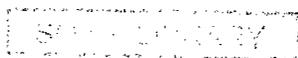


**The laghukathā:
a historical and literary analysis of a modern Hindi prose genre**

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Abstract

The thesis deals with the *laghukathā*, a modern Hindi prose genre published primarily in journalistic print media. The introduction discusses the problems of genre criticism in general and establishes the necessity of a flexible generic concept as a basic form of approach.

The second part of the thesis investigates the historical development of the genre: the various approaches by Indian *laghukathā* critics are evaluated, Indian and non-Indian influences are assessed, and the significance of Indian journalism for the emergence of the *laghukathā* is shown. Thus, the historical section covers a period from ancient times up to the emergence of the *laghukathā* in the early 1970s and its subsequent establishment as an independent genre during the 1980s and 90s.

The third chapter deals with the *laghukathā* writers' intention as pronounced in various articles and essays. The question of a committed versus a non-committed authorial approach to the *laghukathā* is discussed and the significance of a committed socio-political attitude as a distinguishing characteristic of the genre is established. Furthermore, a range of means of publication of the texts is introduced, stressing the importance assigned by the writers to the actual communication of a message to an audience.

The fourth and main part of the thesis consists of the literary analysis of a representative number of primary texts. The initial methodological section describes how the sample of texts has been drawn. The literary analysis itself is divided into three parts, dealing with several aspects in the areas of content, form and style. The detailed literary analysis serves to establish an 'ideal type' of the genre, delineating some basic principles of the *laghukathā* without limiting its generic flexibility.

In the conclusion the 'ideal type' of the *laghukathā* is delineated on the basis of the historical, writer-related and literary analysis; finally the *laghukathā*'s position within the modern Hindi literary scene is described.

Table of contents

Abstract	2
List of diagrams and illustrations	5
Signs and abbreviations	5
Acknowledgements	6
1 Introduction	8
2 Historical development	11
2.1 State of research: contemporary approaches	11
2.2 Beginnings (before 1900)	16
2.2.1 The question of ancient and medieval antecedents	16
2.2.2 Early stages: Bhāratendu Hariścandra	21
2.2.3 The role of journalism	23
2.3 Transition into a modern genre (1900 - 1970)	26
2.3.1 'First' laghukathās (1900 - Independence)	27
2.3.2 Non-Hindi influences: Maṅṭo and Gibran	31
2.3.3 The 1950s and 60s: first collections and the emergence of the term 'laghukathā'	36
2.4 Modern laghukathās (1970 -)	38
2.4.1 The 1970s: the evolution of a new 'genre'	38
2.4.2 Establishment of the laghukathā as an independent genre	42
3 The laghukathā writers	47
3.1 The authors' intentions	48
3.2 Means of publication	53
4 Literary analysis	59
4.1 State of research: contemporary approaches	59
4.2 Methodology	62

4.3	Content	72
4.3.1	Themes	73
4.3.2	Protagonists	106
4.3.3	Space	123
4.4	Form	131
4.4.1	Outer form: shape and size	131
4.4.2	Inner form: the plot	138
4.4.3	Title	166
4.4.4	Points of view	172
4.5	Style	174
4.5.1	Diction and syntax	176
4.5.2	Stylistic modes and tones	201
4.5.3	Rhetorical figures and tropes	216
5	Conclusion	249
6	Bibliography	255
7	Appendix: List of the sampled texts	264

List of diagrams and illustrations

Diagrams

Diagram 1: Distribution of themes	105
Diagram 2: Distribution of number of words	137

Illustrations

<i>Kathā dr̥ṣṭi</i> : laghukathā folder	56-57
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Signs and abbreviations

*	born
~	circa

BLKK1 & 2	<i>Bhāratīya laghukathā koś 1 & 2</i> , ed. Balrām
CBB	<i>Choḍī baṛī bāteṃ</i> , eds. M.P. Jain & J. Kaśyap
HLKK	<i>Hindī laghukathā koś</i> , ed. Balrām
KN 1, 2 & 3	<i>Kathānāmā 1, 2 & 3</i> , eds. Balrām & Manīṣṛāy
L....	Index number of the sampled laghukathās

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1 Introduction

The *laghukathā* is a contemporary Hindi prose genre which has been published primarily in journalistic print media since approximately 1970. Although it is generally characterised by radical conciseness of form and an interest in socio-political themes, we find - not least due to the large number of writers contributing to the genre - an abundance of different thematical, formal and stylistic variation: texts published as *laghukathās* may vary in length between two lines and three pages; the scope of themes extends from poetic descriptions of nature to highly committed political statements, and as to their structure and style, resemblances to almost all major genres of Hindi literature can be discerned.

The determination of a common denominator for the *laghukathā* has so far been hampered by the fact that the main body of *laghukathā* criticism in Hindi has been undertaken by the writers themselves, who tend to promote their own approaches rather than present the genre in objective terms. Pointing to such pitfalls of genre criticism, Hernadi notes that generic classification should attempt to be 'descriptive rather than prescriptive' and 'tentative rather than dogmatic'.¹ Therefore, in order to come to a comprehensively applicable generic definition of the *laghukathā*, the following analysis will avoid the double process of setting the apparent average as an absolute standard while censuring the exceptional², since such a procedure banishes works bearing the individual stamp of a particular writer or time. Instead of pigeon-holing texts according to rigidly fixed standards, the investigation will aim at identifying an 'ideal type'³ of *laghukathā* which may encompass individually or historically marked variants. A suggestion to this effect is also made by the *laghukathā* critic Ś. Puṇatāmbekar who states that a fixed definition of genres is not appropriate, since only motion can be the standard for something which is constantly moving (jo pravāhmay hai, uskā māndaṇḍ mātra pravāhmaytā hai).⁴ Like Hernadi,

¹ Paul Hernadi, *Beyond Genre, New Directions in Literary Classification*, Ithaca & London 1972, p. 8.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 7.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴ Śaṅkar Puṇatāmbekar: 'Laghukathā ke māndaṇḍ', in: Rūp Devguṇ & Rāj Kumār Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā kā laghukathā-saṃsār*, Delhi 1988, p. 44.

Puṇatāmbekar wants to see the rigidly categorising scheme replaced by a flexible and adaptable theoretical framework.

In order to avoid dogmatism we have to ensure that an investigation does not remain restricted to one theoretical area while losing sight of others. A classification of texts into generic categories relies, above all, on the determination of similarities between the various examples, which can be found with respect to the author, the reader, the verbal medium or the evoked world - each, respectively, possibly inducing the critic to be preoccupied with the intention, effect, form or subject matter of a text.⁵ Naturally, it is difficult to set limits of assignability and to determine to what extent similarities should be genre-inclusive. Especially in the *laghukathā* context which has, so far, not seen a groundbreaking comprehensive analysis, it is therefore important to deal with all the above-mentioned issues in order to determine an 'ideal type'.

The following analysis will, in chapter 2, first of all give the historical framework for the genre, therein evaluating the various approaches by Indian *laghukathā* critics (section 2.1), assessing Indian and non-Indian influences, and showing the significance of Indian journalism for the emergence of the *laghukathā*. The historical development of Indian literature leading to the *laghukathā* has been divided into three periods: the earliest period includes possible predecessors of the *laghukathā* from ancient times up to 1900 (section 2.2); phase two deals with the transition of such predecessors into a modern prose genre from 1900-1970 (section 2.3), and the final phase shows us the emergence of the *laghukathā* in the early 1970s and its subsequent establishment as an independent genre during the 1980s and 90s (section 2.4).

In a second step, in chapter 3 the author-reader relationship will be explored. In section 3.1 the *laghukathā* writers' intention as pronounced in various articles and essays will be presented and the question of a committed versus a non-committed authorial approach to the *laghukathā* will be discussed. In the course of this section the significance of a committed socio-political attitude as a distinguishing characteristic of the genre will be explored, an idea which will be followed up throughout the literary analysis of the *laghukathā*. In order to illustrate the importance assigned by

⁵ Cf. Hernadi, *Beyond Genre*, pp. 6-7.

the writers to the actual communication of a message to an audience, the means of publication of the *laghukathā* are discussed in section 3.2.

The main part of the thesis consists of the literary analysis of a representative number of primary texts (chapter 4). After a short overview of the main critical approaches to the topic in the Hindi literary scene (section 4.1), the methodological section (section 4.2) describes how a sample of representative texts has been drawn in such a way as to circumvent the dilemma of the generic critic, namely having to define something that has not yet been sufficiently delineated in order to provide standards on which an attempted definition might draw.⁶ The literary analysis itself is divided into three parts, dealing with several aspects in the areas of content (section 4.3) - comprising themes, protagonists and space - form (section 4.4) dealing with the outer and inner form as well as the title and the narrative viewpoints - and style (section 4.5), covering the areas of diction and syntax, narrative modes and, finally, rhetorical devices. The detailed literary investigation serves to establish an 'ideal' *laghukathā*, delineating its basic principles without limiting the flexibility of the genre.

Based on the historical, writer-related and literary analysis, this 'ideal type' of the *laghukathā* is finally outlined in the conclusion (chapter 5) which will also delineate the *laghukathā*'s position within the modern Hindi literary scene.

⁶ Hernadi expresses this dilemma vividly by quoting G. Müller: 'How can I define tragedy (or any other genre) before I know on which works to base the definition, yet how can I know on which works to base the definition before I have defined tragedy?'. Günther Müller, 'Bemerkungen zur Gattungspoetik', *Philosophischer Anzeiger*, III, 1928, p. 136, cit. in: Hernadi, *Beyond Genre*, p. 2.

2 Historical development

When proceeding from an understanding of 'genre' as a flexible concept which is open towards changing social and intellectual trends and accordingly changing literary trends, the discussion of the historical development of the *laghukathā* should generally avoid approaches that are looking for 'the first' *laghukathā* or 'the first' *laghukathā* writer as favoured in the critical debate. A new genre is not 'invented', it comes into being gradually, absorbing different influences to different degrees at different stages of its history and also possibly being interpreted differently by its various users. Hernadi's suggestion that 'one should present the results of generic observations as "ideal types" to which literary works correspond in varying degree'⁷ has to be kept in mind when tracing the *laghukathā*'s historical development.

In the following, first of all, the general trends of *laghukathā* criticism will be discussed. Then different stages of development of the *laghukathā* will be determined and possible antecedents and influences be evaluated.

2.1 State of research: contemporary approaches

In the Hindi critical debate on the history of the *laghukathā* three basic standpoints can be discerned: a traditionalist, a modernist and a 'middle course' approach. Representatives of the first group heavily insist upon the *laghukathā*'s being part of an ancient strand of indigenous literary tradition, claiming a direct relationship with the earliest forms of Indian literature, such as the Vedas, Purāṇas, Pañcatantra etc. They stand for what Devy calls the 'revivalistic trend' of modern Indian criticism, an attitude assumed also in the general contemporary Hindi critical debate when describing the historic development of literature.⁸ This approach is opposed to a Westernising trend in the context of generic literary criticism, as will be seen later. Representatives of this traditionalist or revivalist attitude are, for example, Śaṅkar Puṇatāmbekar and Rāj Kumār Nijāt.

⁷ Hernadi, *Beyond Genre*, p.7 ff.

⁸ G.N. Devy, *After Amnesia, Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism*, London & Hyderabad 1992, p. 19.

In stark contrast to the revivalist approach, a second group of writers and critics sees the laghukathā as a distinctly contemporary genre which is not connected in any way to the Sanskrit tradition. Unlike the revivalists who base their arguments on the one hand on the similarity of the size of ‘ancient laghukathās’ and modern laghukathās, and on the other hand on the fact that the laghukathā relies on the very basics of literature, namely the principle of *telling* something to an audience, the modernists also consider the content, tone and intention behind the text when claiming that no connection between the two can be discerned. There remains, however, disagreement over the question of the actual beginning of the ‘modern’ period of the laghukathā. Different standpoints are taken which span a period of more than a hundred years, proposing for example texts by Bhāratendu Hariścandra (~1875), Mādhavrāṅ Sapṛe (~1900) or Rāmnārāyaṅ Upādhyāy (1944) as possible ‘first’ laghukathās. Interestingly, several of the revivalists set the starting point for modernity much later, namely in the 1970s. Modernists include Puṣpā Bansal and Bhagīrath.

The third approach to the topic is a middle course: its representatives point out the long tradition of Indian writing in a revivalist manner but nevertheless, in the course of their argument, come to the conclusion that the laghukathā as it presents itself today cannot be seen as a part of the ancient strand of Indian literature, thus often contradicting their earlier statements. Followers of this course are, for example, Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṅ, Jagdīś Kaśyap and Kṛṣṇānand.

These three trends are also reflected in the most important essays on the topic which started being published in the early 1980s. The first article said to have been written about the history of the laghukathā is Kṛṣṇa Kamleś’s supposedly modernist ‘The Hindi laghukathā: a real examination of its transition’.⁹ According to Rāṭhī - himself a modernist in his approach - and Svarṅ Kiraṅ, Kamleś has provided a basis for laghukathā criticism by distinguishing three periods of development: the prārambhik yug or ‘initial period’ (1905-1947), the vikās yug or ‘period of development’ (1947-

⁹ ‘Hindī-laghukathā: saṅkramaṅ kā sahī jāyā’, Cf. Bhagīrath’s article ‘Hindī laghukathā: aitiḥāsik pariṅprekṣya’, in: Balrām & Maṅīśrāy (eds.), *Kathānāmā* 3, Delhi 1990 (unpublished), p. 152; unfortunately Kamleś’s essay was not available at the time of writing this section; the time of publication can be assumed to be 1981 or 1982.

1970) and the ādhunik yug or ‘modern period’ (1970-1981).¹⁰ Unlike most critics, Kamleś sees Independence as a crucial date within the history of the laghukathā; however, his claim that the modern era of laghukathā writing started in the early seventies is generally agreed upon within the critical debate.

Another interesting essay with a modernist approach is Śakuntalā Kiraṇ’s article ‘The journey of the contemporary Hindi laghukathā’.¹¹ Although she sees the starting point of the laghukathā’s history as around 1900, she does not set rigid temporal boundaries but allows phases of transition: Kiraṇ regards the development of the laghukathā as having proceeded in several stages which do not follow but rather blend into each other before coming to an end or allowing another phase to be dominant. These phases are characterised by the manner of publication of laghukathās or ‘texts similar to the laghukathā’. Thus, according to Kiraṇ, an initial stage of collections containing ‘laghukathā-like’ texts (~1900-early seventies) blended into the phases of books with laghukathā sections (1956-early seventies), individual collections of laghukathās (1950-today), anthologies of laghukathās (early seventies-today), magazines devoted to the laghukathā (1973-today), and finally individual laghukathās published in various magazines and newspapers (1944-today). The approach seems to be useful insofar as the changing manner of publication of the laghukathā certainly indicates an increasing awareness of the genre and the existence of a theoretical concept of the laghukathā.

An important article is furthermore Kaśyap’s ‘The Hindi laghukathā in its historic perspective’¹², in which he steers a ‘middle course’: he declares, on the one hand, that ‘today’s laghukathās are absolutely different from the stories of the Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa or Jātakas’¹³, but, on the other hand, insists on terming the tales and

¹⁰ Cf. Satīś Rāthī ‘Laghukathā sāhitya kā vikās evaṁ samkālīn laghukathā lekhan’ and Svarṇ Kiraṇ ‘Laghukathā-sāhitya ke mūlyānkan meṁ samikṣakoṁ kā yogdān’, both in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.): *Hariyānā*, pp. 72-73 & 86.

¹¹ Cf. Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Samkālīn hindī laghukathā kā saphar’, in: Balrām & Manīśrāy (eds.): *Kathānāmā* 2, Delhi 1985, pp. 173-189; this essay is an updated version of ‘Hindī-laghukathā ke sāhitya kā lekhā-jokhā saṅkalit/saṅgrahit’, in: Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā (ed.): *Laghukathā: bahas ke caurāhe par*, Patna 1983, pp. 227-242; Kiraṇ’s unpublished dissertation on the laghukathā is also often referred to in the critical debate.

¹² ‘Hindī laghukathā: aitiḥāsik paripreksya meṁ’, in: Mahāvīr Prasād Jain & Jagdīś Kaśyap (eds.), *Choṭī barī bāteṁ*, Delhi 1978, pp. 21-44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

stories of the Vedas, Pañcatantra, Mahābhārata etc. ‘laghukathās’. Kaśyap divides the history of the laghukathā into three major periods - the ‘ancient times’ or ‘prācīn kāl’ (e.g. Vedas, epics, Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa), the ‘dormant period’ or ‘supt kāl’ (~1000-1970) and the modern times (starting with the 1970s); surprisingly, at some point he claims J.B. Gilchrist’s *The Hindee Story Teller*, a collection of around 100 short prose texts published in 1802-03, as ‘the first book of the Hindi laghukathā’ (Hindī laghukathā kā ādi granth), only to come, in the course of his argument, to the conclusion that the modern laghukathā, characteristically used as a ‘social weapon’ (sāmājik hathiyār), has only come into being around 1970. Although the phase of transition between this ‘dormant period’ and modern times is not sufficiently described or clearly structured, Kaśyap’s essay provides a valuable survey of major dates, works, writers and tendencies.

S. Puṣkaraṇā’s ‘The proud tradition of the Hindi laghukathā’ takes a similar stance and is in certain sections closely modelled on Kaśyap’s article.¹⁴ However, Puṣkaraṇā’s treatment of the topic differs from Kaśyap’s approach in that it lays more emphasis on the transitional phase between the growth of Hindi prose from the beginning of the 19th century and the emergence of the modern laghukathā in the 1970s. Like several other critics and writers, Puṣkaraṇā sees Hariścandra Bhāratendu’s *Parihāsini* (~1875) as the first work containing laghukathās, but he also emphasises foreign influences like the stories and prose poems of the English- and Arabic-writing Lebanese author Khalil Gibran. In another publication Puṣkaraṇā focuses on the modern period of laghukathā writing by exploring the impact of the works of Maṇṭo¹⁵, and his pamphlets on the history of laghukathā-related conferences and symposia are a useful contribution to the history of laghukathā writing because they illustrate the increasing theoretical interest in the genre from the end of the 1970s.¹⁶

¹⁴ ‘Hindī-laghukathā kī gauravśālī paramparā’, in: Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathādes: bṛhad laghukathā-saṅkalan*, New Delhi 1990, pp. 7-18.

¹⁵ Cf. Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā (ed.): *Maṇṭo aur uskī laghukathāem*, Patna 1986.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Puṣkaraṇā: *Hindī-laghukathā kī vikās-yātrā meṁ sammelanom, saṅgoṣṭhiyom aur goṣṭhiyom kā yogdān*, Patna 1998, and *Akhil bhāratīya pragatīśil laghukathā mānc sammān kā itihās*, Patna 1998.

As far as the traditionalist attitude is concerned, the most important article published is Viṣṇu Prabhākar's 'Traditional versus contemporary laghukathās'.¹⁷ Prabhākar argues that the seeds of the laghukathā were sown in the exempla (dṛṣṭānt) of ancient times and proposes an unbroken development. Although he admits that it is open to discussion as to how far the modern laghukathā is indebted to these early antecedents, he nevertheless claims that even if that, which is dynamic, changes over time, it is still not different or separated from the past.¹⁸ This leads Prabhākar to differ from most other laghukathā writers and critics in that he does not see the laghukathās' content as being focused on the hardships of man in modern society but - corresponding to the exemplum of bygone times - as comprising the entire vastness of life (jīvan kī virāṭṭā), interpreting it like an aphoristic *sūtra*.¹⁹ Thus, Prabhākar - within his broad understanding of the genre - can be seen as a representative of a particular strand of laghukathā writing rather than a 'true revivalist'. 'True revivalists', like Nalin or Candra 'Śālihās', try to establish a connection between the modern, socially critical, laghukathā - as it is understood by the majority of young writers - and the earliest literary narratives. In this context the Rigvedic tale of Yamā and Yamī is often mentioned or quoted in order to prove a direct relationship. How far this claim is justifiable will be seen later.

All in all, it can be said that critical opinions on the historical development of the laghukathā are largely in agreement insofar as they regard the modern phase of laghukathā writing to have begun in 1970s. Disagreement, however, exists on the phases of transition as well as on the question of the 'first' laghukathā writer and the 'first' laghukathā, a problematic approach, considering the dynamic nature of the development of a genre. Another problem of the historical criticism of the laghukathā has been and still is that by and large no agreement on the typical or indispensable features of the genre has been reached, which makes it difficult to relate the laghukathā to other previous or contemporary genres. In the following a re-

¹⁷ 'Pāramparik banām āj kī laghukathāem', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: bahas*, pp. 69-72; the article was first published as the introduction to Prabhākar's laghukathā collection *Āpkī kṛpā hai*, Delhi 1982.

¹⁸ Cf. Prabhākar: 'Pāramparik...', pp. 69-70.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

evaluation of the historical situation of the laghukathā will be undertaken against the background of the establishment of an ‘ideal type’ of laghukathā.

2.2 Beginnings (before 1900)

The following sections will question how far the earliest stages of Indian literature have influenced the emergence and development of the modern Hindi laghukathā. In this context the question of the ‘first’ laghukathā, the significance of the growth of Indian journalism for the laghukathā, the role of writers like Bhāratendu Hariścandra within this process, and the possible influence of particular genres like the dohā will be discussed.

2.2.1 The question of ancient antecedents

In discussing whether the laghukathā is an old or a new genre Rameś Candra ‘Śālihās’ states: ‘The persistence to call the laghukathā a discovery of the last three decades is just excessive stubbornness.’²⁰ He argues that the laghukathā, in its literal sense, came into being together with man’s ability to speak and he demands that, in order to find a set or rules for the genre, stories from Vedic times are also to be considered. Like other revivalists - e.g. Nalin or Niśāntketu - Candra ‘Śālihās’ refers to the Rigvedic tale of Yama and Yami as one of the first laghukathās - a myth of origin which relates very briefly how the gods create the night in order to enable Yami to forget her brother Yama’s death.²¹

However, a direct comparison between such texts and the contemporary laghukathā is fruitless, since an invocation of ancient texts as direct antecedents merely highlights the differences between the genres and does not bear closer examination of literary features. Vedic tales like the above but also other types - e.g. Jātakas, fables from the Pañcatantra, folk tales or exempla - differ from the modern laghukathā in almost all

²⁰ Rameś Candra ‘Śālihās’, ‘Ise tin daśābdī pūrv kā āviṣkār mānne kā āgrah durāgrah mātra hai’, in: ‘Laghukathā ek purātan vidhā hai yā iskā janm kuch varṣ pūrv hī huā hai?’ discussion chaired by Rūp Devguṇ, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, pp. 105.

²¹ Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā 1,5,12; cf. Moriz Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*, Stuttgart 1907, vol. 1, pp. 190-191.

literary aspects: in their poetic nature, their content, form and style and especially in the matter of authorship. Thus, ancient literature is, in the original Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit, composed in verse rather than prose like the *laghukathā*, artistic prose literature being introduced to India only in the wake of colonialism at the beginning of the 19th century.²²

The content of ancient texts tends to revolve around religious and moral teachings or entertaining romances and narratives about the general human condition, including humorous denunciations of respected persons falling short of the general societal expectations²³; the 'ideal' *laghukathā*, on the other hand, avoids all these but rather deals with the problems of the common man and his position in society, a theme preliminarily touched upon in the medieval poetry of Kabīr and seriously dealt with in prose only after the emergence of newspapers and magazines at the beginning of the 19th century.

In terms of form the most clearly visible feature of both the ancient 'antecedents' and the *laghukathā* is their relatively small size, a fact which is probably partly responsible for the various attempts to establish direct links between the genres. Yet, the much more important inward form, i.e. the structure of the actions, again reveals major differences. The *laghukathā*'s artfully constructed 'plot' which, for example, makes use of different techniques for handling the narrated time and the continuity of narration, is a distinctively modern literary trait, and equally modern is the conscious employment of textual titles, which are indispensable for grasping the full meaning of the story, and the usage of a variety of points of view - both typical features of the *laghukathā*.

²² Sanskrit prose novels like Dandin's *Daśakumāracarita* were still written in the elaborately embellished *kāvya*-style and did not foster a subsequent tradition of prose novels written in the various north Indian dialects which established themselves over the centuries as literary languages.

²³ In this thesis the term 'societal' is not to be used as a 'pseudo-scientific and pompous variant of "social"', as the *Dictionary of Modern Thought* paraphrases it, but as 'a term which refers to the attributes of society as a whole: its structure or the changes therein. "Social" would remain a wider term which not only includes "societal" but can also be applied to interpersonal relations as well as to attributes or acts of an individual which affect other human beings.' Both in Alan Bullock & Oliver Stallybrass (eds.), *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, London 1988 (new revised edition, 1st edition 1977), p. 792 (headword 'societal').

As far as diction and style are concerned, the *laghukathā* employs a commonly spoken and easily intelligible prose style instead of using the artfully constructed and often highly embellished poetic language of the ancient Sanskrit texts. The usage of different codes and registers for protagonists of different provenance, as to be found in the *laghukathā*, can also be seen in Sanskrit drama which used, for example, Sanskrit, Prakrit and various local dialects for different social classes, but cannot be traced through the literary tradition leading to modern Indian literature. However, outside the dramatic genres the distinction of protagonists through linguistic register - a preferred feature of the *laghukathā* and a distinctly modern literary trait - was only introduced into Indian literature with the advent of prose via English.

The most important difference between the modern *laghukathā* and the ancient short literary forms lies in the realm of authorship and intention. The tale of Yama and Yami, for example, serves - as a myth of origin - to reassure man about his position in the world; fables and parables are written or told with a distinctively didactic intent, as are exempla. Folk tales in general - where they are not explicitly didactic or religious - are often intended to entertain readers or listeners rather than taking a socially critical stance against particular problems. In contrast to these genres, the *laghukathā*, in Ś. Kiran's words, 'is not laden with moral instruction and idealistic teaching, and it abstains from didacticism and entertaining tendencies'.²⁴ Besides, the relationship between the artist and the recipient of a text has changed significantly over the times: oral communication of texts has been widely replaced by the written medium, and modern prose is directed towards an individual recipient who is left on his or her own with regard to the reception and interpretation of texts. Modern prose is also more likely to present readers with new contents rather than drawing from a well-know body of material constituting the oral tradition, thus being not so much affirmative as inspiring.

Yet, ancient 'literature' has, through oral transmission, become part of the general cultural knowledge of the modern Indian writer; a general awareness of old forms and their principles therefore certainly influences modern Indian vernacular literature.

²⁴ Śakuntalā Kiran, 'Kathā-lekhan kā ek aur pirāmiḍ', in: Satīś Dube (ed.), *Āṭhvern daśak kī laghukathāem*, Indore 1979, p. 5.

Individual traits like the constellation of characters in the fable or the principle of the myth of origin can be found in contemporary laghukathās, even if direct similarities between ancient genres and the ideal-typical laghukathā on the level of literary composition cannot be detected. As a general comparison does not add to the discussion of the laghukathā's characteristics, it has to be considered more useful to keep ancient literary forms in mind as something to be considered when writers seriously or playfully adopt individual patterns for particular stories.

In the context of the indirect impact of old literary forms on the modern laghukathā another literary epoch is also interesting: the medieval times (i.e. very approximately 1100-1800), which belong, according to Kaśyap, to the 'supt kāl' or 'dormant period' as far as the laghukathā is concerned. At first sight, considering the poetic nature, communicative situation and content of these works, the medieval period is no more or less a time of rest than the ancient times: the oral transmission of tales and myths is continuing and the literary scene is equally dominated by religious, moral and heroic verse. Yet, especially the increasingly popular dohā as typified by Kabīr's poetry, bears some resemblance to the modern laghukathā in terms of the general idea of a brief, highly persuasive and independent (muktak²⁵) statement. Interestingly, only one laghukathā critic, Niśāntketu, points out this similarity, stating that 'the laghukathā takes the same place in the field of kathā writing as the dohā takes in the courtyard of poetry'.²⁶

Traditionally, the dohā was an expression of universal truth and 'beliefs, values and conceptions widely accepted by culture', but also a vehicle of criticism on the side of the Sant poets towards established religions and their representatives.²⁷ As demonstrated by Linda Hess, this critical attitude has been expressed to an extraordinarily high effect through Kabīr's 'rough rhetoric'. Hess calls Kabīr 'a poet and a radical reformer', his style simple, blunt and provocative; her description of Kabīr's rhetoric

²⁵ Cakradhar Nalin uses the term 'muktak' in his definition of the laghukathā, stating that the genre incorporates 'independent poetry in elegant prose language' (saras gadya bhāṣā dvārā muktak kāvyā), Nalin, 'Laghukathā-yātrā kī aśeṣ kathā', in: Puṣkaraṇa (ed.), *Kathādeś*, p. 686.

²⁶ Niśāntketu: 'Laghukathā kī vidhāgat śāstrīyatā', in: S. Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: sarjā evaṁ samīkṣā*, Delhi 1990, p. 104.

²⁷ Cf. Karine Schomer: 'The Dohā as a Vehicle of Sant Teachings', in: Karine Schomer & W.H. McLeod (eds.): *The Sants*, Delhi, Benares, Patna & Madras 1987, pp. 68 & 85.

as ‘a technique to jolt and shock people into facing things, to push them over the edge into an understanding that they fear and yet profoundly long for’²⁸ seems to echo the laghukathā writers’ demand for a profound and shocking effect on the reader: ‘The laghukathā does not entertain, it gives a blow to [people’s] minds, shakes up their consciousness, jabs a finger into [their] eyes and shows [them] the truth’²⁹. Yet, the nature of this ‘truth’ that the respective authors want to be ‘understood’, is only superficially similar in the two genres. Society and its problems - the target of the laghukathā writers - are, according to Hess, ‘only the outermost skin of what [Kabīr] wished to be reformed’. His understanding of the world was more philosophical than the laghukathā’s, his ultimate target was the ‘naive belief that [people] actually possess and will continue to possess house, body, mate, and family, or that the mind ... is an accurate reporter of what is going on in the world’.³⁰ Nevertheless, Kabīr’s uncompromising criticism and his provocative style can be assumed to have indirectly influenced the emergence and contemporary creation of the laghukathā, because his dohās - and also those of his contemporaries - have been a regular part of everyday life since medieval times. Schomer states that Sant dohās, like proverbs, ‘come up daily in the course of normal conversational situations - to make a point in an argument, to express a feeling, to comment on persons or situations, to congratulate, to give advice, to console in times of trouble, to make a request or ask for a favor etc.’³¹ The technique - the brief and pointed character of the dohā - is reflected in the principle of the laghukathā.

A last important point to be mentioned is the author-reader relationship, a crucial aspect of laghukathā writing. In contrast to the ancient texts where no direct and personal relationship between the author and the reader or listener existed, Kabīr’s poetry relies on a passionate and personal contact with the recipient. ‘The reader is central in Kabīr’, Hess states and explains that the poet aimed at engaging people, waking them up and affecting them - a trait that distinguished him from his contemporaries who usually spoke to God rather than their listeners.³² Thus, in this respect,

²⁸ Linda Hess, ‘Kabir’s Rough Rhetoric’, in: Schomer & McLeod, *Sants*, pp. 144-149 & 161; Hess does not talk specifically about Kabīr’s dohās in her investigation but on his poetry in general.

²⁹ Puṣpā Bansal, ‘Apnī bāt’, in: Śamīm Śarmā, *Hastākṣar*, Delhi 1983, p. 21.

³⁰ Linda Hess & Shukdev Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, Delhi, Benares, Patna & Madras 1983, p. 7.

³¹ Schomer, ‘The Dohā...’, p. 89.

³² Cf. Hess, ‘Kabir’s Rough Rhetoric’, p. 147.

too, Kabīr's style, i.e. his way of addressing the audience, anticipates the modern and individualised approach of the laghukathā.

However, the modern social commitment characteristic for the laghukathā starts to emerge only when these traditions which have prepared the way for India's literature to approach modernity were merged with the prose literature as brought to India by the English from the beginning of the 19th century, as will be seen in the following chapter.

2.2.2 Early stages: Bhāratendu Hariścandra

The introduction of a Western type of prose to India - initiated through the founding of Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 - resulted in dramatic changes in literature: prose was increasingly adopted instead of verse, the oral medium found a competitor in the written text as a means of artistic and intellectual communication, and the dialects which had so far dominated the North Indian literary scene were slowly replaced by Khaṛī bolī. Furthermore, as Yogendra Malik shows, the intellectual scene became more and more secularised, it 'developed new themes, symbols, subjects and heroes to depict changing social realities', and thus '[s]ocial and political rather than religious and metaphysical issues, became their major concerns'.³³ Besides, with the gradual introduction of the printing press, a large number of magazines and newspapers emerged which had considerable impact on the development of the laghukathā and prose literature in general. A second consequence of the founding of Fort William College was the introduction of the English language not merely as a medium of education or 'yet another instrument of communication', but also as 'a vehicle of a new culture ... introduced with a motive to control the country politically and socially'.³⁴ The resulting clash of the Indian and English value-systems led to a mood of increasing socio-political frustration and triggered a revivalistic search for the golden past on the one hand and a 'modern' social and political consciousness on the other. Social and political ideas as a worthy topic of Hindi literature were established in the

³³ Yogendra Malik, *South Asian Intellectuals and Social Change: A Study of the Role of Vernacular-Speaking Intelligentsia*, New Delhi 1982, p. 127

³⁴ Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910; Western Impact: Indian Response*, vol. VIII, New Delhi 1991, p. 31

latter half of the 19th century by Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850-1885) and his contemporaries and followers as a direct response to the growing Western influence on indigenous norms and values. It was also Hariścandra who helped to shape a modern style of Hindi (i.e. Khaṛī bolī) prose, and his collection *Parihāsinī*, 'Ridicule', is often considered to be the first book of laghukathās.³⁵

Bhāratendu wrote most of his literature - especially his prose and verses - for publication in magazines and journals, and it was his magazine *Kavi Vacan Sudhā* (1867-1885) which marks the beginning of a 'mushroom growth of Hindi newspapers and journals'³⁶. Thus the short prose pieces in the collection *Parihāsinī* were originally published in various journals from 1871 onwards, before being compiled in book form in 1876. The anecdotal nature of these pieces is already indicated in the title 'Ridicule': in a witty and often ironic tone the author deals with daily matters like the greed and indolence of the rich, the relationship between man and woman or simply everyday interpersonal relations. The texts assume a rather modern appearance insofar as they are written in a simple and clear Khaṛī bolī prose style and rely on matter-of-fact report and dialogue rather than the descriptive and didactic elements of traditional narration, as the following text *Ang-hīn dhanī*, 'The physically-challenged rich', shows:

In a rich man's house sat his distinguished friends. The bell was rung to summon the servant. Mohan ran inside but came back laughing. The other servants asked him, 'Hey, why are you laughing?'

He answered, 'Friends, there were sixteen strong young men in there, not one of them could turn off the light, I had to go to turn it off'.³⁷

³⁵ As noted above (p.9), some critics and writers see J.B. Gilchrist's *The Hindee Story Teller* (1802-03) as the first laghukathā collection, but the work contains a variety of different genres, namely, according to Gilchrist, '[e]very short, amusing or interesting story, anecdote, witty saying, and in fact everything of this kind we have yet found familiar to the natives, in which there is nothing offensive to decency'³⁴. (Gilchrist, *Hindee Story Teller*, p. i) The compilation thus demonstrates a general Indian preference for short and pointed stories to illustrate and explain daily life, and it provides an overview over this 'literature' of both an oral and written nature, but on the other hand neither does it show an underlying literary concept that might be considered influential for laghukathā writing nor do the works exhibit the modernity of composition and especially the social consciousness which is typical for the laghukathā and whose presence could be felt more strongly in Kabīr's verses.

³⁶ Ram Ratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism*, Allahabad 1946/47, p. 104.

³⁷ In: Bhāratendu Hariścandra, *Parihāsinī*, ed. by Balrām Agravāl, Delhi 1996 (original text first published 1876), p. 34.

Texts like these serve to draw attention to everyday problems and ridicule objectionable behaviour, but the fiercely critical social and political voice as characteristic of many of Hariścandra's editorials, verses and dramas is lacking; in terms of tone and subject matter, the pieces seem to be closely related to the light kathā-literature, i.e. the indigenous narrative tradition of which farce and satire were well-known and established vehicles, while the literary prose style already points to the emergence of the modern kahānī, similar to the Western short story. The two trends of expressing socio-political or personal concerns and of using short literary prose forms with a pointed ending can be seen as having started in this period, yet, it would take some more time for them to completely merge into what may be seen as the modern laghu-kathā.

2.2.3 The role of journalism

Further steps towards a socially and politically committed narrative prose literature were taken by other authors and journalists like Bālkr̥ṣṇa Bhaṭṭ or Bālmukund Gupta, who continued to politicise the topics of their various journalistic contributions and helped to develop the essay into a 'recognisable literary form in Hindi' thereby 'contributing with the bulk of other journalistic writing to an approximate stabilisation of prose style by the early 1900's'³⁸. According to Bhatnagar, during this period of the 'rise' of Hindi journalism³⁹ the essay was the most experimented-on literary form. Essays covered light and serious matters alike and often took the form of an editorial which was also among Bhāratendu's preferred genres when he wanted to sound his political voice.⁴⁰

Next to the essay, another literary form gained in popularity and importance: the 'punch', which was initially promoted by Bhāratendu Hariścandra⁴¹ but later widely

³⁸ Ronald Stuart McGregor, *Hindi Literature of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Wiesbaden 1974, p. 85.

³⁹ Bhatnagar determines five major phases in the history of Hindi journalism: 1. beginning 1826 - 1867, 2. rise 1867 - 1883, 3. growth 1883 - 1900, 4. development 1900 - 1936, and 5. contemporary press 1936 and after; cf. Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*, pp. ix ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. Sagaree Sengupta, 'The Nineteenth-Century Brajhasa Poetry of "Bharatendu" Hariscandra', Ph.D. Thesis, Ann Arbor 1992, p. 128.

⁴¹ Bhatnagar states that the punch was popularised especially in the *Hariścandra Magazine* which was edited by Bhāratendu Hariścandra from 1873 onwards (from 1874 under the title *Hariścandra Kaumudī*). Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 135-136 (Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*; also Satiśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, 'Hindi

used by contemporary journalists, since ‘no magazine or weekly could catch public attention unless it traded in “punch”’.⁴² Although ‘punch’ is not a literary genre of Western literature, in the Hindi context it can be seen as a short, humorous and preferably satirical narrative prose text⁴³, modelled in tone and style on the English magazine *Punch* which was published in London from 1841 and - ‘as a comic paper with a social consciousness’ - traded in ‘a mixture of text and illustrations, ... humor and social criticism’.⁴⁴ Besides, David Mellor, in his investigation of the reflection of Parsi history in the Indian press, draws attention to the ‘serio-comic’ magazine *Hindi Punch* which was published in the second half of the 19th century - first as the *Parsi Punch* and from 1888 onwards under the title *Hindi Punch*. Like its English model this magazine satirically mirrored daily life and - albeit from a Parsi point of view - provided ‘a distinctive conspectus of political, social and religious events in India’, caricaturing Indian attitudes and presenting itself as ‘a leading publication for creating political awareness through humour’.⁴⁵ The term ‘punch’, thus, carried a general notion of comic socio-political criticism, both as a journal and as a genre. It may be seen as a first step in the bringing together of short narrative prose and social criticism, albeit still with a humorous and light touch.

Another journalistic form taking a similar direction is the ‘reductive but extremely efficacious’ satire, as mentioned by Mariola Offredi.⁴⁶ In magazines like Bālkr̥ṣṇa Bhaṭṭ’s *Hindī Pradīp* (1877-1909), short texts in the form of satirical definitions were published in order to ‘render social and political ideals accessible’. According to Offredi, these brief statements were so popular that they were even quoted in other journals. She gives the following example:

Laghukathā-jagat merī hindī patr-patrikāom kā yogdān’, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, p. 49)

⁴² Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*, p. 135.

⁴³ For a delineation of the Hindi ‘punch’ (pañc) cf. Puṣkaraṇā, who describes the works published in columns of ‘punch’ and ‘humorous reflections’ (citt-vinod) as ‘narrative pieces ... [of] sharp irony’ (kathātmak racnāem ... jo dhārdār vyaṅg[ya] lie hue hotī thīm); Puṣkaraṇā, ‘Hindi Laghukathā-jagat...’, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Richard Daniel Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution 1841-1851*, Columbus/Ohio 1997, pp. XVII & XIX.

⁴⁵ David C. Mellor, ‘The Parsis and the Press: an Indepth study of the “Hindi Punch”, 1906-1931’, MPhil Thesis, Manchester 1985, p. 2; R.R. Marshall, *Gujarati Patrakaitvono*, Surat 1950, p. 274, cit. in Mellor, ‘Parsis’, footnote 3, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Mariola Offredi, ‘The Search for National Identity as Reflected in the Hindi Press’, in: Offredi (ed.), *Literature, Language, and the Media in India*, New Delhi 1992, p. 224.

Lakṣmī incarnated - the mahārānī Victoria. Peculiar features - white skin. The worthy - high grade English civil servants, incorruptible temples of civilization. The unworthy - all of us, because we are Indian. The apex of civilization - standing up to piss.⁴⁷

The development of literary forms like this and the aforementioned punch - as well as the publication of Bhāratendu's anecdotes - was made possible by the growing journalistic landscape. Variety was one of the characteristics of journalism of the late 19th century: newspapers, magazines and journals became a forum for topical social and political ideas, and different literary genres were tested.⁴⁸ It is against this steadily developing background that literary forms began to emerge which later assisted in the evolution of the laghukathā. Before this could happen, however, the situation had to change in two respects: a wider reading public had to be reached and fiction had to find its way into the journals.

The initial phases of Hindi journalism have to be seen against the background of the illiteracy of the masses. Bhatnagar states: 'Literary articles, poems and literary collections were unsuited to the majority of the reading public which could hardly spell...' - the circle of readers thus remained limited to 'the small class of educated persons'.⁴⁹ Even though the indirect influence of journalistic media was not to be underestimated since the ideas and news conveyed through the press filtered through to the illiterate public, a significantly large group of recipients was not reached directly until the second and third decade of the 20th century, by which time the literacy rates had gone up from roughly 3-4% to 8-9%.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the First World War provoked a growing interest in daily news, thus forming a larger reading public.⁵¹

As to the question of fictional literature, Bhatnagar declares that in the early periods of journalism 'fiction, whether novel or short story, was simply non-existent'.⁵² Story-writing that no longer relied on ancient anecdotal models crystallised only at the beginning of the 20th century, especially with the advent of Mahāvīr Prasād

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 225; the quote, published in the journal *Ucit Vaktā*, December 18th, 1880, was taken from *Hindī Pradīp*.

⁴⁸ Cf. Sengupta, *Nineteenth-Century Brajghosa Poetry*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*, p. 106.

⁵⁰ Cf. D. Natarajan, *Extracts from the All India Census Reports on Literacy*, Census of India 1971, New Delhi 1972 [?], pp. ii, 1 & 84.

⁵¹ Cf. Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*, pp. 224-225.

⁵² Ibid., p. 136.

Dvivedī's magazine *Sarasvatī* which rang in a new era not only of journalism but also of Hindi literature in general and prose writing in particular.⁵³ Correspondingly, the majority of laghukathā critics and writers see the time around the turn of the century as a significant stage of laghukathā-writing, namely the beginning of the modern phase - be it as a phase of transition or a phase of development - in which the general tendencies towards merging narrative prose with commitment and fictionality (kahānī) while keeping up the short and pointed appearance of a text (kathā) slowly found its way into the new literary genre of the laghukathā.

2.3 Transition into a modern genre (1900-1970)

With the founding of the miscellany magazine *Sarasvatī* in 1900, Hindi journalism and Hindi prose literature entered a new era. Especially under the editorship of Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī from 1903-1921, *Sarasvatī* became the leading organ for the standardisation of language, the development of Khaṛī bolī prose and poetry, the creation of several kinds of prose styles, and the making of the modern short story.⁵⁴ The short story now entered what Das calls 'the last stage of the evolution of narratives', assuming an appearance 'distinct from anecdotes, tales, sketches, reportage and novellas'.⁵⁵ Although the short story of the early 20th century still shared features with these traditional prose forms, it gradually developed into a modern literary genre by more and more relying on the 'presence of a conscious narrative', by 'foregrounding a particular incident, ... a situation, or a moment of emotional intensity' and especially by focusing on 'the common man and his mundane problems'.⁵⁶ However, it is important to remember that the traditional types of narrative did not disappear, they continued to be written and remained 'side by side with the new form which was a conscious rearrangement of the fictional narrative structure'.⁵⁷ The landscape of literary narrative prose of the early 20th century was thus dominated by two strands of narratives, a 'kathā'-prose - in the tradition of indigenous 'tales' - and a newly emerging 'kahānī'-literature, developing a modern type of 'short story'. Both

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 176, and S. Puṣkaraṇā, 'Hindi Laghukathā-jagat...', pp. 49-50.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bhatnagar, *Rise and Growth*, p. 268; other important magazines of this period were *Sudarśan* (1900-1903), *Indu* (1909 -) and *Madhurī* (1923 - 1930), cf. *ibid.*, pp. 282, 296.

⁵⁵ Das, *History 1800-1910*, p. 302.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302 & 307.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

forms were made popular especially through the various journalistic media, although more and more books were also published.

It is against this background that the further development of short narrative texts into the *laghukathā* has to be seen. While various short narrative genres - anecdotes, fables, exempla etc. - continued to be written according to traditional standards, one strand of texts took over the new techniques of the short story and assumed an increasingly modern appearance in terms of content, narrative structure and tone. At the same time the old models of briefness and pointedness, which have been seen as a typical feature of several traditional genres of both poetic and narrative nature, were retained. In the following we will see that from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1970s several writers can be found who - without having the concept of the 'laghukathā' in mind - tried out the combination of a modern and increasingly committed way of writing with the traditional short form of tale-telling.

2.3.1 'First' *laghukathās* (1900 - Independence)

The determination of a fixed starting point has been shown as an unreasonable approach in the context of genre-development, yet, in the critical debate several texts of the early decades of the 20th century are repeatedly pointed out as the 'first' *laghukathās*. Characteristically, no agreement has been reached in this matter; however, the different stories may be seen as stages which illustrate the progress of the genre. The texts suggested most often as 'first' *laghukathās* are:

1. *Billī aur bukhār*, 'Cat and fever', by Mākhanlāl Caturvedī (~1900, publication details unknown)
2. *Ek ṭokaṛī bhar miṭṭī*, 'A basket-full of earth', by Mādhavrāv Sapṛe (1901 in the magazine *Chattīs gaṛh mitra* - later *Sārikā*)
3. *Jhalmalā*, 'Radiance', by Padumlāl Punnālāl Bakhśī, (1910 [1916?] in the magazine *Sarasvatī*)
4. *Vimātā*, 'Stepmother', by Chabīlāl Gosvāmī, (1915 in the magazine *Sarasvatī*)
5. *Sethjī*, 'Sethji', by Kanhaiyalāl Miśra 'Prabhākar' (1920 [1929?], publication details unknown)
6. *Āṭā aur simenṭ*, 'Flour and cement', by Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyay, (1944 in the magazine *Vīṇā*)⁵⁸

⁵⁸ It is not certain whether the dates of publication as stated in the various critical articles are correct. Some details seem to be obscure since the respective writers would have been only around ten

Written between 1900 and Independence and published in various magazines, all the pieces show - in different respects and to various degrees - signs of modernity, but *Ek ṭokarī bhar miṭṭī*, *Jhalmalā* and *Vimātā* seem to belong to the history of the short story rather than the laghukathā, as we will see later. However, all six of the aforementioned texts clearly show their experimental nature in terms of content and especially the construction of the plot. *Billī aur bukhār* is still anecdotal in character, it relies on an unexpected and humorous ending but assumes a modern appearance in terms of style and viewpoint: the text is written in a simple and clear Khaṛī bolī prose style and presents a first-person narrator who relates a personal experience of his childhood to the reader. The text shows no signs of moralism or didacticism but equally lacks a socio-political attitude, and seems to be written for light entertainment only. Nevertheless, it seems - for its conciseness and pointedness - to be more in line with the emergence of the future laghukathā than the three stories following it in the list. Sapre's *Ek ṭokarī-bhar miṭṭī* describes in some detail how a widow is expelled from her hut by a greedy zamindar who, however, in the end realises his mistake:

The Zamindar Sahab was so intoxicated with pride at his wealth that he had become arrogant and forgotten his duties, but the widow's [...] words opened his eyes. Remorseful about what he had done he asked the widow for forgiveness and returned the hut to her.⁵⁹

In spite of a somewhat crude and unconvincingly motivated turn, the ending seems to anticipate Premchand's idealist realism, leading the ruthless and wrong-doing antagonist towards moral betterment due to a real insight. An element of modernity can be seen in the writer's taking side with the common woman who belongs to a subjugated group of society, however, the construction of the plot lacks refinement and inner logic. In terms of style, the rather detailed descriptions and the general conversational tone of the text suggest a relationship with story literature, while the terse and pointed character of e.g. Hariścandra's anecdotes which will later be characteristic for the laghukathā is not to be found.

Jhalmalā and *Vimātā*, although utterly different in character from each other as well as from *Ek ṭokarī bhar miṭṭī*, seem to belong to the short story strand of literature

years old at the time of publication, given that the dates of birth are correct. The dates therefore have to be seen as approximate only.

⁵⁹ In: Rūpsimh Candel (ed.), *Prakārāntar*, Delhi 1991, p. 68.

for similar reasons - a lack of conciseness and pointedness. In *Jhalmalā* the first-person narrator strikes a rather contemplative and long-winded tone, telling the reader about a childhood incident catching up with him when he is an adult. Modernity here presents itself in the intimate character of the story as well as in the open beginning and end. *Vimātā*, on the other hand, is characterised by its remarkably artificial plot which develops at a slow and heavy pace until its highly far-fetched and 'happy-ever-after' ending, when a father and his son are reunited. The text is interesting in that it shows us the writer's effort to compose a narrative prose text according to modern models but also displays the difficulties the writers of this period had in terms of structuring a modern plot. Clearly, neither *Jhalmalā* nor *Vimātā* belong in the line of texts that prepare the field for the *laghukathā*, they only generally pave the way insofar as they contribute to the development of modern Hindi prose.

The text *Seṭhji*, on the other hand, seems to pick up the thread of the punch or Hariścandra's brief anecdotal prose pieces which ironised e.g. members of particular social groups. Dominated by dialogue, the plot of *Seṭhji* develops towards a witty surprise ending at a fast pace, thereby lending the text a modern outlook: a merchant is reluctant to donate money to a Gandhi-fund because he fears that the secret police or the 'Collector Sahab' might find him out. He argues with the fund-raiser who, in the end, suggests that the merchant might solve the problem by joining the Congress, because, then, the 'Collector Sahab' would be afraid of *him*. Like Hariścandra's texts, *Seṭhji* is of a humorous nature, it does not 'shock' the reader as the modern *laghukathā* is supposed to do. Yet it refrains from moralising and didacticism as found in the short stories of the period and reflects the trend of socio-political consciousness entering literature.

The last text mentioned regularly as a possible 'first' *laghukathā* is *Āṭā aur sīment*. Of the texts introduced in this section this story best anticipates the spirit found in modern *laghukathās*: a labourer on a building site asks the master of the house that is being erected how much the cement costs that is used as a foundation. Hearing the answer he is shocked:

'Oof, Babu! Flour and liquid cement cost the same! So you can pour flour into your foundation as well as cement. It's not a question of flour or cement, but of money. In terms of

money you can buy the same [amount] of each, flour or cement. Well, the only difference is that if rich persons have a lot of money they have cement poured into the foundation of their 'houses', and if poor people have some money they pour cement into the foundation of their body. But thanks to the times we live in, you can have cement poured into the foundation of your house as you wish, while we cannot pour a stomach-full of flour into the foundation of our bodies. The foundation of the house is solid, but the foundation of the human remains weak. No one pays attention to this at all.⁶⁰

The contrast between the poor and the rich is effectively illustrated and symbolised in the contrasting image of flour and cement, and the tone of the story is no longer humorous but - as in modern laghukathās - rather serious and bemusing. Yet, the text conveys its message in a somewhat long-winded manner, emphasising and illuminating its issue from different angles; it does not produce the pointed and matter-of-fact ending characteristically found in the laghukathā.

Interestingly, no text from the period between the 1920s and *Ātā aur sīment* in 1944 is usually considered as a 'first' laghukathā and neither are texts which fall between 1947 and 1970. A reason for this might be that the search for a 'first' laghukathā actually serves to prove a tradition rather than establish the 'starting point' of the genre. The necessity of such proof seems to become less pressing the closer one comes to the actual beginning. Two stories which are regularly mentioned but ruled out as laghukathās are Upendranāth Aśk's *Gilaṭ*, 'Gilding', (1932) and Premchand's *Rāṣṭra kā sevak*, 'A servant of the nation' (1930). Both texts reflect the spirit of the modern laghukathā insofar as they are brief and pointed critical statements that refrain from anecdotal humour. Especially *Rāṣṭra kā sevak* seems to anticipate modern laghukathā writing: echoing the increasing involvement of writers in contemporary social and political events, reflected e.g. in the founding of the All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in 1936, it presents socio-political commitment in a short and poignant way, does not rely on the detailed plot found in short-story writing and ends with the surprising and critical twist typical of the laghukathā. However, this story is an isolated case in Premchand's oeuvre: it did not set a literary trend in motion nor did the author himself feel motivated to follow up this line of writing by consciously forming a concept of such short and poignant prose pieces - the text has

⁶⁰ By R. Upādhyāy, in: *Vīṇā*, December 1981, p. 2.

to be seen as merely another individual example preparing the field of modern Hindi prose for the *laghukathā*.

The period discussed above corresponds with Kamleś's determination of the initial phase of *laghukathā* writing (*prārambhik yug*, 1905-1947), although the time around Independence should rather be seen as a flexible phase of transition. The growing socio-political consciousness not only of writers and other intellectuals but also of the reading public had opened the field for committed writing, an increasingly well-developed landscape of magazines, journals and newspapers provided the means of publication for topical writing, and literary experiments were encouraged through the publication of literary magazines like *Sarasvatī* (from 1900⁶¹) and *Hamṣ* (from 1930). The above-given examples of 'first' *laghukathās* show that, during this period, several individual attempts were being made at taking over the newly explored techniques of the short story and combining them with the briefness and pointedness of traditional literary models, thus producing short narrative texts of a more and more modern appearance in terms of content, narrative structure and tone. The idea of making these texts into a genre of their own, however, was formed only later, after the authors' absorbing other influences and developing a consciousness about the possible strength inherent in this kind of writing.

2.3.2 Non-Hindi influences: Maṅṭo and Gibran

Sa'adat Hasan Maṅṭo and Khalil Gibran are repeatedly pointed out as influential when the emergence of the modern *laghukathā* is discussed, and they are also mentioned as having affected the works of individual writers.

Maṅṭo's book usually referred to in the *laghukathā*-debate is the collection *Siyāḥ ḥāṣiye*, 'Black Margins', which is a compilation of brief, ironic short prose pieces in Urdu, ranging in length from two lines to five pages, and published in 1948. The texts in this collection represent, according to Leslie Flemming, 'Maṅṭo's first shocked reactions to the violence of Partition'⁶² - they deal with the brutality of communalism

⁶¹ I have been unable to trace the date of closure of *Sarasvatī*.

⁶² Leslie A. Flemming, *Another Lonely Voice: The Life and Works of Saadat Hassan Manto*, Introduction (Flemming) and translations (Naqui), Lahore 1985, p. 73.

raging in both parts of the divided sub-continent in 1947 and after. Although Flemming acknowledges that the texts' 'grim themes at first produce a chilling effect', she sees the book nevertheless mainly as a 'collection of anecdotes' and 'intellectual jokes', albeit of 'black humor'.⁶³ Considering the structure of the plot, the texts indeed exhibit an anecdotal appearance: they rely on conciseness of content, a single-stranded plot and the principle of a pointed and often witty outcome, usually presented in the last sentence which, according to Flemming, is mostly based on a pun or ironic twist. An example is the text *Dāvāt āmāl*, 'Invitation to action':

When the neighbourhood was set on fire, everything burnt down with the exception of one shop and its sign.

It said, 'All building and construction materials sold here'.⁶⁴

Despite the ironically humorous tone found in texts like this, the 'laughter' produced is of a rather nervous kind; since the general theme of the collection is 'man's incredible inhumanity to man'⁶⁵ a few texts can even be seen as provoking the truly shocking effect typical for the laghukathā, as for example the following story *Jailī*, 'Jelly':

At six in the morning, the man who used to sell ice from a push-cart next to the service station was stabbed to death. His body lay on the road, while water kept falling on it in steady dribblets from the melting ice.

At a quarter past seven, the police took him away. The ice and blood stayed on the road.

A mother and child rode past the spot in a tonga. The child noticed the coagulated blood on the road, tugged at his mother's sleeve and said, 'Look mummy, jelly'.⁶⁶

It can be seen from the two examples that, with respect to the laghukathā, the texts are of importance because Maṅṭo combines in them the anecdotal principle with a truly modern literary content and style, dealing with topical socio-political events, presenting them in his 'spare' and 'simple' prose style, and stripping the stories of any kind of didacticism. However, the significance of this connection of old and new is not usually acknowledged in the critical debate on the laghukathā. While some critics

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ In: Saadat Hasan Manto, *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition*, translated by Khalid Hasan, New Delhi, London 1997, p. 193.

⁶⁵ Flemming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 73.

⁶⁶ Translation by Khalid Hasan in: Manto, *Mottled Dawn*, p. 192.

focus mainly on the topicality of the stories - e.g. Sonī who emphasises the ‘contemporariness’ (tatkālīntā) of Maṇṭo’s writing and his sense of the contemporary world’s ‘bitter reality’ (kaṭu yathārth)⁶⁷ - others, who refer to the technique, do not consider the texts as laghukathās at all but rather call them ‘little works’ (laghu racnāem, choṭī-choṭī racnāem): when Kaśyap, for example, states that one ‘cannot say that the technique of the laghukathā is contained in the works of *Siyāh ḥāśīye*’, it has to be assumed that he refers to the texts’ anecdotal element whose humorous implications are not part of the concept of the laghukathā as it is understood by the majority of contemporary writers.⁶⁸

The principle of the modern ‘committed anecdote’ as practised by Maṇṭo in *Siyāh ḥāśīye* failed to attract attention at the time of publication; Flemming describes it as a ‘unique but virtually unnoticed’ collection.⁶⁹ Direct traces of Maṇṭo’s ‘anecdotes’ can perhaps be seen in the way the modern laghukathā deals with communalist problems, namely by describing conflicts and riots without naming the parties, thus ‘objectively’ presenting the picture as one of equally detestable violence on all sides. In addition, the principle of the ‘committed anecdote’ can indeed be found in a fairly large number of laghukathās, despite the laghukathā writers’ outspoken disapproval of the anecdotal tone. Yet, on the whole, the direct influence Maṇṭo’s ‘Black Margins’ exert on contemporary laghukathā writing has probably to be seen only as an individual inspiration for contemporary writers rather than a large-scale impact, not least because of the lack of popularity of the collection. However, it does reflect rather neatly the general trend of socio-political commitment being introduced to Indian literature in the period around Independence.

The other non-Hindi writer who is regarded as influential in the laghukathā context is Khalil Gibran who, as a Lebanese author who emigrated to the United States in 1912, wrote in Arabic and English and became highly popular through his brief mystical and philosophical prose writings.⁷⁰ With regard to the laghukathā it is important

⁶⁷ V. Sonī, ‘Maṇṭo kī choṭī kathāem’, in: S.N. Keśav et.al. (eds.), *Kathālocan*, Delhi [1993?], p. 87.

⁶⁸ Cf. Kaśyap, ‘Maṇṭo kī laghukathāem’ and Puškaraṇā, ‘Do-ṭūk bāt’, both in: Puškaraṇā (ed.), *Maṇṭo*, p. 45 and no page.

⁶⁹ Flemming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 72.

⁷⁰ Cf. Joseph P. Ghougassian, *Khalil Gibran: Wings of Thought; The People’s Philosopher*, New York 1973, pp. 37-57.

to notice the emphasis the biographers Bushrui and Jenkins put on Gibran's 'deep social concern' and rebellion against 'fanatism, extremism, and injustice in all its forms' - expressed especially in his posthumous collection *The Wanderer* (1932) but also in *The Madman* (1918)⁷¹, the two collections which are also considered most significant within the laghukathā debate. *The Madman* is usually claimed to have made its impact via Bhadrīnāth Sudarśan's collection *Jharoke*, 'Oriel windows', (1947-48) which, according to Ś. Kirāṇ, is one of the earliest books to assemble laghukathā-like texts. Two of Sudarśan's stories were later incorporated in the anthology *San̄ket*, 'Sign', the first compilation that contained a special section of laghukathās, published in 1956 by Aśk, Kamleśvar and Mārkaṇḍeya.⁷²

It is however only a minority of critics and writers who regard the texts of *The Madman* and *The Wanderer* as real laghukathās: the prevalent opinion is that Gibran's little stories are only 'laghukathā-like' (laghukathātmak) and closer to the lyrical prose-song (gadyagīt). Unlike the laghukathā which uses a plain narrative prose style, Gibran's texts are written in poetic and emotive language. Another significant difference is pointed out by Bhagīrath when he draws attention to the mysticism of the messages conveyed in Gibran's writing, an aspect also mentioned by Bushrui and Jenkins who emphasise the influence not only of Nietzsche but also of Sufi parables on the texts of *The Madman*.⁷³ In spite of Gibran's critical attitude towards 'malevolence, hypocrisy, injustice, conformity, ambition, blindness and puritanism' which is expressed in his writings with poignancy and sometimes 'mordant irony'⁷⁴, the reader is, on the whole, presented with a subtler and more universal outlook on life than in the modern laghukathā which tends to communicate its mostly topical themes more bluntly. An example is Gibran's story *The Philosopher and the Cobbler* which Kaśyap counts as one of the few real 'laghukathās' in *The Wanderer*:

There came to a cobbler's shop a philosopher with worn shoes. And the philosopher said to the cobbler, 'Please mend my shoes.'

⁷¹ Cf. Suheil Bushrui & Joe Jenkins, *Khalil Gibran; Man and Poet; A New Biography*, Oxford 1998, pp. 12, 15 & 170 f.

⁷² Cf. Ś. Kirāṇ, 'Samkālīn...', p. 174 & 176.

⁷³ Cf. Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā kā śilp aur preṣaṇīyatā kā savāl', in: S. Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: bahas*, p. 108, and Bushrui & Jenkins, *Khalil Gibran*, p. 170.

⁷⁴ Cf. Bushrui & Jenkins, *Khalil Gibran*, p. 170.

And the cobbler said, 'I am mending another man's shoes now, and there are still other shoes to patch before I can come to yours. But leave your shoes here, and wear this other pair today, and come tomorrow for your own.'

The philosopher was indignant, and he said, 'I wear no shoes that are not mine own'.

And the cobbler said, 'Well then, are you in truth a philosopher, and cannot enfold your feet with the shoes of another man? Upon this very street there is another cobbler who understands philosophers better than I do. Go you to him for mending'.⁷⁵

The text illustrates nicely the above-described characteristics of Gibran's writing which distinguish it from the *laghukathā*: the poetic language manifests itself in vocabulary and diction which have an archaic touch and echo a biblical style in the use of main clauses beginning with 'and'. In other texts this feature is even more distinct, e.g. when the clauses are co-ordinated, as in 'And the poet read his poem. And it was a long poem'.⁷⁶ The message of our text - the common man is wiser and less narrow-minded than the intellectual who is not ready to 'wear another pair of shoes', i.e. see beyond the limits of his own *weltanschauung* - is of a rather philosophical nature; it has more depth and universality than *laghukathās* which deal with the criticism of the superficiality and irresponsibility of the modern intellectual. Unlike the representatives of intelligentsia preferred in the *laghukathā* - mostly teachers and professors - Gibran presents a philosopher whose responsibility is not limited to the education of the future generation but encompasses the explanation of the world to the world.

The translation and publication of Gibran's texts in *laghukathā*-related media has been going on since the transitional period between Independence and the 1970s. It confirms the continuing keen interest in his writings and the model-character ascribed to them by contemporary *laghukathā* writers, but on the whole, the tone and style of Gibran's works differ considerably from the modern *laghukathā*. A similarity between his texts and the modern *laghukathā* is to be found in the pointed structure of the plot which develops towards an often ironic ending in the last sentence, yet this feature is also characteristic of other genres and can thus not be seen as having developed in relation to Gibran's works. Individual *laghukathā* writers will have absorbed Gibran's parables and sayings and let them influence their general outlook on literature, but the impact must be seen as irregular, since the philosophical and emotive approach has clearly not been adopted in the modern *laghukathā*.

⁷⁵ Khalil Gibran. *The Wanderer: His Parables and His Sayings*, New York 1944, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Cf. *The Two Poems*, in: Gibran, *Wanderer*, pp. 64 f.

2.3.3 The 1950s and 60s: first collections and the emergence of the term 'laghukathā'

We have seen that until around 1947 only individual texts appeared that can be regarded as preliminary steps towards the development of the modern laghukathā. Interestingly, the situation appears to have not changed much during the first decade after Independence, although several books published during the 1950s are repeatedly claimed to be the 'first' laghukathā collections. Examples are Ānand Mohan Avasthī's *Bandhanom kī rakṣā*, 'Protection of bonds' (1950) or Rāmprasād Rāvī's *Mere kathā guru kā kahnā hai*, 'My story-master says' (1958), but texts by these two writers still show proximity to the short story or the traditional genres rather than the modern form of the laghukathā: Avasthī's title story, for example, reminds us strongly of the kahānī in terms of tone and structure of plot and a lot of Rāvī's texts are reminiscent of didactic parables and fables.⁷⁷ Considering the significance of the journalistic landscape for the development of modern Hindi prose forms, it has to be assumed that writings compiled in such collections had also previously been published in journalistic media - a suggestion which is confirmed by Rameś Śrīvāstav's claim that after 1950 hundreds of newspapers and magazines tried to promote the laghukathā but failed to succeed because of a general confusion about what distinguished the laghukathā from anecdotes, satires or short stories.⁷⁸ Still, it is highly questionable whether there were attempts to advance the 'laghukathā' as early as the beginning of the 1950s, since no concept of the genre existed at the time. Nevertheless, Śrīvāstav's statement proves the continuing importance of the journalistic media for the emergence of the laghukathā.

It was during the 1960s that the laghukathā-typical trend of combining the traditional short pointed text with a distinctly modern content, tone and structure grew stronger. The principle of the laghukathā can for example be seen more distinctly in Śyāmānand Śāstrī's collection *Pāṣāṇ aur pañchī*, 'Stone and bird', which was pub-

⁷⁷ The primary sources as given in the text have not been available but a range of the authors' relevant texts are published in various laghukathā-related anthologies, e.g. in Balrām (ed.), *Bhāratīya laghukathā koś*, 2 vols., Delhi 1990 (*BLKK 1 & 2*), Balrām (ed.), *Hindī laghukathā koś*, New Delhi 1988 (*HLKK*) or Candel (ed.), *Prakārāntar*.

⁷⁸ Cf. Śrīvāstav, 'Laghukathā: ek avalokan'. in: Nandal Hitaiṣī (ed.), *Ātānk*, Allahabad 1983, p. 99.

lished in 1962; besides, according to R.K. Śarmā, magazines and newspapers like the *Kādambinī*, *Vīr Arjun* or *Dainik Hindī Milāp* now started to publish ‘laghukathās’ regularly.⁷⁹ In the critical debate laghukathā collections other than *Pāṣāṇ aur pañchī* are also mentioned, but unfortunately the period of the 1960s is not very well documented and the relevant primary sources are not available. Presumably, many of the laghukathā-typical features as they appear in several of Śāstrī’s texts are also to be found in other collections which are named but not exemplified in the critical debate.

The importance of these decades, however, lies not only in the changing nature of the texts but also in the fact that writers and editors began to identify a particular form of literature as ‘laghukathās’, thus coining a new term and initiating the idea of common features characteristic of a certain kind of text described by this term. This development is reflected in the usage of the word ‘laghukathā’ in different contexts. While some of the early mentions in the late 1940s and early 1950s seem to be of little relevance since they do not exhibit a particular generic concept behind the term but rather use it as a general phrase meaning ‘little tale’, an essay of Bhraṅg Tupkarī in his story-collection *Paṅkhuṛiyām*, ‘Petals’, (1956) appears to show first signs of a conscious usage of ‘laghukathā’. The essay’s title ‘The short story and the laghukathā’ (*Kahānī aur laghukathā*) suggests an attempt to distinguish the two forms on a generic basis, and Akhilendrapāl Siṃh states that the essay itself shows that ‘Bhraṅg Tupkarī was aware of the concept of the laghukathā’.⁸⁰ Another indication of the developing distinction between a ‘laghukathā’ and other narrative forms is the fact that editors of anthologies started to introduce particular sections for the laghukathā. According to Ś. Kiraṅ this trend had its starting point in the aforementioned compilation *Saṅket* by Aśk et.al., which was also published in 1956. Also important was the year 1967 when, according to Bhagīrath, the laghukathā-writer Kamal Gupta used the term ‘laghukathā’ in his literary magazine *Kahānīkār*. Unfortunately, Bhagīrath does not elucidate the context of its usage but his claim underlines the general trend of the growing awareness of the laghukathā as a new literary form with generically determinative features. The final steps of establishing an intellectual concept behind this genre were taken in the early 1970s.

⁷⁹ Cf. Rameś Kumār Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā: svarūp evam itihās*, Delhi 1989, p. 52; unfortunately, Śarmā does not indicate whether the term ‘laghukathā’ was used here.

⁸⁰ Cited in Bhagīrath, ‘Hindī laghukathā...’, p. 156.

2.4 Modern laghukathās

With the beginning of the 1970s the modern form of the laghukathā began to take shape against the background of an atmosphere highly charged with political and societal tension, which ultimately led to the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975. In the early 1970s the Indian economy was ridden by inflation, high expenditures for the Bangladesh crisis and the steep rise of oil prices in late 1973. Results included mounting unemployment and the general disappointment of the public. The government was accused of being inefficient and corrupt, people demonstrated and were eager to show their discontent.⁸¹ Extreme socio-political conditions demanded expression and furthered a committed attitude amongst the intelligentsia in general and a new generation of laghukathā-writers in particular. These new writers entered the scene in the 1970s and shaped the genre according to their needs. It will be seen below how the constantly rising interest in the new genre is reflected in the publication of anthologies of laghukathās from 1974 and in the beginning of a critical discussion about the theoretical background of the laghukathā.

2.4.1 The 1970s: the evolution of a new genre

Although anecdotal and traditional narrative elements were still clearly recognisable in many laghukathās written at the beginning of the 1970s and would never completely leave the genre as we will see later, the new generation of writers was quickly beginning to focus on a less humorous and more shocking tone, thus giving the laghukathā one of its distinctive characteristics. Born approximately between 1945-1955 the first generation of laghukathā-writers were in their early twenties when they started to explore the possibilities of a new genre in order to deal with socio-political reality, beginning cautiously but soon finding a style of frank expression.⁸² The typical twisted and shocking ending, for example, can be seen in Kuldīp Jain's

⁸¹ Cf. Percival Spear, *A History of India, Volume 2: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, London 1990, pp. 265 ff.

⁸² The first generation of laghukathā-writers includes Mālatī Mahāvar (*1954), Satīś Dube (*1942), Kṛṣṇa Kamleś (*1944), Balrām (*1951), Bhagīrath (*1944), Devīprakāś Hemant, (*1945), Saroj Dvivedī (*1947), Jagdīś Kaśyap (*1949), Balrām Agravāl (*1953), Rameś Battarā (*1952-1998), Kuldīp Jain (*1953), Kamal Coprā (*1955), Añjanā Anil (*~1955), Bhārat Yāyāvar (*1954) and Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā (*1943).

first laghukathā *Duśmanī ke bāvjūd*, ‘Enmity notwithstanding’ (1973), in Mahāvar’s *Aisā bhī*, ‘Just so’ (1974) or Puṣkaraṇā’s *Manovṛtti*, ‘State of mind’ (1976).⁸³ *Duśmanī ke bāvjūd* illustrates nicely how the first laghukathās had not yet emancipated themselves from the style used in traditional short prose narratives. The text begins with two paragraphs of a rather detailed account of the general situation - two neighbours who are locked in hateful conflict - which serves to create a context for the action to follow in the third paragraph:

[...]

Then one day something happened that I could not have imagined. Some rowdies armed with sticks came to our quarter and challenged that old fellow who was a Muslim. When the other old man heard that some rowdies from outside had come to crush his mortal enemy, he put a hand to his forehead and began to think.

Suddenly he had an idea. He quickly got his ancestral, well-oiled stick out and ran towards his mortal enemy’s house.

When the rowdies saw that another armed man was challenging them, they became furious and let their real victim off the hook to turn on that man. After all the rowdies were convinced that he was dead they scattered.

The man who had died was a Hindu.⁸⁴

As a laghukathā the text is still ‘flawed’ to a certain degree: the initial two paragraphs are unnecessarily long and too descriptive for a laghukathā and the identification of one of the two men as a Muslim comes somewhat unmotivated and thus indicates the outcome rather bluntly. Yet, Jain provides the story with a modern laghukathā-typical closing which is devoid of all humour and must have been thought-provoking for the early 70s’ reader because it relates directly to a subject matter of particular importance during a period which saw, in the aftermath of the Indian-Pakistani war, millions of Bangladeshi refugees streaming into India, bringing with them ‘the usual pitiful tales’ and communalist tensions.⁸⁵ Although communalism remains an important issue in the Indian context and texts like the above-quoted keep their validity even when taken out of their immediate temporal context, the laghukathās of the 70s showed an increasingly distinct political topicality, as, for example, *Uchāle hue nāre*, ‘Tossed up slogans’⁸⁶, (1972) which ironically deals with Indira Gandhi’s 1971 election slogan ‘Garībī haṭāo’ (Remove poverty) and her sub-

⁸³ In Dube (ed.), *Āthverī daśak*, p. 128; L1316, *ibid.*, p. 100; and L1877, in: Balrām & Maniṣrāy (eds.), *KN2*, p. 165, respectively.

⁸⁴ In: Balrām & Maniṣrāy (eds.), *KN2*, p. 31.

⁸⁵ Cf. Spear, *History*, p. 262.

⁸⁶ By Kṛṣṇa Kamleś, in: Balrām & Maniṣrāy (eds.), *KN2*, pp. 24 f.

sequent failure to keep her promises. The importance and recognition of the political voice that the laghukathā acquired within the first years of the 1970s becomes evident from the fact that during Emergency rule from 1975 till 1977 a lot of laghukathās were strictly censored - writers and editors were forced to publish political laghukathās in magazines and journals with the relevant passages crossed out with black bars.

The modern disturbed and disturbing tone of the laghukathā, however, was not only prominent in political laghukathās but also in those committed to social or societal matters - *Aisā bhī* (1974), for example, shows a girl being expelled from the house by her father because she has become pregnant without being married. The last sentence reveals the truth behind the situation in the shocking manner typical of the laghukathā. Upon being asked by her friend who the father of her child was, the girl answers: 'The man who has thrown me out of the house... my father'. Next to the provocative ending this text furthermore shows the dialogic style characteristic for a large number of modern laghukathās.⁸⁷

The new style thus combined the concise form of the anecdote - the descriptivity of kathā-literature was increasingly avoided - with a disturbing and provocative rather than humorous tone and message. Where the anecdotal ending was retained, the structure of the plot, the employment of protagonists and usage of other literary means showed a distinctly modern appearance and the commitment of the author was clearly discernible, as has also been seen in Maṅṭo's collection *Siyāḥ hāsiye*.

However, it was not only a new style but also a growing awareness of this style which characterised the early 1970s. The laghukathā as a genre made headway when writers began to discuss the subject theoretically, coming more and more to the conclusion that the anecdotal and didactic tone were to be avoided. The laghukathā was supposed to be 'shocking' and provocative. The start of the discussion can be seen as a real breakthrough of the genre, which had now come to the point where it was recognised by the writers as a new literary form. Among the first theoretical works to be published were an editorial by Jain and Bhagīrath and two essays by Kṛṣṇa Kamleś

⁸⁷ Cf. section 4.4.1 'Outer form', pp. 131 ff., and 4.5.2 'Modes and tones', pp. 201 ff.

and Jagdīs Kaśyap, all in *Laghukathā: guphāoṃ se maidan kī or*, ‘The Laghukathā: from the caves into the open’ (1974); they were followed by other works, mostly in the form of introductions or editorials.

Another indicator for the evolution of the laghukathā as a genre in its own right is the publication of laghukathā anthologies.⁸⁸ The first anthology containing exclusively laghukathās was the aforementioned *Laghukathā: guphāoṃ se maidan kī or*, published by Rameś Jain and Bhagīrath in 1974. It was followed by an increasing number of similar compilations. Now as before, most of the laghukathās collected in these anthologies had been published earlier in various magazines and newspapers whose increasing interest in the genre can be seen in the rising number of special issues on the laghukathā from the year 1973 onwards, when for example the magazines *Dīpśikhā* and *Sārikā* as well as the daily *Svadeś* published the first laghukathā issues.⁸⁹ Later, several of these special issues were made into books. Besides, from 1973 various small literary magazines (*laghu patrikāeṃ*) began to be published which were devoted to the laghukathā, e.g. *Diśā* (Satīśrāj Puškaraṇā), *Kathābimb* (Mañjuśrī), *Āghāt*, later: *Laghu Āghāt* (Vikram Sonī), *Kṣitij* (Satīś Rāthī) or *Minīyug* (Jagdīs Kaśyap).⁹⁰

An important fact is furthermore that the laghukathā was recognised by the intelligentsia outside the relevant circles: in 1974 the Hindi Department of the University of Meerut acknowledged the laghukathā as an independent genre by making it part of its curriculum, and several other universities followed its example.⁹¹ This helped to broaden the theoretical discussion by contributing evaluative views of recipients who were not themselves laghukathā-writers.

The beginning of the 1970s thus saw the introduction of a new style that could reflect the societal circumstances and at the same time allow the writers to express their

⁸⁸ Cf. the fourth period of Ś. Kiraṇ’s categorisation, section 2.1 ‘State of research, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Cf. Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Samkālīn...’, pp. 183 f., and Bhagīrath, ‘Hindī laghukathā...’, p. 157; the most important magazines to have published laghukathās from the early 1970s are: *Dīpśikhā*, *Antaryātrā*, *Atirikt*, *Tārikā*, *Viṇā* and *Sārikā*; newspapers include *Svadeś*, *Navbhārat Tāims*, *Dainik Milāp* and *Dikṣetar*. Cf. Rāthī, ‘Laghukathā sāhitya kā vikās...’, p. 75.

⁹⁰ Cf. Rāthī, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Cf. Kaśyap, ‘Hindī laghukathā...’, p. 43.

commitment. In the years to follow, the theoretical discussion on the laghukathā would go into more detail, as different approaches began to take shape, showing that the genre gradually established itself.

2.4.2 Establishment of the laghukathā as an independent genre

From the second half of the 1970s short prose pieces under the heading ‘laghukathā’ were regularly published in most of the important Hindi magazines and newspapers, and the number of laghukathā collections and anthologies rose continually. Compilations titled *Pratinidhi laghukathāem*, ‘Representative laghukathās’ or *Śreṣṭh laghukathāem*, ‘The best laghukathās’, show that the genre had reached a level of recognition that allowed publishers to select and judge texts as ‘representative’ or exceptionally good; in 1979 the first retrospective anthology *Āṭhvern daśak kī laghukathāem*, ‘Laghukathās from the 1970s’ came out, recapitulating that ‘the Hindi laghukathā of the 1970s, as a new compelling and efficacious means of expression, ... has proved to be a powerful genre of narrative literature’.⁹²

The 1980s saw the continuation of the trends set in the late 70s: the publication of laghukathās in various journalistic print media and a growing number of individual collections and anthologies.⁹³ It has to be borne in mind that in spite of the steep increase of laghukathā-related books, the most important environment for the first publications of laghukathās remained newspapers and magazines; compilations were based on these earlier publications and did usually not contain original texts. The most important anthologies of the decade include *Hālāt*, ‘Circumstances’ (1981), *Hastākṣār*, ‘Signature’ (1982), *Kathānāmā 1 & 2*, ‘Narratives 1 & 2’ (1984 & 85), *Tatpāścāt*, ‘Thereafter’ (1986), *Hindī laghukathā-koś*, ‘Anthology of Hindi laghukathās’ and *Hariyāṇā kī laghukathā-saṃsār*, ‘The laghukathās of Hariyana’ (both 1988), *Kathādeś*, ‘World of tales’ (1989) and *Bhāratīya laghukathā-koś*,

⁹² Ś. Kirān, ‘Kathā-lekhan...’, p. 3.

⁹³ While in the late 70s approximately 1-2 relevant collections or anthologies were published per year, the numbers rose during the 80s to an average of around 11 per year, i.e. from around 4-5 during the first three years up to 18-19 in 1986 and 1989. Cf. Puṣkaraṇā, ‘Hindī-laghukathā kī vikās-yātrā merṃ sām̐pādit laghukathā-saṅkalanorṃ kī yogdān’, in: Rūp Devguṇ (ed.), *Hindī kī saśakt laghukathāem*, Delhi 1991, pp. 25-40.

‘Anthology of Indian laghukathās’ (1990).⁹⁴ Besides, during the 80s, anthologies began to emerge which focused on particular subjects. An early example is *Ātañk*, ‘Terror’ (1983), which revolves around the problem of the arbitrariness of the police, especially since the early 1970s and the period of Emergency.⁹⁵ The anthology approaches the topic through general essays on the police, essays on the laghukathā and finally a selection of more than 100 laghukathās dealing with police-related matters.⁹⁶

As far as the publication of laghukathās is concerned, it is furthermore of interest to see that during the late 70s and early 80s media other than print were experimented with in the promotion of the genre and its message: laghukathās were made public through folders, exhibitions of posters, readings on the radio and on TV. These media are dealt with in more detail in the section on the relationship between the writer and the audience.

Corresponding to the gradual growth of the primary literature, the late 1970s also witnessed a growing interest in laghukathā criticism. By the early 80s the discussion about theoretical aspects of the genre was in full swing and writers and critics were trying to determine theoretical standards for the laghukathā. This development is reflected on the one hand in the increasing number of treatises published either in the context of anthologies and magazines or in exclusively theoretical books; on the other hand, it becomes evident from the various conferences and seminars that have been held on the subject of the laghukathā since the late 1970s.

The debates at the first conferences on the laghukathā in Damoh in 1977 and Hoshangabad in 1979 were still concerned with very basic topics, namely the question of a possible delineation of the laghukathā from other short prose genres and the closely related problem of the term ‘laghukathā’ itself. This was necessary because

⁹⁴ The respective editors are: K. Coprā, Ś. Śarmā, Balrām & Maniśrāy, S. Puṣkaraṇā, Balrām, R. Devguṇ & R. Nijāt, S. Puṣkaraṇā and Balrām; for full details see bibliography.

⁹⁵ Ed. by N. Hitaiṣī; for full details see bibliography.

⁹⁶ Other subject matter-related anthologies include *Strī-puruṣ sambandhorṁ kī laghukathāerṁ*, ‘Laghukathās about the relationship between man and woman’, 1992 (ed. S. Sāhñī), *Mahānagar kī laghukathāerṁ*, ‘Laghukathās of the city’, 1993 (ed. S. Sāhñī), *Śikṣā-jagat kī laghukathāerṁ*, ‘Laghukathās on the world of education’ 1993 (eds. R. Devguṇ et.al.) and *Deh-vyāpār kī laghukathāerṁ*, ‘Laghukathās on prostitution’ 1997 (ed. S. Sāhñī).

the texts published under the heading ‘laghukathā’ varied immensely, proving that there was still a general confusion about what the constituents of the genre were or should be. Further confusion was added by the disagreement about what term to use for the new, still undefined genre: according to Puṣkaraṇā, in the early days of the laghukathā, various alternative expressions had been used, as ‘laghuvyaṅgya’, ‘minīkathā’, ‘aṅukathā’, ‘kṣaṇikkathā’, ‘kathānikā’ and ‘sūkṣmakā’ or - with reference to the kahānī - ‘choṭī kahānī’, ‘minī kahānī’ and ‘laghukahānī’.⁹⁷ But while the issue of the definition of an ideal type of laghukathā has still not been sufficiently resolved, the problem of naming was settled rather quickly. By the late 70s it was the distinction between the ‘laghukathā’ and the ‘laghukahānī’ which had become especially important, and after failing to reach an agreement on the question at Damoh in 1977, the Hoshangabad ‘Laghukathā-sammelan’ in 1979 is said to have dealt with the problem more constructively.⁹⁸ The initial discussion about the difference between the two terms has to be seen as an approach to the determination of the nature of the laghukathā rather than a delineation between two existing genres. With the decision in favour of the term ‘laghukathā’, the genre was identified as being related to the traditional ‘kathā’-strand of literature, thus being generally shorter and less ‘intimate’ than a ‘laghukahānī’, which would have suggested a relationship to the short story or ‘kahānī’ in terms of length and also insofar as the depth of the plot was concerned.

Since the first conferences in 1977 and 1979, symposia and seminars have been held regularly at various venues, thereby helping the laghukathā to establish itself as an independent genre: Puṣkaraṇā resumes that not least because of successful conferences ‘the laghukathā, just like other genres, has nowadays found its own significant place within Hindi literature’.⁹⁹ Till today these meetings are attended by established as well as new laghukathā writers, and in addition to debating on theoretical issues they also serve as a forum for reading and discussing texts.

⁹⁷ Cf. S. Puṣkaraṇā, ‘Hindī-laghukathā kī gauravśālī paramparā’ and ‘Hindī laghukathā merī samīkṣā kī samasyāerī evaṁ samādhān’, both in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathadeś*, pp. 8-9 & 638-639.

⁹⁸ Cf. Dube, ‘Choṭī kathāoṁ kā lambā safar’, in: Balrām & Maṇīśrāy (eds.), *KN3*, pp. 164-165, and Puṣkaraṇā, *Hindī-laghukathā kī vikās-yātrā merī sammelanorī...*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Puṣkaraṇā, *ibid.*

The process of the establishment of the laghukathā as a genre in its own right can be seen as completed by the early 1980s. The new literary form had been given a name and had become a regular feature of various public media in modern India. The objectives of the symposia on the genre after the Hoshangabad conference therefore gradually changed from focusing on basic questions to discussing individual aspects of the laghukathā and promoting it more widely. The following protocol of the first meeting of the executive committee of the All-India Laghukathā Forum (Akhil Bhāratiya Laghukathā-Mañc) in 1989 illustrates this development:

1. Encouragement should be given to the translation of laghukathās from various Indian languages into Hindi. In this way the translation of Hindi laghukathās into Indian languages should also be supported.
2. A leading role should be accomplished in the direction of staging laghukathās in the form of dramas.
3. Critical writing on the laghukathā should be enforced.
4. New laghukathā writers should be encouraged. Through various advisory meetings good and aware writers should be brought to light.
5. Within a period of three months the creation of a constitution of the Forum should be brought to a successful conclusion.
6. A laghukathā forum on a regional basis should be established quickly. Membership etc. should be arranged.
7. Priority should be given to the publication of a central journal in order to provide for a dialogue between laghukathā-writers.¹⁰⁰

The protocol clearly shows a shift of interest: it is the dialogue between the writers and the promotion of the genre that are now emphasised, a trend that the laghukathā shares with many other established contemporary genres. However, a problem which has remained unresolved till today is the ‘definition’ of an ideal-typical laghukathā. Although the committed and shocking style that evolved during the early 1970s is generally favoured by writers and critics - in the late 1990s a Bihar-based group of writers even formed a regional movement called ‘camatkārvād’, ‘shock-ism’ or ‘revelation-ism’ - many texts published as laghukathās still show anecdotal elements and the variety of themes is remarkable. The failure to come to an agreement in the matter is largely due to the problem that the main body of criticism on the genre has been undertaken by the writers themselves who tend to promote their individual approaches rather than describe the laghukathā ‘objectively’ from an outside point-of-

¹⁰⁰ *Āyojan: Akhil Bhāratiya Laghukathā Mañc, 11-12 Farvarī, Bareli-Goṣṭhī: ek riport*, ed. Sukeś Sāhni et.al, Bareli 1989, Catur satra, p. 6.

view. The general reluctance to allow a variety of possible types of laghukathās is especially problematic because any genre, in the process of its development, adjusts to new requirements, especially when it attempts to mirror contemporary society as the laghukathā does. Variety, as it is typical of the by now well-established laghukathā, is therefore a strength rather than a weakness and must be seen an indicator of the maturity of the genre.

3 The laghukathā writers

It has been said earlier that one characteristic of the modern laghukathā is a certain degree of socio-political commitment. Consequently, the authorial attitude towards the laghukathā plays a major if not determinative role when it comes to defining an 'ideal type' of laghukathā. The following sections will therefore investigate how far the laghukathā writers consciously and explicitly plead the cause for such a committed attitude, and what their ideas of the writer-reader relationship are. As a frame of reference for the determination of the authorial ideas it will be useful to know that as far as education and profession are concerned the majority of the laghukathā writers belong to what, in European terms, may be called the middle stratum: more than 90% of the writers have higher degrees like the BA, BCom, MA, MSc, PhD, LLB, or different diplomas, and their professions range accordingly from scientists to teachers, lecturers, doctors, lawyers and journalists to civil servants.¹⁰¹ Although several writers have specialised in the laghukathā, only very few have confined their writing to this genre exclusively; other chosen genres are short stories, novels and poetry, and quite a few writers are also involved in laghukathā criticism.

Although laghukathā-related activities, i.e. the creation, publication and discussion of laghukathās, extend over most of the Hindi-speaking area of Northern India, a certain number of places are of special significance because they are closely connected to the names of particular influential laghukathā writers, critics or publishers. Thus, some centres of laghukathā-writing with their major representatives are Sirsa, Hariyana (Rūp Devguṇ, Rāj Kumār Nijāt), Delhi (Balrām, Kamal Copṛā, Madhudīp, Viṣṇu Prabhākar), Ghaziabad and Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh (Jagdīs Kaśyap and

¹⁰¹ The information about the writers' backgrounds and their attitude towards laghukathā writing has been drawn from three different sources: 1. brief biographical paragraphs on the writers given in various collections and anthologies; 2. prefaces, essays and authorial comments; 3. interviews with 24 writers conducted over a period of three months in India at the beginning of 1999.

Of the 24 writers interviewed, 13 filled in informal questionnaires which included questions on their personal background as well as their attitude towards literature in general and the laghukathā in particular (Mukeś Jain 'Pāras', Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāṃsu', Aśok Varmā, Madhudīp, Balrām Agravāl, Mukeś Śarmā, Narendra Kumār, Kamal Copṛā, Rāj Kumār Nijāt, Satīś Dube, Sureś Śarmā, Viṣṇu Prabhākar); 1 writer returned a questionnaire without being interviewed (Pūran Mudgal); and 10 writers agreed to a meeting but did not return the questionnaires (Rameś Candra Goyal, Dāmodar Khaṛṣe, Amarnāth Caudharī 'Abz', Jagdīs Kaśyap, Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy, Rūp Devguṇ, Satīś Rāthī, Sukeś Sāhnī, Surendra Varmā, Sūryakant Nāgar).

Sukeś Sāhnī respectively), Indore, Madhya Pradesh (Satīś Dube), Patna and Bokaro, Bihar (Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā and Amarnāth Caudharī ‘Abz’ respectively).¹⁰² It is interesting to notice that in spite of generally good communications between the different laghukathā writers, a certain underlying groupism can be detected, which seems to be based either on conflicting individual approaches to the genre or on a distinct competitiveness between the more important figures of the scene. Mutual criticism and animosities, however, remain on a personal level and do not seem to influence the genre on a creative plane. Distinctive ‘schools’ of laghukathā-writing as proposed by R.M. Trivedī ‘Bandhu’ are rejected by most writers and are, indeed, difficult to determine.¹⁰³ It will be seen below to what extent different levels of commitment may serve as a possible distinction between different factions.

3.1 The authors’ intentions

Although the term ‘commitment’ has been used repeatedly to indicate the attitude of the writers of modern laghukathās, it has to be handled with caution since the expression is often associated with explicitly ideological - especially Marxist or Progressive - writing. Progressive literature - whose forum in India since 1936 has been, above all, the AIPWA (or later PWA) - is characterised by the fundamental belief that ‘literature is an instrument of social transformation’¹⁰⁴. Progressive writers are concerned with social realities or ‘the actualities of life’¹⁰⁵, they reflect problems and issues of the contemporary society and, in Mulk Raj Anand’s words, ‘face the human predicament through imaginative writings, [...] invoke the rights of Man [and sup-

¹⁰² Naturally neither this list nor the later given catalogue of interviewed writers is exhaustive. The names given here present only a small selection of influential laghukathā writers. Alongside these representative figures, we also find other important laghukathā writers in each area who are, however, not as prominent in the scene.

¹⁰³ Cf. Rājendra Mohan Trivedī ‘Bandhu’, ‘Laghukathā: kuch samasyāem evaṁ samādhān’, in: S. Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: sarjñā*, p. 144; Bandhu suggests a writer-related concept, i.e. a Puṣkaraṇā-, Sonī- and Kaśyap- school (skūl); S. Puṣkaraṇā, however, does not endorse this approach.

¹⁰⁴ *Commitment! P.W.A.'s International Conference held on 3rd & 4th August 1985*, ed. by S.A. Kazmi, London 1985, p. 137.

¹⁰⁵ English version of the Lucknow Manifesto, cit. in Carlo Coppola, ‘The All-India Progressive Writers’ Association: The Early Phases’, pp. 39-41, in: C. Coppola (ed.), *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, Delhi 1988 (1st edition 1974), pp. 1-41.

port] liberation of all the areas under Imperialist rule'¹⁰⁶. Anand nicely summarises the Progressive attitude towards art when he states that in 1936 the authors associated with the newly emerging AIPWA 'vowed to write and live in action'. This distinctively committed approach to literature is echoed even more explicitly in the declaration on the PWA's International Conference in 1985 where attending writers stated: 'We are conscious of the fact that commitment alone can authenticate our existence as human beings and as writers'¹⁰⁷. The conference's motto 'Commitment!' indicates once more the close connection between the term and the Marxist-ideological background.

The laghukathā writers' theoretical approach to their genre as represented in the various essays, prefaces and commentaries, on the other hand, shows only a moderate ideological colouring. Although authorial statements about the subject matter, purpose and effect of the laghukathā are strongly reminiscent of leftist ideas about the relationship between art and society, a truly Progressive register cannot be made out; phrases like 'class distinction' (varg bhed) or 'exploiter and exploited' (śoṣak aur śoṣit) do occur, but they never dominate the critical discourse and do not indicate an underlying Marxist concept. This might suggest that it is inappropriate to use the expression 'commitment' to describe the writers' attitude. Yet, 'committed' writing needs not necessarily and exclusively be characterised by a Marxist viewpoint, it can also be understood on a more general basis as a non-ideological dedication to the advocacy of beliefs which aim for social reform¹⁰⁸. If the relevant Progressive manifestos and declarations are stripped of their ideological jargon, the typical features which remain are a strong commitment to social reform: an interest in the socio-political conditions of society, a concern especially for the 'common man' - who is not necessarily to be defined in terms of class struggle - and the attitude that literature may serve as an agent to raise the readers' awareness of the social realities surrounding them. This also provides a relatively accurate description of the laghukathā writers' basic attitudes, without, however, suggesting an explicitly Progressive ideology

¹⁰⁶ Mulk Raj Anand in a speech at the PWA's conference in 1985, presenting the essence of the PWA's first manifesto (1935). In: M.R. Anand, 'Let us make the world our own village', In: *Commitment!*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Commitment!*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. the definition of 'commitment' in J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Oxford & Cambridge, Mass. 1993 (3rd revised edition, 1st edition 1977), p. 173.

behind the texts. It will be seen in the following that it is appropriate to consider the majority of laghukathā writers to be socially committed without their being politically Progressive.

The first area of similarity between laghukathās and Progressive literature is the subject matter with which the texts are to be concerned. Like Progressive writing, the laghukathā, according to the majority of writers, is expected to deal with themes of ‘social significance’ (sāmājik mahattva), which means that they should first of all deal with the ‘reality of life’ (jīvan kā yathārth). The expression of a ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ is a central objective of the writers when they outline the laghukathā’s themes. Like Progressive artists who lament the escapism of spiritualist or idealist literature, most laghukathā writers look with disfavour upon works whose themes lack contemporaneousness, usefulness and a sense of reality: ‘a literature which does not revolve around ordinary human life, a literature which is not the expression of reality and not the messenger of the sentiments of the people, is a hollow [thoṭā] literature’.¹⁰⁹ It is man in his social and societal existence who stands at the centre of the laghukathā. Accordingly, the ‘truth’ of the subject matter is understood as a part of *social* truth or reality (‘Ais[ā] sac jo sāmājik satya kā aṅg ho’)¹¹⁰, which is characterised by social, political, economic, religious or mental disruptions (visaṅgatiyārn).¹¹¹ Correspondingly, Ś. Kiraṇ sees the laghukathā as a camera documenting every subtle truth of life: ‘it has the power to create an exact picture of critical moments, it successfully deals a blow to those traditional values of life that have become senseless’.¹¹² Socio-political disruptions, the daily problems of the common man in society, a loss of values and a clinging to outdated norms thus stand at the centre of the laghukathā writers’ interest.¹¹³ Unlike Progressive literature,

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bhagīrath, ‘Hindī laghukathā...’, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ K. Copṛā, ‘Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāem’, in: Hitaiṣī (ed.), *Ātaṅk*, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Cf. e.g. R.K. Nijāt, ‘Laghukathā ke vartmān pariprekṣya meṁ iskī ādī [sic] aur bhāvī sthiti’, in: Puṣkaraṇā, *Kathādeś*, p. 225, S. Puṣkaraṇā, ‘Hindī-laghukathā kī gauravśālī paramparā’, *ibid.*, p. 8, and M.P. Jain, ‘Laghukathā: śilp aur racnā vidhān’, in: Jain & Kaśyap (eds.), *Choṭī baṛī bāterī*, p. 20.

¹¹² Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Kathā-lekhan...’, p. 3.

¹¹³ The laghukathā presents itself, here, as a true child of its times: L. Rosenstein has demonstrated that similar trends characterise various short story movements of the 1970s and 80s which reflect an increasing feeling of social responsibility among the writers. Especially the programme of the ‘Samāntar Kahānī’ shows significant similarities to the laghukathā: as Rosenstein shows, followers of this movement, which was initiated by Kamleśvar in the early 1970s, focused on aspects also central for laghukathā writers, namely the ‘truth of life’ of the ‘ordinary man’, presented in simple

however, the *laghukathā* does not represent these disruptions as a result of specifically capitalist exploitation but rather as a tension between individuals or between the common man and the powerful, the rich, the politically and morally corrupt of any provenance: an ideological identification is neither attempted in the theoretical debate nor in the primary texts.¹¹⁴

Parallels between the Progressive artists' and the *laghukathā* writers' intentions can be seen furthermore with regard to the assumed 'purposefulness' of the work of art. The *laghukathā* writers' ideas about the purpose of their genre are a focal point of discussion in the critical debate, not least in order to demarcate the *laghukathā* from other genres. Unlike the anecdote, fable or *bodhkathā*¹¹⁵, whose entertaining or didactic objectives are explicitly rejected by most *laghukathā* writers and critics, the *laghukathā*'s purpose is usually seen to be the communication of a message which should have a powerful, disturbing and preferably awakening effect on the reader (*manuṣya ko jāgrūk karnā, mānavotthānik honā*). A central term in this context is 'caurīk', the sudden start or shock the reader is supposed to experience when he or she reaches the climax of the *laghukathā*, thus being 'awakened'.¹¹⁶ Correspondingly, the images often used to illustrate the nature of this effect are those of a bullet or an arrow hitting their target, i.e. the reader's mind, suddenly and painfully.¹¹⁷ Śarmā summarises the prevalent opinion nicely when he says: 'The *laghukathā*'s intention is not to pamper the reader with a tonic of sweet entertainment but to deal

language. We even find a *laghukathā* anthology which refers directly to this movement: *Samāntar laghukathāem* (eds. Narendra Maurya & Narmadāprasād Upādhyāy, Indore 1977). Yet, this reference remains a singular one and does not achieve programmatic qualities for the *laghukathā* whose socio-politically committed attitude must be seen as a response to the requirements of the times, rather than with the outcome of trends developed in the short story scene. Besides, we will see that it is the combination of such a committed attitude with traditional narrative forms rather than the short story, which is characteristic of the *laghukathā*. Cf. Lucy Rosenstein, 'Sacetan Kahānī and Samāntar Kahānī - Principal Movements in the Hindi Short Story of the 1960s and 1970s', in: *South Asia Research*, vol. 13, no. 2, November 1993, pp. 117-131, esp. pp. 124 ff.

¹¹⁴ The subject matter of the *laghukathā* will be investigated in more detail in section 4.3 on the themes of the texts.

¹¹⁵ In the *laghukathā* debate 'bodhkathā' is normally used in the sense of 'didactic tale'; although writers and critics do not make it entirely clear what type of didactic tale they refer to, the context generally suggests that they have Sanskritic tales and fables like those of the *Pañcatantra* in mind.

¹¹⁶ Other recurring expressions are the English word 'shock' or the Hindi term 'jhakjhorā', ('jolt' or 'violent blow').

¹¹⁷ Cf. for example Ś. Śarmā, 'Laghukathā: śilp aur saṁracnā', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: bahas*, p. 115, Niśāntketu, 'Laghukathā...', p. 99 and , Ś. Puṇatāmbekar, 'Laghukathā ke māndaṇḍ', p. 45. For details on the intended effect cf. section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 139.

his mind a blow, jolt his consciousness, jab its fingers into his eyes and show him reality'.¹¹⁸

This deep concern with the effect of the *laghukathā* reminds us of the Progressive writers' approach to literature when they say that the people, by encountering progressive art forms, 'should be made to reflect life and reality so that we may be able to light our future'.¹¹⁹ Likewise the *laghukathā*'s aim is to make the reader think; he should understand the problems presented in the text and possibly even find solutions: 'The *laghukathā* forces the reader to reach a more responsible understanding and to reflect [on the circumstances] more carefully'¹²⁰, states for example K. Copṛā, while other writers like M.P. Jain or Ś. Kiraṇ demand that the *laghukathā*, by presenting the truth about contemporary society without suggesting a remedy for the problems, should 'activate' the reader towards finding a solution him- or herself (*samādhān ke lie utprerit karnā*).¹²¹ The phrase 'utprerit karnā' used in this context means not only 'to activate' but also 'to catalyse' - a *laghukathā* is supposed to work as a catalyst, a medium which provokes a reaction through its mere presence. The genre is thus seen by many as a social weapon (*sāmājīk hathiyār*) - an instrument of criticism playing a social role (*sāmājīk bhūmikā*) - and the *laghukathā* writer as having a 'mission' (*miśan*), namely to point out the sufferings of human society and make the reader understand them.¹²²

In their concern to give 'a crushing blow to [...] disruptions'¹²³ and to produce a strong and awakening effect on the reader, the majority of *laghukathā* writers can doubtlessly be seen as committed. The general aims of Progressive writers and *laghukathā* writers are therefore of similar appearance: both want literature to play a social role, both want it to be used as a means to fight the wrongs in society, both are deeply engaged in communicating a message to the reader in order to provoke a reaction. Yet, unlike Progressive literature which is based on the concepts of class struggle, the fight of socialism against capitalism, and a brotherhood of all men, the

¹¹⁸ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī Laghukathā*, p. 43.

¹¹⁹ Coppola, 'The All-India Progressive Writers' Association...', p. 10 (Hams version / 9).

¹²⁰ Copṛā, 'Laghukathā: sarvādhīk sambhāvanāpūrṇ vidhā', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathādeś*, p. 69.

¹²¹ Cf. Jain, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 20.

¹²² Cf. Kaśyap, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 38 and Jain, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 17.

¹²³ A. Caudharī 'Abz', 'Laghukathā: ek vicār', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathādeś*, p. 52.

laghukathā is free from most ideological ballast, and its approach is humanitarian rather than politically Progressive. This is corroborated by the fact that none of the interviewed writers considered the laghukathā a political genre. Therefore, the common people to whom the laghukathā writers are committed are not only ‘those who stand at the mill gate to beg for their wages; those who hunger for land; those who sleep on the footpath’¹²⁴, they include members from all strata of society. Like Maṅṭo’s ‘committed anecdotes’ the laghukathā aims at taking sides with those who suffer from social or societal disruptions, irrespective of religion or status.

All in all, it can be said that the explicitly committed approach as described above is characteristic of the large majority of laghukathā writers. There are also, however, writers who do not express their views as distinctively, but their commitment to socio-political matters is nevertheless reflected in the choice of their themes which revolve around the same core of social disruptions as those texts by more outspoken writers. A different, more general, use of the genre is made only by a small minority of writers whose main representative is Viṣṇu Prabhākar: seeing the laghukathā against the much broader background of ‘life in its vastness’ (virāṭ jīvan), they consider the genre a mirror of human existence, thus allowing much more philosophical themes of general validity to enter their laghukathās. It will be seen in the literary analysis to what extent the actual texts comply with the respective approaches.

3.2 Means of publication

It has become clear that the writers regard the conveying of their ideas to the reader as one of the primary tasks of the laghukathā. A logical consequence of this concern about the ‘communicability’ (saṁpreṣaṇīyatā) of the message is that the writers try to exhaust a large variety of means to reach their audience. To illustrate the writers’ commitment, the most widely used means of publication will be introduced in the following.

¹²⁴ Yaśpāl, ‘Pragativādi dṛṣṭikon’, 1955, cit. in: Corinne Friend, ‘The evolution of Yashpal from Socialist Realist to Humanist’, p. 163, in: Coppola, *Marxist Influences*, pp. 155-169.

The commonest form of publication of the laghukathā is as a text printed in newspapers and magazines. These journalistic print media can be divided into two groups, namely, on the one hand, literary magazines like *Haṃs*, *Vīṇā* or *Kṣitij* which address an audience that is interested in literature, and on the other hand national or regional dailies, weeklies or monthlies which deal with various kinds of matters. Since, in the latter type of publication, the reader is likely to find the laghukathā next to daily political news, editorials, commentaries etc. and does not necessarily anticipate narrative literary pieces, these media constitute a more competitive environment for the laghukathā than literary journals, but they also reach a wider, less specialised audience. Amongst the newspapers and magazines which publish laghukathās but are not especially literature-orientated are dailies like the *Navbhārat Tāims* and *Navin Viśva Mānav* (Ghaziabad, Saharanpur, Dehradun & Bareilly); journals include the government-supported *Sahkār Sañcay* or *Uttar Pradeś* as well as film magazines like *Suśamā*.

A common method of publishing laghukathās in journalistic print media is by way of special issues (viśeṣāṅk), which may take the form of supplements of several pages or, in the context of literary magazines, may make up a whole edition. Special issues usually contain a number of primary texts by different authors but can also include some short, often introductory, essays on the laghukathā. Several special issues of notable literary magazines have later been published as anthologies; examples are *Choṭī baṛī bāterī*¹²⁵, whose laghukathās came out first as a special issue of *Sārikā*, or *Daśā aur diśā*¹²⁶ which contains the laghukathās of a special issue of the magazine *Kathābimb*.

Furthermore, numerous special laghukathā-magazines are to be found. While many of them are rather short-lived and close down after only three or four issues, others have been published for years, like *Minīyug* ('Laghukathā-sāhitya kā prāmāṅik dāijest'), since 1972, or *Laghu āghāt* ('Samkālīn laghukathā kī sampūrṇ traimāsikī'), since 1981.¹²⁷ These specialised journals are not only a means of making

¹²⁵ Ed. by M.P. Jain & Jagdīs Kaśyap, Delhi 1978.

¹²⁶ Ed. by Arvind & Kṛṣṇa Kamleś, (no place) 1981.

¹²⁷ *Minīyug* ed. by J. Kaśyap et.al., Ghaziabad, Delhi, Bareilly, *Laghu āghāt* (former *Āghāt*) ed. by S. Dube, V. Sonī et.al., Indore.

the laghukathā available to a readership but also function as a forum of discussion between the writers and critics.

Another means of addressing the audience are laghukathā ‘folders’ (pholḍar patrikā) - single sheets of paper of the size of one or two A4 pages which are folded approximately three to five times like a brochure. They usually contain laghukathās by different authors, sometimes also translations of texts from other languages and short critical comments or editorials; illustrations and advertisements are also to be found.¹²⁸ Folders are usually published as series over a number of years, although the publication may be irregular at times. The circulation of one issue usually varies between 300 and 1000 and the price lies at one or two rupees. Folders may be distributed to local book stalls for sale, but are mostly sent to subscribers, readers who have responded to laghukathās published in newspapers, other laghukathā writers and relatives and friends of the editors. Most folders are the result of the effort of individual writers who are determined to promote the genre and to reach an audience.

A rather unconventional medium for promoting the laghukathā is the poster. Individual laghukathās are printed on posters and displayed in public places such as banks or small exhibition halls which can be visited for free. This kind of presentation is likely to address a wider and more diverse audience than the folders which target a readership that has already shown an interest in the laghukathā. Poster exhibitions have, for example, been organised by Siddheśvar (Patna) and by Sureś Jāngīr Uday (Kaithal, Lucknow, Dhanbad, Patna).¹²⁹

Laghukathās have furthermore been broadcast on the radio, dramatised for the stage and also made into short television films. Amongst the filmed laghukathās are the ten minute-long *Dīp jal uṭhe*, ‘Lamps lit up’, by S. Puṣkaraṇā (shown in 1993 on Metro Channel) and V. Prabhākar’s *Corī kā arth*, ‘The meaning of theft’ (shown on Doordarshan, no date available). Authors whose laghukathās have been read on the radio include S. Dube, A. Varmā, S. Puṣkaraṇā, K. Coprā and B. Agravāl. The latter two writers had also made laghukathās into short films.

¹²⁸ For a copy of the folder *Kathā dṛṣṭi*, ed. by Rameś Gautam, cf. pp. 56-57.

¹²⁹ Unfortunately dates for these exhibitions are not available.

Eventually, after having been made public in one or more of the above ways, many *laghukathās* are published in collections or anthologies which form the 'last step' in the series of different methods of promoting the genre. In general, two different kinds of compilations are to be found: those which serve primarily literary purposes - presenting an interested reader with a collection of thought-provoking little texts - and those which, unlike the aforementioned rather ephemeral forms of publication, seem to serve first of all to preserve *laghukathās* as source material for the critical debate or for historical purposes. The latter kind of compilation often includes critical essays, interviews with writers and critics, and theoretical discussions of relatively specialised aspects; this suggests that the intended target group is not so much the casual reader looking for entertainment or enlightenment but rather a group of experts.

All in all, the variety of means used to promote the *laghukathā* proves that the writers are actively engaged in reaching an audience. The inventiveness of the writers when it comes to reaching a non-typical audience through means like posters or oral transmissions of texts proves the concern about the broad effect of the genre. In addition, the readiness of radio, stage and film to adapt *laghukathās* shows that the genre has been widely recognised as a useful and inspiring contribution to public cultural life not only by the audience but also by cultural agents other than the writers themselves.

4 Literary analysis

The following literary analysis is an attempt to establish an 'ideal type' of laghukathā. A descriptive and analytical evaluation of the narrative techniques and characteristics of a representative number of primary texts will allow us to determine a common denominator for the seemingly highly heterogeneous genre. The analysis will be set against the background of the committed authorial approach as a general frame of reference.

4.1 State of research: approaches in Hindi laghukathā criticism

As mentioned earlier, a problem of current laghukathā criticism is the fact that most of the critical work is undertaken by the writers themselves who tend to provide a *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* or analytical assessment of the genre: the heterogeneity of the laghukathā is thus reflected in a heterogeneity of critical approaches. An interesting side-effect of the laghukathā debate being dominated by the writers is that the critical discourse, in spite of differences in opinion, seems to be a rather self-contained unit. 'Outsiders' as for example the critics Rameś Kumār Śarmā or Kamal Kiśor Goyankā (senior lecturer in Hindi literature at Delhi University) who are not themselves laghukathā writers but still engage in discussions about the genre, remain the exception. As a result the critical discourse generally lacks in analytical depth and is unsatisfactory when it comes to making generally valid statements about the genre. However, when - in the evaluation of the writers' and critics' theoretical writings - one leaves aside ideas that refer to individual literary features, a clear picture of the main areas of concern and basic underlying concepts emerges. In the following section, these concepts and areas of interest will be introduced in general terms; they serve, at this stage, merely to demonstrate which literary areas are considered significant by critics and writers in order to set a framework for the literary analysis. Critical views on individual characteristics are discussed more thoroughly in the sections on the respective features.

The basic idea underlying almost all critical discussions but especially the essays of the 1970s and early 80s - the years which saw the laghukathā struggling for recog-

nition - is the emphasis on the *laghukathā*'s status as an independent genre. The majority of writers feel obliged to mention, however cursorily, that the *laghukathā* is a self-sufficient and newly developed genre in its own right. When elaborated on, this topic often involves attempts to demarcate the *laghukathā* from other text forms, especially the short story and the anecdote. Interestingly, the latter seems to be considered less 'threatening' for the generic independence of the *laghukathā* than the former: the difference between the *laghukathā* and the anecdote is usually described only in terms of effect - the anecdote is supposed to entertain while the *laghukathā* wants to shock. The *laghukathā* and the short story, on the other hand, are compared on the basis of effect, content, size and structure, which shows that the writers and critics see more areas of possible confusion. An explanation may be that the writers consider the *laghukathā* affiliated to the 'serious' strand of writing, as reflected in the short story, rather than to the trivially entertaining anecdote. We will see later whether this assumption is justified. Among the other genres regularly considered for comparison are *bodh-* or *nītikathās*, moral tales, which are, however, ruled out as being related to the modern *laghukathā* on the grounds of intention and effect: such tales, unlike the *laghukathā*, are seen as entertaining or explicitly morally didactic. But although numerous critics and writers make significant statements about the relationship between the *laghukathā* and other genres, a thorough study of the topic seems to be lacking, possibly not least because a generally accepted notion of what might constitute an ideal typical *laghukathā* has not been agreed upon by the writers or critics. All in all, the recurring discussion of the *laghukathā*'s independent status seems to spring from an urge to justify its existence by proving that it possesses qualities not to be found in other genres.

When it comes to the concrete literary features of the *laghukathā*, two issues stand out from the critical debate: the communicability (*sampreṣaṇīyatā*) of the genre's committed message and the short outer form. The prominent role that formal brevity and commitment play in the critical discourse is reflected in the fact that these qualities are referred to in almost all attempts to define the *laghukathā*. Thus R.K. Śarmā, for example, after having compared around thirty different definitions, comes to the conclusion that 'a *laghukathā* is a formally short narrative prose text that presents disruptions in contemporary human life in an ironic form in order to disturb its

reader’(vah laghu ākārīya gadya-kathātmak racnā jo ādhunik mānav-jīvan meṁ vyāpt kiśi viśaṅgati ko vyaṅgyātmak mudrā meṁ prastut kar pāṭhak ko jhakjhor kar rakh de, laghukathā hogī.).¹³⁰ This definition also includes the features of narrativity and irony, but while these are variables that may also be absent from the definitions - replaced by other issues held more important by the respective critic, like, for example, single-strandedness or a simple language - the laghukathā’s brevity and commitment seldom remain unnamed. A logical consequence of the writers’ desire to present a committed message in a short form - or, as several critics formulate it, ‘make the most impact through the least words’ (kam se kam śabdorṁ meṁ adhik se adhik prabhāv dālnā)¹³¹ - is that these two qualities very much determine the usage of other literary features of the laghukathā. Brevity and commitment are, by most writers, considered *conditiones sine qua non* for the laghukathā, and the literary analysis will show that they leave their mark on the manner in which other literary features are employed.

Often the writers and critics themselves allude to the interdependence between brevity or commitment and other literary aspects, the most widely discussed features in this context being the theme, language, and structure of the laghukathā. The way in which these aspects are examined in the various essays easily reveals the relationship: the subject matter is supposed to deal with socio-political disruptions, the language must be intelligible and simple in order to guarantee the immediate and powerful communication of the message, and the structure of the plot is meant to be single-stranded so as to keep the text short and also allow the reader to grasp the point of the story immediately without being distracted by sub-plots.

Other recurring issues discussed less often are the narrative modes, i.e. descriptivity, the protagonists, the style and the pointed ending. Here, too, we can see a close connection between the writers’ dedication to brevity and commitment and their evaluation of the respective features. The descriptive mode, for example, is to be avoided, in order to keep the laghukathā short, protagonists should not be individualised and

¹³⁰ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 20.

¹³¹ Cf. for example Madhu Monālīzā [sic] in a discussion on ‘Laghukathā ko śabdorṁ kī simā meṁ bāṁdhnā ucit hai athavā anucit?’ chaired by Rāj Kumār Nijāt, in: Devgun & Nijāt, *Hariyānā*, p. 116; also Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy, in: *Kṣitij* (Puraskār aṅk, 1985), p. 33, cit. in R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 34.

their characters should not develop in the course of the story, the style has to comply with the demands for a short form and strong impact, e.g. through being metaphorically concentrated rather than elaborately ornate, and the pointed ending is meant to serve the strong impression to be made on the reader. The literary analysis will show in detail to what extent the short form and committed attitude of the *laghukathā* are determinative of the overall appearance of the genre and how far the various aspects are mutually interrelated, exerting influences on each other.

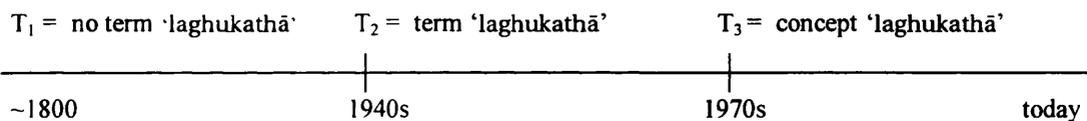
4.2 Methodology

Seeing the discussion of the *laghukathā* as a 'genre' against a background of flexible generic determination, the initially petrifying vastness of heterogeneity among texts featuring as *laghukathās* and of opinions declaring texts as *laghukathās* loses some of its awkwardness. Yet, it remains difficult to find a starting point for analysis. The question which naturally arises from such a situation is how to map out suitable limits for a body of texts to be dealt with. Here we encounter Günther Müller's earlier mentioned 'chicken-and-egg' dilemma: we cannot attempt a thorough analysis to find distinguishing features for the *laghukathā* without first of all determining a basic body of texts to work on, yet such a body of texts cannot be defined before distinguishing features have been found which allow us to decide which texts to include.¹³² To escape this vicious circle the only possible method to do the group of texts justice is an all-inclusive approach: every text that has been published under the heading *laghukathā* has initially to be considered as a text of this genre.

This gives rise to another problem: who determines the subsuming of a text under this heading? The difficulty in dealing with this question lies largely in the fact that no old source material is available, and that the sources used for this research are mainly modern collections and anthologies, comprising old texts of the 19th century as well as modern ones. It has to be decided if only those texts which were intentionally written as *laghukathās* should be considered, or if texts which have been claimed for the genre later by editors keen on establishing an unbroken historical tradition of the *laghukathā* should also be included. A provisional solution has been found in a his-

¹³² Cf. chapter 1 'Introduction', p. 10, footnote 6.

torical approach towards the development of the term 'laghukathā'. Three phases of a chronological progress can be discerned: 1. A time T_1 when no term 'laghukathā' referring to a particular sort of Hindi prose text was in use; as outlined above, this time has started with the beginning of Hindi prose writing and ended in the middle or late forties of the 20th century. 2. A time T_2 when, for the first time, short prose texts were being published under the heading 'laghukathā', i.e. as a consciously chosen label but still employed as a descriptive rather than a conceptual phrase; this phase started in the beginning of the forties with texts published as laghukathās in the Indore-based Hindi magazine *Vīṇā* and continued till the late sixties. 3. A time T_3 when 'laghukathā' came to indicate an intellectual concept behind the term; the beginning of a conceptual understanding of the laghukathā falls in the early seventies.¹³³



When selecting texts one can thus draw on the latter two of these phases, thereby omitting texts which are published as laghukathās but were actually written in a time when neither the term nor the concept of the laghukathā existed. The whole body of texts which was available at the point of starting the analysis and met the requirements of being published under the heading 'laghukathā' and having been written after 1940, amounted to 2818 texts published in 18 collections or anthologies which came out between 1977 and 1995 - a number evidently still too large to be worked on in any detail. Since every single laghukathā is a self-contained unit, comprising analysable literary features such as plot, central motif, characters, message, linguistic characteristics etc., every single text needs to be examined closely on its own in order to come to generally valid observations. Therefore, in the attempt to limit the number of texts, several approaches have been considered. Firstly, the possibility of choosing a limited number of the most prominent laghukathā-writers (i.e. writers who are acknowledged by laghukathā criticism and whose texts are published in different collections by different editors respectively) presented itself, but confining the research to, say, 10 authors out of a totality of 389¹³⁴ (providing an approximate number of

¹³³ Cf. sections 2.3.1 'First' Laghukathās', pp. 27 ff., and 2.3.3 'The 1950s and 60s', 36f.

¹³⁴ A totality based on the material available at the time of starting the research.

400 laghukathās) did not seem to do the heterogeneous nature of the genre justice. Similarly, the idea of working on the basis of two or three selected anthologies had to be ruled out: although the laghukathā's heterogeneity would be taken into account, the selection would have relied exclusively on the few respective editors' choices and preferences. Therefore, to ensure a relative objectivity and thus a general validity of the results, a third approach was applied: the method of content analysis, a means of classifying textual material and thereby 'reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data'.¹³⁵

Content analysis

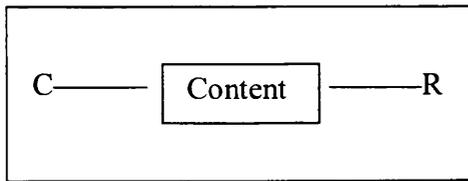
Traditionally employed by social sciences, content analysis aims at a description of social reality by means of textual analysis, i.e. by making 'valid inferences from text'¹³⁶. It proceeds on the understanding of a text as a means of communication, and can hence be seen as based on a simple communication model of a communicator (C), a content and a recipient (R) within a social situation. Merten presents the following two diagrams to illustrate the communication model and the inferences which content analysis wants to draw from the text¹³⁷:

¹³⁵ Cf. Robert P. Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, London 1990, p. 5; Content analysis as a consciously applied research technique developed in close connection to the advent and growth of mass communication. The first research of this kind is often cited as an analysis of topics of several New York newspapers over a period of twelve years by Speed (Speed, Jno. Gilmer: 'Do Newspapers Now Give the News?', in: *Forum*, 15, 1893; cf. Klaus Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse, Einführung in Theorie, Methode und Praxis*, Opladen 1995 (2nd revised edition, 1st edition 1985), pp. 37 & 391). With the emergence of new media like film and radio in the 1920s, the spectrum of potential research topics broadened and the approach of mere quantitative description was widened by a qualitative dimension, increasingly focusing on the effect of contents on the recipient and also considering the possible intention of the communicator. A first systematic and interdisciplinary discussion of content analysis, which also established the phrase as a technical term, took place in 1941 at a conference at Chicago University. Nowadays the scientific discussion focuses on methodology, possibilities and limits of content analysis; by considering communication analysis as one of its possible models, the applicability of content analysis has been furthermore widened. (Cf. Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse*, pp. 35-47) Next to mass media of different kinds, areas of content analytical studies include popular art forms (song lyrics), role-behaviour, dreams, stylistic modes, personal and social value systems. (Cf. Weber, pp. 10 ff. & Merten, pp. 119 ff.).

¹³⁶ Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, p. 9.

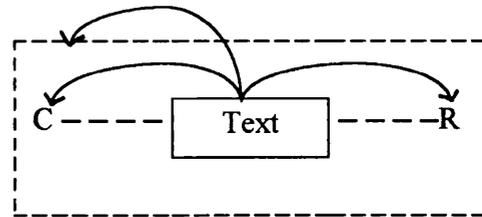
¹³⁷ Cf. Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse*, p. 15.

Communication model:



Situation

Inference model:



Situation

A prerequisite of valid inferences from texts is the texts' description. According to Merten, content analysis can describe texts in line with different dimensions, a syntactic dimension (quantitative account of number and kind of words, sentences etc.), a semantic dimension (information contained in the text) and a pragmatic dimension (intention of the communicator). Based on this threefold division, Merten introduces a typology of content analytical procedures whose adequacy depends on the respective aims of the research.¹³⁸ In the *laghukathā* context it is the thematic analysis on a 'semantic-semantic' level which offers itself as an approach: themes (or contents) of any kind are grouped into relatively few categories. Since this helps especially to reduce a large amount of data it is a relatively economical technique.¹³⁹

Before starting a thematic analysis, three a-priori operations have to be carried out: categorisation, sampling and coding. Categories, as defined by Merten, are classes of a superstructural and abstract scheme of classification, which have to be determined in advance, according to the aim of the research. It is important that the determination of categories is a purposeful and selective procedure since 'content analysis stands or falls by its categories'¹⁴⁰. Merten lists six criteria which have to be borne in mind in order to establish valid categories:

1. The scheme of categories should be developed theoretically and correspond with the aims of the research.

¹³⁸ Merten presents the following methodological types of analysis: syntactic (e.g. analysis of the author or the structure of personality), syntactic-semantic (e.g. analysis of wording), syntactic-pragmatic (e.g. analysis of readability), semantic-semantic (e.g. analysis of themes, contingency or structures of association), semantic-pragmatic (e.g. analysis of values, attitudes, motivations, dreams, symbols etc.) and pragmatic-pragmatic (e.g. analysis of resonance of the recipients). *Ibid.*, pp. 119-279.

¹³⁹ For the thematic analysis as represented by Merten cf. pp. 146-156.

¹⁴⁰ Berelson in: Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse*, p. 147.

2. The scheme of categories should be complete, i.e. it should allow all possible themes to be covered.
3. The categories should be mutually exclusive.
4. The categories should be independent from each other.
5. The categories should comply with a unified pattern of classification.
6. The categories should be defined unequivocally.¹⁴¹

The next step, sampling, is based on the determination of a sampling unit and a recording unit, the sampling unit (e.g. edition, page etc.) being a multitude of the recording unit (e.g. article, paragraph, sentence).¹⁴² Merten distinguishes three kinds of selection: accidental selection, purposive selection and random selection. In our context the definition of a sample by accidental selection has to be ruled out as a valid procedure since it cannot comply with the demand for representativity. Purposive selection is equally unsuitable because, as Merten explains, it presupposes a thorough prescience either of the structure of the recording unit (for a ‘typical sample’) or of official statistics on the distribution of certain characteristics (for a ‘quota sample’). The third approach, a random selection of recording units, is applied when the selection of recording units is to be determined statistically, thus ensuring a relative objectivity in a context where little is known about the nature of the units; it therefore suits our demands in the *laghukathā* context. A random selection offers the researcher several approaches to sampling, depending on the constitution of the sampling unit.¹⁴³ Of those approaches the stratified random sample will prove important for the *laghukathā* context. A stratified sample is taken when relevant features for stratification are to be discerned and the collective can be divided into two or more sampling units. Relevant features for stratification are those which are supposed to be correlated with characteristics of the recording unit, e.g. ‘regionality’ as a feature for the analysis of daily newspapers. Another possible feature for stratification is ‘time’; it applies when it can be assumed that contents change on a diachronic level.

Once the sample has been defined, the last step of the groundwork is the coding: each recording unit is assigned to one of the previously determined categories, a procedure which brings forward a description of the contents according to themes or catego-

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 147-148.

¹⁴² The order of the steps of categorisation and sampling may be reversed, cf. Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, pp. 21-23.

¹⁴³ Merten distinguishes between a simple random selection, a systematic selection, a stratified selection, a cluster selection and a multi-stage selection. Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse*, p. 283-292.

ries - the result of the textual analysis. While, in social sciences, an additional step of coding would be to make inferences from these textual results to the context, in the field of literary research this stage may be neglected if the focus of the study lies in the description and investigation of intratextual features rather than the portrayal of a socio-literary framework. This is especially valid where the thematic analysis is to be seen as an initial step for coming to terms with a large amount of data, as it is the case in this research.

Application within literary sciences

We have seen that content analysis, especially thematic analysis, can be applied to a broad range of media (e.g. newspapers and magazines, radio, films, books) and has been used by various scientific disciplines like politics (one of the first domains of thematic analysis), history, literary sciences, anthropology, psychology, sociology and mass communication research. As far as literary sciences are concerned, content analysis has so far mainly concentrated on the investigation of style¹⁴⁴, although some studies on text types and textual modes exist¹⁴⁵. An examination of Hindi literature on the basis of content analysis has been undertaken by Nirupama Pota who gives her study a distinct socio-literary perspective. Her aim is, in a first step, to provide 'a manual for Hindi literature criticism on the basis of content analysis'¹⁴⁶ and, in a second step, to demonstrate how her theoretical model can be applied to a case study, put to the test on the basis of Jai Śaṅkar Prasād's works. Pota proceeds on two suppositions: 1. that literature reflects society, i.e. that literature and its contents can be determined as a 'source of dependable sociological or societal data', and 2. that it

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Anthony Kenny, *The Computation of Style: An Introduction to Statistics for Students of Literature and Humanities*, Oxford 1982: Kenny mentions different analysable features for a 'computation of style', e.g. 'the length of words and sentences which an author uses, the number of words in a poet's lines [...] [the] choice of vocabulary or preferences between different parts of speech' (pp. 61 ff.); studies of style have been used mainly to examine the attribution of literary works to specific writers, the chronology of several works by one author and features of verse, like metre, rhythm, alliteration etc. (pp. 1 ff.).

¹⁴⁵ E.g. studies about humour - Barron, Milton L.: 'A Content Analysis of Intergroup Humor', in: *American Sociological Review*, 15, 1950; Stephenson, Richard: 'Conflict and Control Functions of Humor', in: *American Journal of Sociology*, 56, 1951 - or about themes - Nauck, Bernhard: *Kommunikationsinhalte von Jugendbüchern* ('communication contents of youth literature'), Weinheim/Basel 1974; Middleton, Russell: 'Fertility Values in American Magazine Fiction, 1916-1956', in: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24, 1960; all in: Merten, *Inhaltsanalyse*, pp. 154 & 356 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Nirupama Pota, *Content Analysis of Hindi Literature (Preparation of Manual and Application)*, Bombay, Nagpur, Delhi 1987, p. viii.

influences society, e.g. by socially maintaining and stabilising or even justifying and sanctifying the social order¹⁴⁷; ‘the writer’ she states, ‘writes for society’¹⁴⁸. Pota, thus, aims at an analysis of literary products ‘in a social perspective’¹⁴⁹ and claims that her major concern is to assess the immediate and mediate impact of society on the creative works of a writer.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, her study concentrates largely on the question to what extent the contents of Prasād’s work reflect the socio-political and economic framework of his times as well as his life.¹⁵¹ She, thereby, focuses distinctly on the relationship between the text and social reality, as it is put forward by content analysts in the sociological field.

Application to the laghukathā context

With regard to the laghukathā the method of thematic context analysis is found to be significant in two respects: first of all it allows us to objectively reduce the vast mass of available primary data while taking into consideration the heterogeneity of the texts, thus coming to a representative selection of laghukathās; secondly, it enables us to assess the laghukathā writers’ diverse opinions about the genre’s primary interest by giving a representative description of the relative distribution of the texts’ themes.

Sampling

We have seen that, because of the lack of prescient knowledge about the structure or distribution of themes of the laghukathā, the application of a random sample is the most appropriate way of dealing with the body of texts. This random sample should

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 51 & 60 ff.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 288.

¹⁵¹ Although Pota presents an interesting approach, her work shows some inadequacies which demonstrate the pitfalls of applying a partly statistically working method to literary products. The two main problems of Pota’s research are, firstly, that she sees literature as all too measurable, especially, as she states, measurable in ‘objective’ terms: her idea, for instance, of giving a matrix diagram to present a ‘picture [of] how to attempt to describe and measure objectively the characters, language, problem[s], events, solution[s] and approach’ seems to be highly questionable (cf. pp. viii & ix); secondly, Pota has not chosen her categories carefully; the points of mutual exclusiveness of themes (3) and a unified pattern of classification (5), as called for by Merten, are not fulfilled. Cf. Pota, *Content Analysis*, pp. 147 & 151 ff.

be stratified according to the above-determined time-phases T_1 , T_2 and T_3 , setting the second phase T_2 which began in the 1940s as a starting point in order to exclude texts written before the term or concept of the *laghukathā* came into being. Since for the main portion of the remaining texts only approximate dates of origin can be given, a separate analysis of works written before and after 1970 cannot be undertaken at this point and the phases T_2 and T_3 will have to be handled jointly. The sampling unit has therefore been defined as all texts written after 1940 and published under the heading ‘*laghukathā*’ in collections or anthologies available at the beginning of the analysis, which amounts to 2818 texts¹⁵²; the recording unit has been determined as one single text, i.e. one *laghukathā*. Of the sampling unit of 2818 texts a random sample of approximately ten percent has been taken, i.e. 281 texts were chosen by a computer programme (Microsoft Excel) to form the basic research unit. Texts outside the sample are considered where they seem appropriate to illustrate certain aspects in further detail.

Categorisation

In order to establish valid categories for the *laghukathā*’s themes it will be useful to proceed from the earlier-described authorial attitudes towards the genre. As we have seen, two basic approaches characterise the *laghukathā* writers’ scene, namely a socio-politically committed attitude as advocated by a majority of authors, albeit to various degrees, and a more general outlook, considering the *laghukathā* as a mirror of everyday reality. These two standpoints provide us with two possible groups of themes: a category that revolves around socio-political disruptions, presenting the relationship between individuals and a social or societal group rather than between one another, and a category whose *laghukathās* mirror all possible facets of daily life - be it bad and ugly or good and beautiful¹⁵³ - thus focusing more on interpersonal relationships and also possibly including texts of a philosophical or contemplative nature. According to these distinctions, the following basic pattern arises:

¹⁵² The starting point of the sample was a collective of 2892 texts from all three periods T_1 , T_2 and T_3 .

¹⁵³ Cf. Prabhākar, *Āpkī kṛpā hai*, p. 7.

Authors' intention	Thematical categories
Socio-political / committed	Criticism of society
Non-socio-political / uncommitted	Mirror of daily life Philosophical questions Contemplations

On the basis of this pattern three key categories of content have been established which can be subsumed under the headings 'criticism of society' (committed), 'the nature of life' and 'contemplations' (non-committed). While the two latter categories form a relatively small group, covering less than ten percent of the whole body of texts, the first group shows clearly that the main concern of laghukathā writers is the condition of society on different levels.

An examination of the critical opinions about the themes of texts belonging to this main category results in yet another threefold division into texts dealing with public life, with societal life and with private life. Avadhnrāyaṇ Mudgal, for instance, mentions the areas of system (vyavasthā), administration (praśāsan, prabandh), society (samāj), family (parivār, gharelū saṃvedanāem) and the individual, i.e. the common man (vyakti, māmūlī ādmī) as possible thematical domains of the laghukathā.¹⁵⁴ This reflects the modern structure of democratic societies, incorporating the state and its administration, the 'people' as a semi-public entity - existing through several stratified social groupings - and the individual as a part of the family and as an individual amongst other individuals. Thus, laghukathās concerned with public life - state and administration - show the relationship between man and the state and its representatives respectively; laghukathās about societal life deal with the relationship of man and society, i.e. man within societal situations and man within societal structures of power. These laghukathās meet the requirements of socio-politically committed texts as demanded by the respective group of writers. The third group of texts, tackling private life, concentrates mainly on interpersonal relations, relations between man and the family and relations between man and fellow-man. This group forms an area of transition as far as the question of 'commitment' is concerned: it presents, on

¹⁵⁴ Avadhnrāyaṇ Mudgal, 'Laghukathā: lāśom ke dalālom aur 'phaṅgas' pravṛttiyom ke khilāf ek jujhārū rukh', in: Jain & Kaśyap (eds.), *Choṭī baṛī bātem*, pp. 8 ff.

the one hand, texts which may not only describe an individual's personal situation but also criticise interpersonal behaviour, thus 'awakening' the reader as to the individual's duties within daily social encounters; these texts therefore clearly belong to the group 'criticism of society', without, however, being as distinctly socio-politically committed as the groups of public and societal life. On the other hand we find laghu-kathās in this category which simply present the reader with 'neutral' or very personal situations, thus 'mirroring' life while lacking any wider socio-political implication; these texts are to be seen as non-committed. The only groups that are entirely non-committed are those dealing with the nature of life or presenting the reader with contemplations. A first basic scheme of these contents would read as follows:

Socio-politically committed	<u>I Criticism of Society</u>
	Public life: State and administration
	Societal life: Social situation and structures of power
	critical / committed Private life:
Non-committed	Interpersonal relations mirror of daily life
	<u>II The Nature of Life</u>
	<u>III Contemplations</u>

Coding

The last step to complete a content analysis is the coding of the texts of the recording unit: the 281 laghukathās need to be classified within the scheme of thematical categories, depending on the content of each text. As pointed out earlier, ‘content’ is a vague term; it will be defined to show how the classification of the laghukathās has been accomplished before the codification results are described in the following section.

4.3 Content

In the following analysis the content of a literary work will be seen as its theme and the way this theme is staged on the podium of the text, the form. A theme, according to Kayser, is abstract, and as a term it designates the idealistic realm to which a text can be assigned; the theme is the idea of the text.¹⁵⁵ It is, however, not to be confused with the motif which is the scheme of a concrete situation. Motifs can be divided into primary or central motifs, which organise the whole text, and secondary motifs, which illustrate certain aspects. The following example, the one-sentence laghukathā *Insānī kutte*, ‘Human dogs’, by Śaśāṅk, may serve as an example to elucidate these definitions:

When the crippled beggar children saw the alsatian sitting on the back seat of the Chevrolet Impala, they sighed sadly and said, ‘Oh, if only we could be like this!’¹⁵⁶

The theme of this laghukathā, according to the above-given definition, is poverty, the central motif is the beggar child whose situation is contrasted with that of a dog, a motif commonly used in laghukathās as will be seen later. A secondary motif of this text is the situation of the dog’s comfortably sitting in an expensive American car, alluding to wealth and well-being as opposed to the physical and, in a figurative sense, social mutilation of the children. Basically, a narrative prose text has only one

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Wolfgang Kayser, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk, Eine Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft*, Bern & München 1976 (17th edition, 1st edition 1948), p. 62.

¹⁵⁶ In: Balrām & Maniṣrāy (eds.), *KN3*, p. 97.

theme, i.e. it is composed around one *central* idea.¹⁵⁷ Hence, the respective central idea or theme of each laghukathā is taken as a criterion for the final classification of the texts within the scheme of categories.

Other components which are responsible for the staging of the theme are protagonists and space; as can be seen from the example, they come in where the abstract theme (poverty) is put into a concrete form and thus communicated: the scenery on the podium of the text has to be designed and finally populated (mutilated beggar children seeing rich man's dog comfortably sitting in a car and wishing to be in its place). Sections on the laghukathā's employment of protagonists and space will therefore complete the analysis of the content.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that the allocation of certain texts to particular categories has, at times, been difficult. In most cases the problem of overlap could be resolved by looking at the title of the respective laghukathā for a clue as to which of the presented aspects was meant to be central to the message¹⁵⁸, but a few texts' assignment might still be arguable, because the classification in the end depends on the viewpoint of the interpreting critic. The following categorisation, therefore, is not meant to draw a categorical picture of the distribution of the laghukathā's themes but rather to outline general tendencies.

4.3.1 Themes

This section presents the codification results of the sampled laghukathās.¹⁵⁹ It gives us a good idea of what laghukathās 'are about' and to what extent the theoretically committed authorial approach is reflected in the genre's themes; it will therefore serve as a sound basis for the rest of the literary analysis.

¹⁵⁷ Even more complex texts fall back upon a single theme: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, has love as its theme and the forbidden love between children of two estranged families as a central motif; the theme in Goethe's *Faust* is human striving, the work being organised around the central motif of the pact with the devil.

¹⁵⁸ The role of the title for the interpretation of the laghukathā is analysed in section 4.4.3 'Title', pp. 166 ff.

¹⁵⁹ A list of all texts of the sample is given in the appendix on pp. 264 ff. In order to codify the texts, all 2818 laghukathās of the sampling unit have been given index numbers (L1-L2818); the list of the sampled texts is ordered according to these index numbers which are also used in the present section to indicate texts exemplifying the various thematic aspects.

Public life

Laghukathās in the section on public life cover two main areas: the state and its administration. The state as a state machine is depicted on an abstract level; on a concrete level it is personified by its direct representatives, the politicians. Texts on both levels are fiercely critical of the Indian situation.

Public life: State and administration	
State	
State machinery	Politicians

State machinery

The state and its machinery are generally shown as suppressive, exploitative, corrupt, inefficient, 'dirty' and even explicitly criminal. Given the abstract nature of the state as an object of criticism, the main portion of the laghukathās of this group is metaphorical. An example is the state being represented by a lion who eats his 'people', the jungle animals, by luring them into fulfilling their dreams in his stomach; those who do not believe him - i.e. critics of the system - are violently attacked (L2659). Another metaphor is that of the 'huge and strong' elephant which is controlled by his rider simply by means of the cruel elephant-hook: a tyrannical minority exerts power over a majority merely by intimidating them, subjugation is only possible because the subjugated do not resist it (L2394).

The criminal nature of the state is often symbolised by the dacoit who feels himself equal to or even better than the state and its government (e.g. L551). This motif is also used to describe politicians and the police, sometimes given a special twist by making the actual criminal appear more honourable than the representatives of law and order.

Another point of criticism is the state's failure to run its institutions - e.g. schools (L575) or children's homes (L2255) - effectively and responsibly. Significantly, in both institutions it is the children, representing the future of the society, who suffer. The state does not fulfil its duty towards its people; it protects neither their civil nor their human rights, and it fails to provide even for their most basic needs: people have to queue for almost all the essential commodities. But while some laghukathās take a rather humorous approach to this topic (L410 and L1363), others show the suffering people as severely crippled by the state's inadequate provision for them (L1973¹⁶⁰). The depravity of the state's actions is summarised in the laghukathā *Sīrhiyom se nice*, 'Downstairs' (L1058):

One day Politics came to a brothel. An old pimp, who was standing at the door, examined her from top to toe: 'Who are you?'

'I am Politics. I need to see Baiji (the Madame).'

Baiji who was standing there, shielded by the door, overheard their conversation and said, 'We don't need you in such a pure place! We don't want to ruin our business. If anybody falls ill by your touch even death won't save them.'

Without turning back Politics went hurriedly downstairs, head hanging.¹⁶¹

The state's business, politics, is morally more detestable than a prostitute's business in a brothel. The title of the story further emphasises that modern politics is 'on the downgrade'.

Politicians

Unlike the personified state, its representatives are not so much described as suppressive, imperialistic and exploitive, but rather - in their personal characteristics - as egoistic, unscrupulous, mendacious and immoral, and - professionally - as engaged in the perversion of justice and nepotism. Their actions, like those of the state they represent, are ineffective and unplanned. Some texts emphasise that such assessments are generally valid for all politicians by describing them as interchangeable at will: the people do not see politicians as representing different political parties with specific aims but as faceless and nameless figures of equal (un-)importance for their private lives, as e.g. *Loktantra*, 'Democracy' (L1307; also L1492):

¹⁶⁰ Translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', pp. 126-127.

¹⁶¹ By Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāmsu'.

As soon as he had climbed down from the tonga he took off his gold-framed glasses, and distributing the fruits with the help of the tonga driver he entered the village.

‘He will win, yes, he will win...’

He will win, yes, he will win... the man left the sentence incomplete, and joining his hands, bones covered with skin, he stepped before the merchant... by the way, Seth Ji, what’s your name? ¹⁶²

As to the personal deficiencies of the politicians, the texts paint the picture against the background of a rather narrow morality: not only is a bad character needed to become a successful politician (L1437, L1824), a person has to indulge in all the current ‘indecentcies’ in order to be entitled to stand in an election. The dialogic ¹⁶³ *laghukathā Cayan*, ‘Election’ (L5) illustrates this nicely:

‘Do you steal?’

‘No.’

‘Ever been to a brothel?’

‘No.’

‘Do you drink alcohol?’

‘No.’

‘Do you take drugs - bhang, caras, ganja or opium?’

‘No.’

‘But you must certainly smoke?’

‘No.’

‘Pan...?’

‘No.’

‘Why, then, are you standing for election?’¹⁶⁴

Politicians are further accused of a collective mendacity, either showing a private behaviour which contrasts starkly with their openly proclaimed standards (L89, L245) or indulging in idle promises (L134, L588). The politicians’ egoism is well illustrated by a text about a minister who sacrifices the people’s well-being for his own wish to sleep longer into the morning. Not willing to get up with his king every morning to check the smoking chimneys and see if all the kitchen fires are burning, he has a smokeless fire invented which renders useless the king’s attempted responsibility (L1582¹⁶⁵). Morally responsible behaviour is exceptional (L577), unscrupulous scheming on the daily agenda. Two *laghukathās* describe situations where politicians almost literally walk over dead bodies to reach their political goals: they have com-

¹⁶² By Madhukānt.

¹⁶³ For an analysis of the ‘dialogic’ type of *laghukathā* see section 4.4.1 ‘Outer form’, pp. 132 ff.

¹⁶⁴ By Aśok Agravāl.

¹⁶⁵ Hindi text in section 4.5.1 ‘Diction and syntax’, p. 191.

munal riots provoked in order to hold a rival responsible and thereby usurp his political position or win an election (L463, L2531¹⁶⁶).

Equally common seems the way politicians pervert and circumvent justice: they have criminals released from jail (L1881), elude laws through bribery (L2177), have to wear the masks of dacoits in order to win elections (L1051; also L1920) and are excluded from all political purges (L1972). Politicians, like the state they stand for, are regarded as an utter failure in both moral and professional respects.

Administration

In the second area of public life - administration - four realms of critical interest can be discerned, namely bureaucracy, the police, the judiciary and education.

Administration				
Bureaucracy	Police		Judiciary	Education
Administrators, officers, clerks	Police machinery	Policemen	Law courts	Educational personnel

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy and its representatives constitute the largest part of laghukathās concerned with administrative matters. A list of their attributes reads like a nightmare cabinet of administration. Civil servants, senior and junior officers and clerks populate the bureaucratic machinery which keeps the state running, and like the state and the politicians, the bureaucrats, too, stand for nepotism, corruption, mendacity, interchangeability and inefficiency; on top of this they are also said to be parasitic and bloodsucking, hypocritical, manipulative, opportunistic and arbitrary.

Nepotism and corruption play an even more important role for this group than for the state and its politicians. 'Know someone and you don't have to worry, know nobody and you have to worry' seems to be the motto of these laghukathās. (L1976, L2333,

¹⁶⁶ Translation of both texts in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', pp. 148-149 & 148.

L582, L1132 and L1368). Only in one *laghukathā*, which is untypical not only for the group but also for the whole body of texts, the corrupt protagonist realises his wrongful behaviour and changes for the better (L1890). Nepotism also plays a role where family relations prevent persons from being called to account for their gross mistakes (L1402; cf. also L2052 below), and corruption pervades all levels of administration: everything and everybody can or must be ‘bought’ - bureaucrats are highly manipulative and mendacious (L81, L1771).

Another central point of criticism is the officials’ arbitrary and often unscrupulous methods of exercising power on inferiors, an attribute which also features in *laghukathās* about the police. An example is a text describing how a junior engineer informs his superior that a dam that had been built by one of the superior’s relatives has collapsed and flooded the farmers’ fields. The senior engineer solves the problem by imposing a fine on the farmers for having damaged the dam while trying to water their fields. Not only does he protect his relative instead of holding him responsible for the damage, but he also has the facts distorted in such an absurd way that the victims are turned into the culprits (L2052). This kind of twist, with the weak being punished for something they have not done is the central theme of a range of texts (L2555, L2505, L1221, L1018). Superior officials are portrayed with an absolute and dictatorial power, of which they make thorough use (also L1747), while inferior officials are depicted as opportunistic and adulatory (L1655).

The alarming proportions of the bureaucrats’ depravity are vividly demonstrated by *laghukathās* whose central motif is the official who sucks people’s blood. In the *laghukathā Bagnakhe* [sic], ‘Claws’ (L246), for example, a first-person narrator relates his encounter with a ‘bald person in a swivel-chair’ - indicating the ‘official’ status - who literally devours other people:

Didn’t you say God gives no fingernails to the bald? But that isn’t really true. Will you listen to my story?

When I came into air-conditioned room No. 1 today, a bald hairless man was sitting in a biggish swivel-chair, rocking back and forth. His fingernails were stronger even than claws, sharp and curved. I saw these nails were sunk into another person’s flesh. Blood was glistening on the nails. His bald skull was glistening in the light. Saliva was dripping from his mouth. Shreds of flesh were stuck in his teeth. The satisfaction of having caught prey was playing on his face.

I immediately went out when I saw this. Because I did not have any weapon with me.¹⁶⁷

The total depersonalisation of the official in this and other texts furthermore indicates interchangeability and, consequently, inefficiency on the bureaucratic level, which has also been mentioned in the context of the state and the politicians. Due to the unqualified way in which the administrative system works, the outcome of bureaucratic efforts, as demonstrated in several texts, is either negative or nil (L141, L2166, L2691, L1402¹⁶⁸). These laghukathās can be subsumed under the heading ‘red tape’, a futile, ignorant bureaucracy, entangled in itself. The extent of the betrayal of the people is emphasised by the fact that the officials are often called ‘jan-sevak’ - servants of the people, which reminds us of their actual duties.

Police

As to the second administrative subgroup, criminal and threatening manners characterise both the police machinery and the individual policemen, the latter also being specially distinguished by their corrupt and arbitrary actions. While the state on the abstract level was pictured as a superstructural system, sensed as such by the writers rather than by the actual protagonists, the police machinery plays a more definite role. It stands for a vicious, collective but still perceptible power, an *éminence grise*, which terrifies the protagonists in spite or because of its facelessness and shapelessness. A commonly described situation is of a person being frightened by the very mention of the police station (L812¹⁶⁹). Another recurring behavioural pattern is that people are not ready to help others because they fear getting involved with the police, even if it is only as witnesses (L908, L1093; also in L2010, L2485 as a secondary motif).

The aforementioned motif of the equation of the dacoit and the state or the politician gets even more emphasis where the police, the actual arm of the law, is shown as the real and ‘lawful’ criminal (e.g. L486, L1788), often making common cause with thieves, taking their share of the stole goods (L2010, L2485). People are more afraid

¹⁶⁷ By Bhagirath.

¹⁶⁸ Translations of the latter two texts in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, pp. 160 & 140.

¹⁶⁹ Translation in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, p. 170.

of the police than of dacoits (L479) and criminals themselves are shocked by the police behaviour (L2585).

The criminal and threatening behaviour of the police becomes utterly vivid where concrete situations of police arbitrariness are described: people are arrested at random and robbed of their belongings by the police themselves (L2083, L2618), those who dare to report crimes are held responsible for those very crimes (L228, L798) and one text shows how a man is taken into custody for a crime which he refuses to commit: not willing to provide the police with alcohol he is later arrested under the law of prohibition (L2105). The absurdity of the situation adds to the appalling image that is drawn of the police (also L136). Those who do not drink or give or take bribes, i.e. are not immoral or corrupt, 'cannot render the police any service' (L729¹⁷⁰).

Judiciary

The third group of laghukathās about administration is concerned with the judiciary. Forming a relatively small part of the research unit they still leave a deep impression of the utter injustice done to the weak, since their plots fit in well with the over-all scheme of an administration characterised by inefficiency and arbitrariness. Because of the inherent contradiction the unjust judiciary, like the criminal police, becomes a very strong image. The basic notion conveyed is that truth does not play any role in the law courts, and no independent justice can be found by those at the lower end of the social hierarchy: an adivasi girl is mutilated by an influential man who is never brought to justice but instead becomes state governor (L567) and a man is wrongfully sentenced because of a plot of false testimonies by his superiors (L1628). The latter text paints the picture against the background of the ambitious motto of the Indian Union, 'Satyameva jayate', Only the Truth Will Prevail, unmasking and ridiculing it and thereby questioning not only the situation of the judiciary but the condition of the nation as a whole (also L596).

¹⁷⁰ Translation in section 4.4.3 'Title', p. 164.

How laws against corruption are eluded by means of corruption is demonstrated in two *laghukathās* of the sample, the judicial situation here featuring as a secondary motif. Those who are bound by new laws and even those who have enacted them are bribed, and they are more than ready to accept the bribes (L2177 above and L1012 below).

Education

The area of education plays an important role within the administrative sector. The respective *laghukathās* are characterised by sharp criticism of teachers and the way in which they run educational institutions. The main offence they are accused of is their massive irresponsibility for the future of the country, the teachers being those who are in charge of educating and modelling the next generation. A text which illustrates these sentiments clearly is Bhagīrath's *Śikṣā*, 'Education' (L264): a teacher, 'in the manner of a police superintendent who interrogates a guilty person', furiously asks some of his pupils why they have not done their homework. When they try to answer he vehemently reprimands them, making sarcastic comments about their explanations. The text closes:

All the boys are standing there, ashamed, guilty, heads bent. The teacher is standing there like a conqueror, his chest straight. The penalty - forty sit-ups and four strokes with the cane.

One boy thinks - Where there is so much shame, there can be no future.

The second thinks - It would be better to flee from this hell.

With clenched teeth, the third thinks - The Master has done something very stupid.

Someone should straighten his arrogance.

The fourth thinks - Is this school or prison? He was looking out for the happy chance to smash windows, doors and benches.

The fifth thinks nothing. He stands there bluntly.

Bitter and hard.¹⁷¹

The situation, described as one of war rather than of mutual respect, indicates the fruits this kind of teaching will bear: shame, withdrawal from education, aggression, bluntness - literally 'no future'. Other *laghukathās* show teachers failing by not living up to the high morals they are teaching (L472) or by teaching high morals from within an ivory tower, not realising that poverty and dependence might force people

¹⁷¹ By Bhagīrath.

to live by different moral standards (L115). The latter text, confronting the truth of 'life' with the truth of books can also be seen as a criticism of the intellectual in general.¹⁷²

The way in which corruption makes its appearance in educational institutions is shown in texts where students with or without the help of the teacher manage to manipulate their exam results (L405, L2422). The corrupt and often hypocritical and discriminatory teacher also stands at the centre of many other texts (L2213; L407, L1900 and L2303).

All in all, contemporary Indian public life as depicted in the *laghukathā* is a picture of extensive malfunctioning of the state and its administration on all levels. Its representatives are distinguished by a general lack of sense of honour and moral standards. The fiscal system is thoroughly pervaded by corruption and those at the upper end of the hierarchy excel in exploiting and taking advantage of the people under their 'protection'. India's future as painted by the *laghukathā* is barren: neither do the public figures show insight into their wrongdoings nor is there any hope for the future generation.

Societal life

The second section of content, *societal life*, deals with the societal situation and social values; it contains five subgroups. Four of them - social structures of power, economic poverty, communalism and religious groups, and individual and society - introduce man in different societal situations; the fifth group - social values - deals, as the term states, with various social and moral values and standards.

Societal life				
Social structures of power	Economic poverty	Communalism and religious groups	Individual and Society	Social values

¹⁷² Cf. below, section 'Social values', p. 90.

Social structures of power

The category 'social structures of power' forms the biggest of these subgroups. Its themes explore the relation of the powerful and the powerless on the different, sometimes overlapping levels of upper strata vs. lower strata, urban vs. rural and rich vs. poor. On each level, the methods used by the powerful to exercise their power are described, resulting in a crass black and white picture of the situation: egoism, immorality and unscrupulousness feature as characteristics of the powerful, self-respect and morality as those of the powerless.

Exploitation of the lower and dependent castes and strata takes place on the urban as well as the rural level: factory workers and village Harijans suffer likewise under the regime of their superiors, be they factory owners, union leaders or unscrupulous village headmen (L2661, L2559, L259). The village headman also plays an important role in *laghukathās* focusing on the methods of exercising power. Poor farmers and low-caste villagers are kept in check in various arbitrary ways, e.g. by having their water supplies cut off (L204), by being 'bribed' into complacency (L69¹⁷³) or by sheer physical violence (L200). A common means of subjugation is furthermore intimidation (L2407, L1639 and L2018; the latter two texts treat the subject metaphorically; cf. above, section 'state'), and it is shown that power and utter disrespect for the powerless go hand in hand. At times, mercilessness escalates into gross and arbitrary violence: in order to cheer up his crying little son a village headman beats an innocent shoemaker's boy to death. The fact that he can get away with it demonstrates the powerlessness of the poor as well as the failure of the system (L517).

A few *laghukathās*, however, show how the common hierarchical power structure is disturbed and how the members of lower castes or strata try to overcome their fate, retain their self-respect and stand up against the powerful, be it through words (L1866) or through action: a shoemaker's daughter rebuffs a zamindar's attempt to rape her (L2589) and a driver rejects an immoral order, slapping his master in the face (L130). The last two examples illustrate the above-mentioned pattern of the contrast between the powerless and the powerful equalling the contrast in high mor-

¹⁷³ Hindi text in section 4.5.1 'Diction and syntax', p. 197-198.

als and low morals. This is also the basis for the pair urban vs. rural whose underlying theme shows the innocent or even naive person from a rural background usually being intimidated and exploited by the sly city-dweller (L533, L791).

Similarly, in the third group, rich vs. poor, the rich are represented as immoral and simply 'bad' as opposed to the 'good' poor who are discriminated against (e.g. L630, L1665). The rich are characterised by their pitilessness, often paired with a cruel egoism and arbitrariness. A common means of describing their heartlessness is to show the rich and the poor in similar situations, thereby emphasising the contrast. An example is a text which presents an officer for food supply who, on a hot day, has himself made a cold drink by his servant but drives away a poor boy who wants to drink water from the pump in front of his mansion. The cruelty of the situation is given an extra impetus by the fact that the water simply oozes away into the ground (L745; also L637¹⁷⁴, L721, L2302, L2609 and L989). Another commonly used motif - a parent in desperate need of money for medicine for a dying child - is expressed in a simple but impressive manner in the laghukathā *Niṣṭhurtā*, 'Cruelty' (L1676; also L989):

In the morning:

'Give me ten paisa for my child, Baba, he has been starving for days.'

In the afternoon:

'Give me ten paisa for medicine, Baba, my child is sick with hunger.'

In the evening:

'Give me ten paisa for a shroud, Baba, my child has died.'

Now all that remained was the soundless, cruel, black night.¹⁷⁵

A recurring motif is furthermore the rich person who regards street children as equally low or even lower than street dogs. A typical example is *Rogī zamīn*, 'Sick earth' (L2386; also L1968):

In Babu Shyamsundarji's 'house' a function took place. A native lady of foreign style alighted from a car. On her lap a shaggy dog of foreign breed, blinking its small eyes. As soon as the native dogs in the vicinity saw the foreign dog, they started barking. The lady took bread out of her bag and tossed it in the air. The dogs fell upon the bread. One dog managed to get hold of a bigger piece of bread and quickly disappeared into an alley. The other dogs followed him.

¹⁷⁴ Translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', p. 126.

¹⁷⁵ By Rājendra Pāṇḍey 'Unmukt'.

Smiling, the lady turned round. A couple of half-naked children were standing there, watching all this. She hesitated. Just then Babu Shyamsundarji came out. He welcomed her. The lady didn't answer. She was still looking at the children. Babu Shyamsundarji did not like that. He approached the children and shouted, 'Get lost, you dogs'.

Frightened the half-naked children disappeared down the same alley.¹⁷⁶

False and genuine pity by the rich is demonstrated in only a few texts (L2537, L1163); rich or powerful people with a conscience remain the exception in the *laghukathā*. The underlying twofold division rich vs. poor equalling bad vs. good is also illustrated in several *laghukathās* which show the poor ready to help and share the few goods they have as opposed to the rich being mean and selfish (L2235, L762, L2597, L2636, L2455, L2214). Occasionally, texts can be found which deal with the topic of rich vs. poor at a more abstract level (L2690, L743).

Economic poverty

The second subgroup within the category of 'societal life' is economic poverty. In contrast to the realm of rich vs. poor, which deals with the condition of a relationship, this group focuses on the theme of poverty itself and how the poor deal with it. The texts in the sample show people adopting different attitudes towards their own poverty: an old coolie, whose 'kitchen hearth has lain cold for a week', is still too proud to take alms (L429), a young man is ashamed in front of his friends because of his torn shirt (L811), a villager who has come to a town to work is dreaming about how he will soon fetch his whole family (L316) and a man is desperate wondering how to buy medicine for his son and send money to his old father (L1039). A characteristic of all these texts is that they simply describe a situation in apparently neutral terms, being not as aggressively critical as the texts which concentrate on the utter helplessness of the poor in their relation with the rich.

Quite a few *laghukathās* show how the poor are trapped in their poverty and how this poverty forces them to take extreme measures, reaching from self-humiliation and prostitution to murder (L12, L2424, L2387, L2741 and L557). The cruellest text of the sample demonstrates how a man turns to parricide to support his family: a hospital has burnt down and the government announces that those people who have

¹⁷⁶ By Vikram Sonī.

lost a relative in the flames are entitled to compensation. When a man in another hospital learns that his father is incurably ill he decides to burn the old man, who is still alive, to get the compensation and thereby guarantee his family's survival (L2323).

Communalism and religious groups

The third subgroup of 'societal life' revolves around themes of communalism, Partition and religion. Naturally, Partition itself does not play a particularly important role for a generation of writers who were mainly born in the late 1940s or 50s. Therefore, laghukathās of this group deal only with the late aftermath of Partition and the following wars and conflicts: communalism, distrust and the continuing pain of a people living in a scarred country.

The basic attitude of these texts is characterised by a distinct impartiality and unconditional humanism. Generally, the texts dealing with communal riots show neutrality either by not expressing to which religious groups the murderers or victims belong¹⁷⁷, or by the fact that laghukathā-writers of each religious community criticise their own rather than the other party (L1191, L1965). A text operating on neutral grounds, shows a little boy who, during a time of communal riots, passes by a mosque and a temple, greeting each of them respectfully. He is stoned to death by both Hindus and Muslims at the same time because each party believes he belongs to the other one (L2727).

The way in which the fanatical execution of power for religious reasons can even affect members of the same religious group is shown in the laghukathā *Sirfirā*, 'The Madman' (L379):

One day, burdened with economic distress and religious pressures, he hit the bottle hard. Staggering in his drunkenness, he came home, and in his rage he set the holy Koran alight.

The members of the household started wailing and assembled the whole neighbourhood. The holy Koran was more than half-burnt before their joint efforts could extinguish it.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. above, section 2.3.2 'Maṅṭo and Gibran', p. 33.

This insult to the sacred scriptures jangled not only the neighbourhood's but the entire city's nerves.

On the next day, at the time of the morning prayer, the madman who had insulted the sacred scriptures had his throat cut and killed. When the members of his household refused to take away the corpse after the post-mortem, the police buried him like an heirless man.

The half-burnt holy Koran is now kept under the rigid protection and supervision of the whole neighbourhood... and nobody even knows the whereabouts of the madman's grave.¹⁷⁸

Ironically fusing Persian-Arabic and Sanskrit vocabulary ('qurān-e-pāk' and 'pavitṛ dharmgranth'), this text focuses on unnecessary religious pressure and the brutal and rigid manners of dealing with renegades. The motif of the madman as the actual normal and responsible person will later be analysed in more detail.¹⁷⁹

Some texts deal with the individual pain caused by partition itself (L313, L79, L241; the latter text deals with the topic metaphorically), while others reveal that the seemingly deep-rooted mutual distrust is a man-made concept that depends on human prejudice and is not necessarily justified (L1734). Correspondingly, communal tension is often shown as provoked by outsiders rather than being truly felt by the individuals within the respective groups (L2341, cf. also above L463, L2531: politicians have communal riots incited to their own advantage). A strict division between different religious groups and, as a consequence, between two countries, seems to be less a wish of the individuals themselves than an artificial, redundant but still painfully well-working concept imposed on them. Occasionally, *laghukathās* demonstrate that in an encounter between individuals the hostility makes room for a natural humanism (L1560).

Individual and society

The fourth subgroup of societal life deals with the individual facing modern society, experiencing hard-heartedness, dependence on societal restraints, loss of identity, isolation and degradation. The part of the antagonist is now no longer taken by a particular group or an individual representing this group but by society as a whole, often epitomised by 'the people'.

¹⁷⁸ By Kamleś Bhaṭṭ.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. section 4.5.3 'Rhetorical figures', pp. 241 f.

Society's pitilessness is shown in texts about people maliciously censuring those who do not comply with the societal standards by doing 'what is not done' (L2273, L2424). Consequently, the fear of social condemnation can be stronger than the grief about the death of a loved one and may even overshadow a mother's love for her child (L350, L2354). Those who refuse to adhere to the roles as provided by society are ostracised - it is the societal system which determines the individual (L167, L111), illustrated vividly in the laghukathā *Samāj*, 'Society' (L2342):

I want to carve stone.

Dew! I want to cast your image.

But when I picked up hammer and chisel... I turned into stone myself, and society the sculptor...¹⁸⁰

But society not only confines and moulds the individuals, it also devours them and deprives them of their individuality (L2094). A modern urban environment leaves the individual isolated and speechless as *Aslī rūp*, 'True form' (L1145) shows:

'Bastard...swine!', he said, taking the tin-tongue out of his mouth and putting it into the wardrobe.

He took off the long black gown, which was much torn, folded it and put it under his pillow. Tossing the crown into the wardrobe his hand suddenly stopped. He stared at the crown. How beautiful it had been, when it was new. He had bought it for five rupees. Now it had turned black. And tattered. And he himself, how beautiful he had been! The village dandy, after having passed the eighth grade, he had run off to Delhi to become a big man: the thought brought tears to his eyes.

Defeated everywhere, he had assumed this form. It was ten years ago. He remembered, when he had gone out for the first time, wearing the new black gown made of cotton, hands and face coloured black, in his mouth a red tin-tongue and the crown on his forehead, he had made a total of fifteen rupees. He had been very happy about this easy job. What he had liked most, had been not having to speak. Silently he would stand there and jingle the small bells around his ankles. The people would recognise the image of Mother Kali and give this or that. Then it became a habit with him. But for the last ten days he had felt a sharp pain in his feet. Eventually he began to starve, just doing nothing, so he had to limp out again. One boy mocked him mischievously - 'Crippled Kali Mai', and then children were running all around him calling out 'Crippled Kali Mai'. First the pain in his feet, now the children's mischief. Inwardly he launched into a vulgar barrage of abuse, but because of the artificial tongue in his mouth he could not speak. It seemed to him as if this tongue...¹⁸¹

Another aspect of persons not being seen as human but as 'show-pieces', deprived of honour and individuality, is illustrated by a laghukathā which shows beautiful young

¹⁸⁰ By Suśilā Sitāriyā.

¹⁸¹ By Śarāfat Alī Khān.

girls exhibited at a fair along with some ox-carts (L2678; cf. L777 below, section ‘man and woman’: a painter exploits his girlfriend by exhibiting an intimate picture he has drawn of her).

Social values

This last section of the category ‘societal life’ deals with a large variety of social and moral values and norms, questioning existing values and depicting the lack, change or decline of moral standards in modern Indian society.

The lack of moral values is, first of all, reflected in a number of behavioural patterns well-known from the world of politicians and bureaucrats: nepotism, corruption and hypocrisy pervade all sorts of social groups, as we are shown by the *laghukathās* of this category. The texts introduce, for example, corrupt and corruptible doctors and pharmacists (L159), political demonstrators (L98) or journalists (L1165; also L2456, L1113); they present a pleasure-seeking, worldly and even violent *sannyasi* (L2128) and immoral moralisers (L2438). Special importance in the context of hypocrisy falls to the share of the social benefactor who benefits him- or herself in the first place (L1533; also L164, L615 and L1707). The texts in the sample furthermore lament the loss of the respect for human life (L288), honesty (L2812), loyalty and unselfishness. *Laghukathās* in general, naturally, cover a broader spectrum of individual values.

The texts dealing with loyalty and unselfishness deserve special mention, because they employ an interesting style of representation: the dethronement of ancient heroes, which is also employed by several other *laghukathās*.¹⁸² Such texts re-narrate well-known episodes - mostly from the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* or popular tales - but change the endings by giving them an unexpected twist, namely the exposition of the traditional hero as a spineless person of highly questionable moral standards. The texts of the sample unmask Lakshman, the emblem of loyalty, as an impostor, eloping with Sita (L1581) and Abhimanyu, representing unselfish helpfulness, as calculating and demanding: instead of readily offering the Pandavas his help, as he does in the

¹⁸² Other unmasked heroes are, e.g. Arjun in Saroj Dvivedī’s *Arjun kī pahūnc*, ‘Arjun’s long arm’, in: Balrām, *KN2*, p. 160, Aladdin in Śyām Nārāyaṇ’s *Gulāmī*, ‘Slavery’, *Haṃs*, May 1993, p. 39.

Mahābhārata, he states his terms - he wants on a sealed document a plot of land signed over to his name, land on which the cinema of Hastinapura is to be built (L1583). The anachronism further emphasises the absurdity of the situation.

The transition in values furthermore plays a role where the contrast of a tradition and modernity is concerned. The traditional, honourable life-style of fathers and forefathers is shown to be giving way to the disreputable and unprincipled ways of the modern generation (L1086, L1819). Contrasting life-styles, as for example of the career-orientated and the family-orientated woman, appear to be incompatible (L1253). The laghukathā *Mānasiktā*, 'Mentality' (L952), criticises the modern attitude of anglophilia by comparing past and present ways of learning the alphabet:

When the country was a slave to the English, my father taught me. Then I learned first of all - *ka* for *kabūtar* (pigeon), *kha* for *khargoś* (rabbit).

Today the country is free. I teach my son. My son learned first of all - *a* for apple, *b* for ball.¹⁸³

A common theme of various laghukathās is furthermore the failure of the modern intellectual, who is shown as unrealistic, impractical and uninspiring. Thus, the intellectual in his ivory tower is depicted in two texts (L1855, L185), the latter directing its criticism against the writers themselves: an authors' workshop about the 'common man' consists mainly of 'sophisticated' talk and a buffet for the more important writers; nobody cares for the young writers and nobody can get any message across to the 'common man' himself, who was brought to the workshop as 'illustrative material' by one of the juniors. In a world that is increasingly devoid of values not even the intellectual who should engage in a critical evaluation of modern society and ideally work towards its improvement comes up to expectations.

Contemporary Indian societal life is shown to be utterly hierarchy-ridden, the relationship between the powerful and the powerless reflecting the ever-present abuse of the weak by the strong. Exploitation is in many cases combined with a heinous violation of legal and moral limits, outraging the dignity of man. The laghukathā draws a blunt and desolate picture of the poor, and shows society as leaving people speech-

¹⁸³ By Sureś Jāngir 'Uday'.

less, alone, without identity. As to social values, a general exchange of traditional values for a growing modern valuelessness in all areas of daily life is lamented, at times based on a rather narrow moralising perspective. In the overall context, these laghukathās add to the picture of a socially and morally rotten Indian society, at times lit by a singular spark of hope but generally plunged into darkness.

Private life

The third section of criticism of society deals with the individuals' private life on three levels, interactions within the family circle - focusing on parent-child relations and on the individual's position within family structures - interactions between men and women, and interactions between men and fellow-men, i.e. general encounters between individuals on a personal level.

Private life			
Family		Men and women	Men and fellow-men
Parents and children	Individual and family		

The shift of interest from the public-societal to the personal area goes hand in hand with a widening of focus as far as the variety of themes is concerned. This is a logical consequence since the protagonists' personal experiences, attitudes and estimations of situations take more room now and therefore allow the writers to take more intimate and detailed viewpoints. As indicated earlier, these texts represent an attitude of non-commitment, while others which deal critically with interpersonal behaviour may still be seen as socially engaged.

Parents and children

The relationship between parents and their children, as depicted in the texts of the sample, is determined by three different issues: money, marriage and the 'generational contract'. The laghukathā draws a picture of a continuous violation of mutual generational duties, but against all expectations these violations are not shown as entirely

due to a change in values or a clash of tradition and modernity. Individualisation does play a role for the younger generation, but unlike in many post-Independence Hindi short stories, the fact that inter-generational obligations are not complied with often seems to reflect a generally valid truth; this is corroborated by the fact that *laghukathās* tell far more often of the parents' failure than of the children's.

The only *laghukathā* of this group which mirrors inadequate behaviour on the side of the children shows a kind of modern individualism paired with insensitivity: an old man on the verge of death summons his four sons, all of whom are well educated and well-off, in order to teach them the value of unity and solidarity. He intends to do so by showing them a bundle of wood alluding to a traditional tale but his sons are alienated from traditional knowledge and do not understand the father's hint. Instead they talk disrespectively to him about his death and funeral and are surprised when their father dies 'fast and easily' (L930). Other *laghukathās* present situations where the children's neglect of their parents is only seen as a common behavioural pattern.

The violation of the generational contract on the side of the parents, on the other hand, covers a broad variety of areas, from the failure to provide a good example to the abuse of children. Parents, like teachers, are liable for the upbringing of the next generation and hence for the survival of a people, and, like teachers, they are accused of irresponsibility (L456, L2364). One *laghukathā* even depicts a scene of severe child abuse: a father rapes his daughter and expels her from his house when she becomes pregnant (L1316). This text is an exception insofar as only very few texts refer to these kinds of atrocities with such clarity.¹⁸⁴

Situations where monetary matters govern the nature of the parent-child relationship mostly show the pattern of money providing the primary standard against which a child's value is measured (L2228). The parents' respect for their children depends exclusively on if and how much money they earn (L1097), even if a high income involves criminal activities (L2423). A text which shows the supremacy of money over

¹⁸⁴ Interestingly, in a later version of this *laghukathā* the ending has been modified: the rapist is no longer the father himself but his friend.

the love for a child is *Ataḥ: Śrī Lābh*, ‘Consequently, Mr. Profit’ (L493; also L700 and L1635):

Misfortune abducted his little son from his house. He placed an announcement in the newspapers. Hope said, ‘Someone is sure to bring your son back within a few days in order to get the reward of fifty rupees’. Reality and Hopelessness declared sharply, ‘What difference will your fifty rupees make. He can sell the boy’s blood for hundreds’.

But some days later a letter from Misfortune arrived. It said - ‘Bring one lakh to the cremation ground and take your boy. Don’t try to resist, cry, scream or inform the police, otherwise...’ He thought, ‘It’ll take me years to earn a lakh. A son I can get within a few months...’¹⁸⁵

Money - often in the form of dowry - also plays an important role in the area of marriage. A common pattern of these texts is that fathers try to ‘sell’ their sons at the highest and their daughters at the lowest possible price (L354, L1871). Only one *laghukathā* of this group shows some insight on the side of a father whose daughter has been rejected (L49). This text carries an explicit call for action in the last sentence which states that the ‘leprosy of dowry’ needs to be removed from society.

Another aspect of marriage brought up in the context of parent-child relations is the arranged marriage. It is not so much the arrangement itself, though, which is questioned, but the children’s techniques of avoiding it (L1226, L1247). In general, arranged marriage does not play an important role for the *laghukathā*.

Individual and Family

The second group of themes revolving around the family deals with family life in the broadest sense, describing general matters of daily life as well as the individual’s situation within family structures. Those *laghukathās* in particular which represent a ‘slice of life’ show strong similarities to the short story in terms of tone and complexity, indicating thereby that a certain range of themes calls for the short story as a suitable genre rather than for the *laghukathā*. This corroborates Jain’s supposition of a natural connection of content and form: he believes that a theme itself seeks out its

¹⁸⁵ By Kamal Coprā.

appropriate medium and thus spontaneously assumes the form of a particular genre.¹⁸⁶

Various laghukathās of this group deal either with daily life on a very general basis or with the alienation and isolation of the individual within his or her own family, a theme typically adopted by the *Nai kahānī*. The texts often focus on socio-politically insignificant situations, giving rather private glimpses into an individual's life, thereby allowing a kind of intimate insight which is untypical for the laghukathā (e.g. L1629). Thus, one text which has to be seen as a short story rather than a laghukathā is *Mṛtyubodh*, 'Presentiment of death' (L2046). It tells of an old woman on her sickbed who, surrounded by her family, experiences only rejection and weariness and therefore feels utterly lonely (also L872):

Because of her high fever which had thrown her into a state of delirium, it seemed to old Sumitra as if she were hearing every single sound not only with her ears but with her whole body -

'Bare Bhaiya must have lost his mind!' - the irritated voice of the younger one - 'After all, why was it necessary to send us a telegram so soon? What have we gained by coming here?'

'I should have given the work order for the Mall Road. Now that bastard Sharma will have grabbed the job. I've lost of lakhs by sitting around here!' The voice of the middle son.

'I have been telling him that from the start - let the second telegram arrive, old people hardly give up the ghost so quickly. But he hardly ever listens to anybody but himself. Now we've already been sitting here for four days swatting flies.' The enraged voice of the middle daughter-in-law.

'You people are distressed after only four days. Look at us, we have to cope with all this every day...' The distressed voice of the elder daughter-in-law.

She felt as if someone had plunged her into deep water: the voices in the room seemed to be coming from far away. Various good and bad moments of her life were floating before her eyes - like one transparency after the other with lightning speed the days of her childhood, her wedding, the birth of her children, their education, weddings, partings, the death of her husband, her loneliness, her old age, and now... Did illness in old age have just one meaning? She just had a bit of a fever and these people started lying in wait. Thinking like this in her state of high fever, her breathing became unsteady and wheezing sounds began to come from her mouth...

Old Sumitra's attention was drawn back into the room. In the room there was turmoil...

'She's gone...! She's gone...!!' One voice.

'Call the doctor... quickly!'

'What can the doctor do now! Inform Bare Bhaiya!' The younger brother's irritable voice.

'Hey, lay her on the floor, first of all!' The excited voice of the middle daughter-in-law.

¹⁸⁶ Mahāvīr Prasād Jain, 'Hindī-laghukathā...', pp. 14-20.

‘Hey, bring some Ganges water from the puja niche.’ The orders of the elder daughter-in-law.

As soon as she has gained control over her thoughts, her breathing becomes normal and slowly she opens her eyes. Seeing her eyes opening, deathlike silence descends upon the room. Her eyes wander towards her daughters-in-law who are standing there like statues. Her children, whom she had brought into the world and raised... it doesn’t take her even a second to read their minds. She can no longer bear to see the terrible hopelessness of her sons and the annoyance of her daughters-in-law at the sight of her sudden recovery, and she closes her eyes again. Tears emerge from the corners of her eyes and roll down her wrinkled face.¹⁸⁷

At first sight, this text reminds us of the aforementioned *laghukathā* about the father on the deathbed who summons his four sons to give them some last advice; a closer look, however, shows that the texts actually differ in two respects - the viewpoint and the central motif. In the latter text a more personal perspective is assumed by the use of free indirect discourse and a clearly partial and intimate tone on the narrator’s side, whereas the former *laghukathā* is presented by a neutral omniscient narrator. Besides, it can be noticed that the former text focuses on a situation showing a generational conflict due to a collision of tradition and modernity, while the latter concentrates on the inner feelings of a person. Other texts of the sample which deal with the egoism and carelessness of the family towards one of its members avoid the highly intimate viewpoint of the above-given example; they are, thus, more *laghukathā*-typical and also more ‘committed’ (e.g. L1283).

Further issues of daily family life depicted in the sample are monetary matters and the obligation of the individual to his or her family, which may result in constraints and a lack of personal freedom (L906, L142, L2417).

Men and women

The second group of *laghukathās* dealing with private life focuses on the relationship between men and women, woman’s status within society and the societal forces a relationship has to deal with; the texts cover, like those about the family, a broad spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes.

¹⁸⁷ By Sukeś Sāhni.

The relation between men and women is depicted on several levels, including the questions of the nature of love, truthfulness, devotion and the transitoriness of love (L2781, L1469). The unsteadiness of love in contemporary society is portrayed in a text which again shows short-story-like features, giving an intimate account of a complex situation and the inner feelings of the persons involved (L1090). Another group of texts concentrates not so much on the nature of love and loving behaviour but on the general relation between the sexes, the difference in attitudes and role expectations (L604, L2740, L2139, L1450).

As far as the woman's status is concerned, the *laghukathā* presents women in their relationships with men as confronted with disrespectful, exploitive and arbitrary behaviour, be it on part of their partners or on part of other male members of society (L532, L777; cf. L2678 above, section 'individual and society': young women are exhibited alongside ox-carts). One text even shows how a newly wedded girl is forced to spend her wedding night with her father-in-law instead of her husband (L1638).

Other *laghukathās* deal with the question of how the relationship of man and woman is determined by society and its rules, demonstrating that individuals are not easily given the option to stay with the persons they love; men and women are restricted in their choice of partners (L1614). A tone of inwardness and privacy brings several of these texts very close to the short story. The *laghukathā Akālgrast rište*, 'Famine-stricken relationships' (L1967), narrates the experiences of a couple trying to force their way together through the 'desert' of society:

The two of them were going along in the desert. An ocean of hot sand, and peeling blisters on their feet... they were separated from the last caravan which was fleeing from the famine-stricken desert, so they were wandering about for three days. Like blotting-paper the famine had soaked up the water of every heart and every eye. The drought had even found its way into relationships...

An obligation? They were lover and beloved, and went on together. They had already lost all ways out of the hot sand ocean... the beloved was already broken... she fell! The lover also lost his strength to carry her and he left her lying there and went on... far... beyond the vast glistening mounds of sand something was shimmering, like a stream of water... he went on as far as he could go. A mirage was dancing a frenzied dance in front of his eyes. He was not destined for a single drop of water. He also fell to the ground, like a broken tree... How long can one go on in the end...

Riders on camelback, a caravan coming out on relief work by chance passed that spot... their glance fell upon the lover, they picked him up... With a few drops of water the lover's thirst increased... He remembered his beloved, his heart and eyes found their brightness again. He made a gesture with his hand, there... fa...r, she is thirsty...

The caravan set out once again. Their glance fell upon flocks of hovering crows and crouching vultures... from far away a faint blue woman's skirt was glimmering in the sunlight. ... quickly, somewhere she... the sentence stuck in the lover's throat...

The tender body of his beloved had withered in the sunshine and had already become stiff, vultures and crows had clawed the body, abhorrent... when the lovers saw this scene he shrieked loudly and collapsed... nothing but foam emerged from his mouth.¹⁸⁸

Men and fellow-men

The third group of laghukathās concerned with interpersonal relations on the private level illustrates how persons deal with each other and how their behaviour is governed by their various attitudes. These texts are distinguished from the groups of individual-family and individual-society by the fact that they refer to a direct encounter between two individuals or an individual confronting a cluster of individually acting people rather than the family as a group or society as an impersonal and unknown quantity. Although occasionally human and charitable behaviour is encountered where people deal with each other directly rather than with an anonymous mass (L1698, L2419), the tenor, by and large, stays the same: people are egoistic, hard-hearted, indifferent and ungrateful; communication seems impossible. A few texts describe encounters on neutral grounds, simply showing a certain facet of life in a short-story-like manner.

Egoism takes various shapes on the interpersonal level, ranging from pitilessness to cruelty. A typical situation is shown by a laghukathā describing how witnesses of an accident are more interested in speculating about the personal situation of the victim than in helping or even feeling genuine pity (L2249; cf. L2235 above, section 'structures of power': instead of helping a sick beggar woman people gather and stare at her). At times the refusal to help may even lead to the death of the suffering person (L1589). 'Charity-begins-at-home' is shown to be a common behavioural pattern (L518¹⁸⁹; also L132).

¹⁸⁸ By Vibhā Raśmi.

¹⁸⁹ Translation in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 157.

Interpersonal behaviour is furthermore characterised by a lack of commitment, mistrust, ingratitude and double morals. People are unwilling take responsibility for their fellow-men (L2695), and are all too ready to suspect persons of a low status of being untrustworthy, dishonest or simply stupid (L1040, L1711); they act opportunistically and fail to appreciate friendliness (L2319), and are quick to help the rich but refuse to help the poor (L917). Two *laghukathās* of the sample illustrate this dehumanisation of mankind metaphorically, comparing men with animals: dogs and vultures, two kinds of animals of unmistakably low esteem, are shown to be less barbarous and brutal than humans (L555, L2733).¹⁹⁰

The issue of communication which figured in some of the aforementioned *laghukathās* on the levels of public and societal life plays a role on the private level as well. The text *Holī / sampreṣaṇ*, ‘Holi / Communication’ (L1070), shows the individuals’ inability to get in touch with each other:

At Dhulaindī I went to her house. I was drenched with colours. Her clothes were sparkling clean. Not a drop of colour on them. I turned back.

At Raṅg Pancmī I went to her house. As if hiding. My clothes were sparkling clean. Not a drop of colour on them. She was drenched with colours.

I turned back.¹⁹¹

Even on the occasion of Holi, the colourful festival of fertility, centring around intense, if not necessarily ‘language-based’ communication, the individuals remain isolated within their respective spheres, unable to bridge interpersonal gaps. Another text tells about the first-person narrator’s encounter with a fellow-traveller whose implicit homosexual advance leaves him helpless as to how to react (L2724). Homosexuality may be occasionally alluded to in other texts as well (cf. L257 below) but is not usually openly discussed as a primary motif.

Altogether the panorama of private life as depicted by the *laghukathā* allows a broader picture to evolve than could be seen on the levels of public and societal life. Many texts of this category seem to function as a ‘mirror of life’ as demanded by V.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. section 4.3.2 ‘Protagonists’, p. 107 f.

¹⁹¹ By Kṛṣṇa Kamleś.

Prabhākar¹⁹², taking intimate viewpoints, without attempting to produce any kind of socio-politically ‘awakening’ effect on the reader. Next to these non-committed, publicly and socially unimportant day-to-day affairs, another strand of text can be discerned, presenting selfish and inhuman behavioural patterns, which have been shown to control the public and societal level and can be seen as an indicator for a committed attitude behind the respective texts. Individuals in their private life have to deal with and emotionally digest a colourful variety of good and bad experiences, depicted in humorous, dispassionate or critical ways.

The Nature of Life

A similar approach can be seen for the texts which fall into the second main thematic category, ‘the nature of life’, which must be divided into the sections of ‘proverbs and folk-wisdom’ and ‘philosophical questions’.

The Nature of Life	
Proverbs and Folk-wisdom	Philosophical Questions

Although some of these texts present situations which are, at first sight, similar to those being registered as committed laghukathās, their classification as texts of this category is justified by the fact that their themes do not have the shocking revelation of personally or socially disruptive incidents as their focal point but are illustrative of general - pleasant or unpleasant - truths.

Proverbs and Folk-wisdom

Texts of this section can be described as illustrations of familiar sayings, i.e. pictures of some general truth of life. On being read, they bring to mind one or the other proverb as the central idea of the text, as e.g. ‘as you make your bed so you must lie on it’ (L1834, titled with the Hindi version of this saying: *Apnī karnī-bharnī*), ‘ill-gotten wealth never thrives’ (L2615), or ‘pride goes before a fall’ (L2577).

¹⁹² Cf. section 3.1 ‘Authors’ intentions’, p. 53.

Two texts of the sample take a rather humorous approach to illustrate their central ideas. A laghukathā which shows that ‘he who grasps all things will lose all’¹⁹³ features a minister and an avaricious officer: having saved the minister’s life, the officer is granted a wish but he goes too far and asks for the minister’s ‘chair’ (kursī), i.e. his position. The minister, contrary to the reader’s expectations, keeps his promise; he has his old broken chair delivered to the officer’s house and then sits down on his new chair to commence with his work (L2165). The use of this kind of pun, i.e. the literal interpretation of a figurative meaning, is a popular feature of other laghukathās of this kind; they provoke a feeling of gloating in the reader rather than of shock (also L363: it is easy to fall into one’s own trap).

Not all the texts of this section, though, refer back to a repertory of proverbial wisdom. An example which takes up the Akbar-Birbal context shows how anecdotes can constitute the basis for laghukathās, the recruitment of well-known material being a common feature of the genre. But where committed texts make use of ‘Great Tradition’ material to express socio-political criticism, laghukathās with a ‘lighter’ tone rather rely on ‘Little Tradition’ sources. Just like the committed texts, they reverse the original patterns: in our example the Akbar-Birbal plot does not develop along the familiar lines of Akbar being humorously enlightened by his sharp-witted minister - Birbal and his intellect are rather the topic of a conversation between Akbar and another minister. Akbar, on being humbly queried why he always asked Birbal absurd questions, answers that it would be dangerous to silence an intelligent person, because his surplus energy might be directed at one’s own downfall (L662). Akbar thus reverses the usual situation and presents himself as cleverer than his minister.

Philosophical questions

The second section of the category on the nature of life deals with philosophical questions or concepts. Several texts take up single aspects of human existence revolving around such themes as violence, power, success and failure, liberty, sin, truth and the power of the mind; other laghukathās cover the nature of life in a broad sense,

¹⁹³ Ādhī choṛ sārī ko dhāve, ādhī rahe na sārī pāve (He who drops the Half to run after the Whole will neither keep the Half nor get the Whole).

dealing for example with the struggle of life or the meaning of life, reality and the modern human being. Occasionally the ideas are presented in a mode of artistic concealment, demanding of the reader a close re-reading and scrutinising of the text before he can grasp its full meaning; another regular way of presentation is the allegorical style.

Themes which are repeatedly represented allegorically are, for example, power and success (L2471, L2396¹⁹⁴). Personal success, or rather its absence, is also the theme of the *laghukathā Asaphaltā*, 'Failure' (L1174), which, in style and tone, assumes the gestalt of a prose poem:

Whenever I tried to dive in,
the entire Mansarovar
turned into a cupped hand!¹⁹⁵

As opposed to the allegorical texts, this *laghukathā* is given a more intimate design by the touch of personal involvement.

One of the texts dealing with violence focuses on the nature of sin: a boy sees a cat killing a pigeon and thereupon starts throwing stones at it. When his mother tells him to stop it because it was a sin to kill the cat he asks her if the cat had not sinned killing the pigeon. As the mother knows no answer the boy kills the cat (L974). The central question raised by this text remains unanswered: does only he sin who has insight into and understanding of his deeds or is sinful behaviour possible without knowing about a concept of sin? (Also L931)

Other philosophical texts of the sample deal with the power of the mind and the importance of independent thinking (L291, L1993), while one example warns against the potentially devastating dangers of enlightenment (L2712). Furthermore, we find *laghukathās* probing into the quest for 'the greatest truth', which, in the end, is suggested as lying in the plain bread that keeps one alive on a daily basis (L547; cf. L115 above, section 'education'), and into the unbreakable will to gain freedom (L312),

¹⁹⁴ Translation in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', pp. 150-151.

¹⁹⁵ By Dāmodar Khaṛṣe.

which includes the search for the liberation from a senselessness and uselessness of life (L257).

A recurring theme of philosophical *laghukathās* is what may be called the ‘wheel of life’. Some texts, for example, sharply contrast a child’s naivety and innocence with the older generation’s knowledge about life’s hardship. Unlike *laghukathās* about the family, they focus on basic differences between youth and old age rather than young and old persons (L1699, L2371). Other texts portray the fight of life, for example, by showing that one person’s death is another person’s life: a shroud seller is necessarily glad about a death which only causes distress to others (L2720).

Man’s fear of unvarnished truth is depicted in the *laghukathā Naṅgī duniyā*, ‘Naked World’ (L2238). It reveals the first-person narrator’s utmost angst to be forced to see things as they are:

‘Madman... madman... madman...’ - the boys’ uproar, the young men’s curiosity, the old men’s fascination! An uproar in the streets and a large group of boys.

I too opened the door and went out - to see the appearance of the madman. His hair dishevelled... face smeared with clay... The boys’ monkey-troops attacking with bricks and stones and the madman running after the children, a dance in the streets... Śiva’s frenzied dance of destruction.

He is not mad. The people insist on calling him mad. Why do they throw stones, these people?

...No ...no... I too have made a mistake in what I said. He certainly is mad. Don’t you see... how he rips the clothes off his body... how he stands there without clothes... absolutely naked!

...When they see him naked, the children begin to clap boisterously. The young men begin to laugh wildly. The old men begin to whisper.

... And I am dying of shame. Yes... when I see him naked I begin to feel ashamed. I raise my eyes towards my neighbours’ big house. Shame, shame... how the girls curiously open the windows... and see his nakedness!!...

It begins to seem to me as if it is not only him who is naked... as if I too was naked... as if all people around me were naked. In my eyes the world itself appears naked. I run home, I want to fetch a torn rag and give it to him. But helplessly I pause. The lack of clothes is not the reason for his nakedness... it is his madness. He himself has ripped the clothes off his body.

From the crossroads I call the police. They threaten the madman with their sticks and make him put his clothes back on. ...Then...the world does not appear naked any more! I too appear to be dressed up to the nines! Now nobody appears naked any more.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ By Siddheśvar.

The motif of the madman who is the actual ‘normal’ person and speaks the truth has been mentioned above (cf. L379, section ‘communalism’).¹⁹⁷

Contemplations

The last category of the sample contains what may be called ‘contemplative’ texts. Characterised by strong atmospheric, inward and sentimental elements, they express, in a highly subjective way, personal emotions and meditations about the beauty of nature as an end in itself, giving hardly any concrete situational context.

Contemplations
Reflections about nature and personal emotions

Laghukathās of this kind are an absolute exception within the genre. The sample contains only two such texts, one of them dealing with the beauty of a sunset (L616), the other one, *Ekākī svar*, ‘Lonely Voice’ (L618), by the same author speaking about the reflection of the narrator’s sadness and its dispersion in the nature surrounding him:

Sadness still. Even the moonlight could not break it. The clouds, like a towel, wipe the moon’s face. The wind, helpless, is molten in pain.

I pray deeply - may this sadness, this helplessness be washed away. This moonlight’s smile, may it be diffused one more time, this is what I’ve longed for. I ask, when will it be?

And then, far away, the lonely voice of a sandpiper pierces the sky.¹⁹⁸

Other texts, outside the sample, deal, for instance, with the feeling of love. Contemplative laghukathās contain a strong self-reflexive element, conveying the presence of the author behind the description of the personal feelings presented.

¹⁹⁷ For the sadhu who is ridiculed by children as a motif triggering off the narrator’s reasoning about the world cf. Kṛṣṇā Sobti’s short story *Lāmā*, in: Kṛṣṇā Sobti, *Bādlom ke ghare*, New Delhi 1985, pp. 174-176.

¹⁹⁸ By Kṛṣṇakānt Dube.

Summary

The analysis of the 281 laghukathās of the sample, covering the time phases T₂ and T₃ (1940s-today), has shown that the thematical categories drawn from the critical comments on the genre's content, allow a comprehensive description of the themes governing the texts. The complete scheme of the content categories presented in the analysis looks as follows:

Socio-politically committed	I Society					
	Public life					
	State			Administration		
	State machinery	Politicians	Bureau- cracy	Police	Judiciary	Educatio n
	Societal life					
	Social struc- tures of power	Economic poverty	Communalism and religious groups	Individual and Society	Social values	
Non-committed	Private life					
	Family		Men and women	Men and fellow-men		
	Parents and children	Individual and family				
	II The Nature of Life					
	Proverbs and folk-wisdom			Philosophical questions		
	III Contemplations					
Reflections about nature and personal feelings						

In order to complete the content analysis it will be helpful to analyse the distribution of themes. The following diagram shows which thematical groups receive the greatest emphasis and thus give the body of laghukathās its particular appearance.

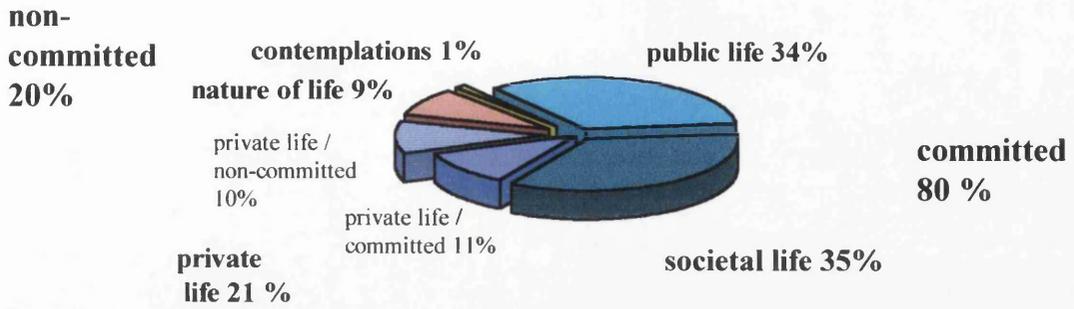


Diagram 1: Distribution of themes

The diagram shows clearly that socio-political commitment lies at the centre of interest of the laghukathā: 80% of the 281 texts take a committed standpoint, focusing critically on different aspects of disruptions in the areas of social, societal and fiscal affairs. Both the public and the societal level are of equal importance with results of around 34% and 35% respectively, while the committed texts of private life account for only around 11%, thus making up around half of the laghukathās of private life. Non-committed laghukathās play a significantly minor role at a rate of 20% of the whole sample. While texts featuring different day-to-day situations of private life and laghukathās dealing with the nature of life are of equal importance at rates of 10% and 9% respectively, contemplative texts play an insignificant role at around only 1%.

We have seen that texts belonging to the committed categories excel in drawing a horrendous picture of life in modern India; they often provocatively present a society governed by corruption, avarice, and amorality, by unscrupulousness, hatred and utter inhumanity on the public, societal and large parts of the private level. Texts from private life, however, also incorporate more intimate, short-story-like presentations, especially in the groups of family and man-woman relations. These laghukathās may be seen as non-committed, they simply present a glimpse into private worlds of no significance for the socio-political environment of modern society. This more moderate attitude is also reflected in the two sections presenting texts on the ‘nature of life’ and contemplative texts. Here, life is being dealt from a general viewpoint, encompassing philosophical or ‘proverbial’ wisdom. Laghukathās of these categories might motivate the reader to think not so much about his immediate environment but rather about life in general. All in all, the laghukathā does indeed give a general picture of

everyday life in contemporary India, as claimed by Viṣṇu Prabhākar, but it seems to lie in the very nature of this life that the majority of texts written after the 1940s carry the distinct socio-critical message proclaimed by the majority of writers.

4.3.2 Protagonists

Laghukathā critics and writers are far less concerned with the question of the laghukathā's protagonists than with its theme. The marginal treatment of the characters is surprising since the presentation of the protagonists is a major determinant of the relationship between the text and the reader and therefore plays a significant role for the laghukathā's central concern - the communication of the writer's message. The following analysis of the laghukathā's protagonists will therefore be set against the background of the protagonists' function for the plot as well as for the conveying of the message. In a three-step investigation the protagonists' nature is outlined, the various degrees of typification are demonstrated, and the main constellations in which the protagonists are presented are established.

The nature of the protagonists

As far as the protagonists' nature is concerned the writers' basic standpoint is that the laghukathā allows all possible animate or inanimate protagonists, from gods, epic heroes, humans and animals to rivers, mountains, flowers, bricks etc. Kaśyap even considers 'states of mind' (mānasik bhāv) as possible protagonists.¹⁹⁹ An investigation of the texts shows that the genre has indeed a repertoire of roles for all sorts of acting protagonists - we encounter Vishnu and Sarasvati, Rama and Yudhishtira, beggars and politicians, dogs and vultures, trees and books - but the main portion of texts relies on the employment of human beings as acting characters. Contrasting the laghukathā with the didactic tale (bodhkathā), R.K. Śarmā points out rightly that its modern personnel no longer rely on 'dumb oxen, cunning foxes or colourful jackals' but rather 'unemployed youths, exploited labourers and opportunistic politicians'.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Jagdīs Kaśyap, 'Laghukathā kī racnā prakriyā aur nayā lekhak', in: Hitaiṣi (ed.), *Ātānk*, p. 81.

²⁰⁰ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 29.

The distribution of protagonists within the respective content categories turns largely out as expected, each category showing a dominance of those groups that have proved significant in the content analysis. Laghukathās belonging to the first category, public life, are clearly dominated by employers and employees, civil servants, politicians and policemen; laghukathās on societal life feature protagonists as members of particular social groups, characterised for example by economic, educational or religious status: the rich and the poor, workers, professionals of higher and lower education, family members and members of various religious groups. The category of private life is dominated by protagonists identified simply as men or women or characterised by the position they hold in the family. The last two categories of worldly wisdom and contemplations revolve around more abstract themes; unsurprisingly, the respective texts take a more allegorical and metaphorical course and give prominence to personifications and animal characters as acting protagonists.

Animal protagonists

The laghukathā employs animal protagonists mainly in two different ways. Firstly, they appear in a ‘classic’ fable-like manner, i.e. as anthropomorphised creatures acting and talking like human beings - a situation of human life is transferred to the animal world, creating an ironic tension inherent in the unreal and paradoxical plot depicting a general truth. An example for a classic fable-like laghukathā is *Samay ke sāth-sāth*, ‘In the course of time’²⁰¹, where the power of nepotism is demonstrated in an encounter between a mouse and a cat: because the mouse is friendly with a dog, the cat does not dare to eat it. Secondly, animals in the laghukathā are presented in a still fable-like but slightly modified way: anthropomorphised animals talk *about* human beings, revealing them as a wild and ‘uncivilised’ race - in paradoxical contrast to the creatures who comment on them. The situational contrast is usually further strengthened by the fact that the animals who are shown to be shocked about human manners are often those who are associated with especially fierce and rough behaviour or who are of extremely low status, like dogs, scorpions, snakes or vultures. Thus, in *Phark*, ‘Difference’²⁰², a dog-panchayat explains to a little dog that he

²⁰¹ L1976 by Satīś Rāṭhī.

²⁰² L2733 by Jñānprakāś Vivek. The contrast or comparison between the dog and the human is a means employed extensively by the laghukathā. Dogs may be revealed as morally superior to hu-

should be loyal to his master and never bite him because it is only the human being who treacherously attacks his master.²⁰³ Next to their roles as anthropomorphised protagonists, animals can be presented just for the sake of their symbolic meaning, standing e.g. for death (vulture) or wealth and a middle-class westernised lifestyle (alsatian).²⁰⁴

An interesting aspect of the employment of animal protagonists in the *laghukathā* is the way in which the writer plays with the reader's anticipation. Introducing talking animals into a text raises expectations in the reader who will be familiar with the Indian fable literature like the *Pañcatantra* or *Hitopadeśa*. By using the classic fable-like way of representation, the writer profits from the familiar notion that the fable represents a general truth - the text's message is validated. But by twisting the fable's scheme, stripping the animal protagonists of their 'typical' qualities and reversing them - making, for example, the vulture 'human' and the human being fierce and bloodthirsty - the reader's expectations are not fulfilled and a provocative effect, as demanded by most writers, is achieved. To what extent a *laghukathā*'s closeness to the fable may also have an impact on the constellations of protagonists will be seen later.

Degrees of characterisation

Another interesting aspect of the protagonists' nature is the extent of their characterisation, which can generally be distinguished on four levels. The first level is that of

mans in general as in the aforementioned text; they may be contrasted to beggars - mostly children - either putting them on the same level or showing the dog in a better position, as, for example as a much loved and well fed pet dog sitting in a car contrasted with an envious beggar child; pet-dogs - often alsatians - are generally shown to be more dear to their masters than human fellow-beings; masters are also directly compared to their own guard-dogs: some texts play with the warning 'Beware of the dog' which seems to refer to the master rather than the dog. Cf. e.g. Kamal Gupta, *Kuttā*, 'The dog', in: Balrām & Maniśrāy (eds.), *KN2*, p. 24 ff., Saroj Dvivedī, *Śok-divas*, 'Day of mourning', *ibid.* p. 157, Bhārat Yāyāvar, *Ādmī hone kī śart*, 'The condition of being human', *ibid.* p. 147 (translation in section 4.3 'Content'), Śaśāṅk, *Insānī kutte*, 'Human dogs', in: Balrām & Maniśrāy (eds.), *KN3*, p. 97, or Subhāścand Sarkār, *Sāvadhān - kutte hairn*, 'Beware of the dogs', in: N. Maurya & N. Upādhyāy (eds.), *Samāntar*, p. 57.

²⁰³ A text that employs a similar means of representation is Premcand's *Do bailom kī kathā*, 'The story of the two bullocks': not only is a human situation - the condition of the subjugated - projected to the animal world but the text also ironically challenges the notion one has of the 'stupid' bullocks by showing them as caring and responsible protagonists.

²⁰⁴ Symbolic protagonists are discussed in the passage 'symbols' of section 4.5.3 'Rhetorical figures and tropes', pp. 241 ff.

‘characters’, i.e. protagonists who are individualised, be it through personal characteristics, such as certain attitudes or habits, or through an individually distinct history which is presented to the reader in excerpts or in detail, depending on the genre. This kind of protagonist is of minor significance to the *laghukathā*. The second, and for the *laghukathā* by far most important level of protagonistic characterisation, is that of ‘types’; these types, lacking any individual moulding, exhibit features which are identified by the reader as typical for a certain kind of person, for example of a particular profession, status or age group. Typical protagonists can also be representatives of social classes or strata and - unlike the ‘representatives of ideas’ which will be described below - cause the reader to think in associative terms, comparing the ‘type’ of the text to any such representative of his own environment. Typification can be achieved by means of suggestive or indicative behaviour, utterances, language and gestures or clues like names, characteristic clothes or profession. The third and fourth level of characterisation play an almost equally important role for the *laghukathā* context; their protagonists will be called ‘representatives of ideas’ and ‘functional agents’ respectively. The distinction between these two kinds of protagonists has to be made with regard to their role within the text. A ‘representative of ideas’ stands for an idea, concept or attitude which is crucial for the text, while a functional agent’s only task is to advance or illustrate the plot.

Characters

Characters do not hold an important position in the *laghukathā* context. The *laghukathā* neither has the capacity to show a protagonist being individualised by means of direct or indirect description, or, as Ś.Kiraṇ states, by means of gradual development²⁰⁵, nor does it generally aim at the presentation of a personal and unique fate; *laghukathā*-writers have been shown to rather intend to present a general ‘truth of life’ (*zindagī kī saccāi / satya*).

Bansal points out an interesting aspect when she refers to the writer’s control over his protagonists. Protagonists in the novel, she states, escape the control of the author’s writing as soon as they have been created; invigorated by their individuality

²⁰⁵ Cf. Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Kathā-lekhan...’, p. 12.

they force the writer's pen to pursue them.²⁰⁶ Protagonists in the *laghukathā*, on the other hand, are said to be devoid of any individual features and therefore do not have a life of their own: they are completely under the writer's control and, according to Śarmā, merely 'human instruments' (*yantra mānav*)²⁰⁷ in his service. But this 'instrumentalisation' does not only lead towards a de-individualisation of the protagonists, it also reduces the possibilities for the reader to identify him- or herself with them emotionally. In terms of perception the *laghukathā* is hence positioned on an intellectual level rather than an emotive one.

Characters, unlike 'types' who produce a rather superficial relationship with the reader, allow a more intimate view of their situations, a feature untypical for the *laghukathā*. Although certain degrees of intimacy are created, for example, through particular spatial arrangements²⁰⁸, the *laghukathā* cannot usually intrude into a protagonist's spatial *and* psychological privacy without coming close to the short story. An example for a short-story-like *laghukathā* whose protagonists are characters rather than types is the text *Paribhāṣā*, 'Definition'²⁰⁹: taking the form of a letter - already an intimate medium - written by a woman to her former lover, it reveals personal problems, thoughts and feelings, telling about an individual's fate and her attempts to deal with and understand it. The letter's breaking off without actually being finished, i.e. without the usual closing statements, increases the momentum of intrusion into privacy because the letter-writer seems to be still sitting and pondering over it. But not only the main protagonist is individualised, through her letter her former lover, too, becomes an individual with specific habits and attitudes. In general, it can be said that an individualisation of protagonists appears only in *laghukathās* belonging to the category of private life, which have been shown above as prone to a more intimate, short-story-like appearance than texts of other thematical categories. This confirms the assumption that characterisation goes hand in hand with a personalised view.

²⁰⁶ Puṣpā Bansal, in: *Harigandhā*, May-June, 1986, p. 23, quoted in R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 39.

²⁰⁷ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 39.

²⁰⁸ Cf. section 4.3.3 'Space', p. 123 f.

²⁰⁹ L1614 by Nīlam.

Types

Types are especially important for the *laghukathā* because their very ‘typicality’ gives the message a notion of general validity. By presenting types rather than characters with a personal fate, the *laghukathā* makes the reader recognise the distressing situations depicted in the text as the rule and not the exception. Ideally, this will eventually open the reader’s eyes or mind towards a keener perception of his environment, as demanded by most *laghukathā* writers. Types, therefore, make up more than half of the protagonists of the sample, either as the classic representatives of a certain category of persons or as the prototypical embodiment of what a person of a particular category stands for.²¹⁰

A central aspect of typification is the question of whether it is achieved on a primary or a secondary level. Primary typification equals the direct social identification of the protagonist as for example a ‘politician’ or a ‘father’, depending on which of the protagonist’s roles is determinative for the story.²¹¹ Secondary typification, on the other hand, shows what the typical features of these ‘types’ are: the politician may be shown as corrupt, the father as irresponsible towards his children. The order of primary and secondary identification is of special importance for the *laghukathā* because it provides a means of manipulating the reader’s attention and perception.

Primary typification is naturally closely connected to the earlier established content categories; thus, in ‘public life’ texts the protagonists are identified with regard to features relevant for the public sector - their profession or their rank within the ad-

²¹⁰ An interesting aspect of typification which cannot be dealt with in detail here is that different agents of typification - those instances in the text which undertake the act of typifying - can be distinguished, namely the protagonist himself, the impersonal narrator, other protagonists, or the textual situation. Naturally, all four kinds of typifiers can be found in combination as well as on their own. The choice of typifier in a text is significant because it determines the degree of involvement of the reader in the text: the more the protagonists are commented on, the more preconceived an idea is conveyed, leaving the reader less room for individual judgement. The *laghukathā*, which avoids the mode of comment, prefers the least obtrusive typifiers - the protagonist or the textual situation. For the significance of the commentary mode cf. section 4.5.2 ‘Stylistic modes and tones’, pp. 208 f.

²¹¹ A person can play different roles in different contexts, the same individual can, for example, be a ‘woman’ in the gender context, a ‘mother’ in the family context, a ‘boss’ in the professional context or ‘Hindu’ in a religious context. The primary identification refers to the role which is significant for the story line.

ministrative hierarchical system.²¹² Laghukathās of ‘societal life’, on the other hand, identify their protagonists as members of a wider range of social groups, characterised e.g. by their economic, religious, professional or ‘educational’ status; we find rich men and beggars, shoemakers and doctors, Hindus and Muslims etc. Texts on ‘private life’ mainly feature protagonists who are identified by either their gender or their role within the family context, and the categories of worldly wisdom and contemplations offer a manifold mixture of types: no general tendency can be discerned, firstly, because of the great variety of themes covered in these laghukathās and, secondly, because types are not as important for this category as for the others.

It is, however, not only necessary to identify protagonists with respect to the type they represent, it is even more important to see what the particular types are typical of. Only a display of secondary typifying aspects which expose for example *the* policeman as criminal, arbitrary and violent, makes the laghukathā meaningful, allowing it to direct the reader’s attention to the incongruities and misdemeanours of the respective persons surrounding him. Secondary typifiers may consist of various aspects, including the protagonists’ behaviour or utterances, use of language and gestures, secondary attributes like clothes or a person’s environment, i.e. his or her place of work, living etc. In addition, a protagonist can be typified by his or her name. Names as indicators of the typicality of a protagonists are mostly common names like Varmā, Gupta or Śarmā and often allude to the protagonist’s social status and caste in names like Seth (merchant).²¹³ In some cases names serve to emphasise a certain quality of the nameholder - as e.g. in *Pahcān*, ‘Characteristic’²¹⁴, where a man named ‘Anjān’ (ignorant) is revealed as the typical ‘Indian husband’ who is disrespectful and negligent towards his wife; in other texts names may play a crucial role for the plot, as in *Jātivād*, ‘Casteism’²¹⁵, where only the names reveal the ongoing nepotism.

²¹² Where acronyms like BDO, SDO, SP or IG are used to state a person’s professional status the air of impersonality and exchangeability is given special impetus.

²¹³ Naturally, in the Indian context every surname indicates the social, if not necessarily the economical, position of the named. By using common surnames a certain exchangeability within the social group (jāti) to which the nameholder belongs is achieved. The grade of typification is increased where only first names are used. The two most common names in this context are Ramesh and Mahesh.

²¹⁴ L532 by Lakṣmendra Coprā.

²¹⁵ L1132 by Sunil Kauśīś.

The order of primary and secondary typification is optional but nevertheless important. Where a protagonist is identified at the very beginning of the story the high associative value of the type immediately raises the reader's expectations as to what is likely to follow. An example is the laghukathā *Surakṣā*, 'Security', which opens: 'Once upon a time there was a very important security officer at a very important institution'. Secondary typifying aspects are then added to the picture throughout the plot: firstly, several secondary attributes are listed by the narrator - the security officer wears a 'spick-and-span uniform', has lots of 'medals and stars' attached to it, earns 'good money' and gets a lot of 'bonuses'. Then the protagonist himself acts as a typifier, he exposes himself as absurdly sticking to the literal wording of his orders, thereby allowing a fire to devastate his work place.²¹⁶

Other laghukathās make use of the reverse order of primary and secondary typification: they first list or describe the features of a type and then reveal his identity in the last sentence and thereby produce a surprising climax. Excellent examples are the laghukathās *Ādmī - 1*, *Ādmī - 2*, *Ādmī - 3* and *Ādmī - 4*, 'Man - 1', 'Man - 2' etc., by Śrīnivās Joṣī. which are not part of the sample. Starting each of these four texts with the sentence 'Once upon a time there was a man' (ek ādmī thā), the narrator then lists attributes of this man or 'human being', making the reader curious as to what kind of person he refers to. In the last sentence the identity of the respective protagonist is revealed. *Ādmī - 3* will illustrate this point:

Once upon a time there was a man.
 - Dressed up nicely, clothes clinging to the body, modern.
 - He danced to jazz, smoked expensive cigarettes, sipped beer-whisky, went to the cinema with Pinki-Dimpi.
 One day his parents came from the village to visit him. Withered faces, tattered health. Two skeletons giving up all happiness for that man.
 Those who had seen this declared - he who lived in such a state of pomp was no man, he was a student.²¹⁷

Some laghukathās go one step further and dispense with the final revelation, thus assuming a riddle-like structure: like the above-mentioned text, the riddle may state a list of secondary typical aspects of an object - person, thing or process - leading the

²¹⁶ L1402 *Surakṣā*. 'Security', by Maṇiṣrāy (translation in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 140).

²¹⁷ In: Balrām (ed.), *BLKKI*, p. 197; *Ādmī - 1*, *Ādmī - 2* and *Ādmī - 4* reveal 'an office clerk', 'a leader' and 'a rich man' respectively; *ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

reader or listener towards its primary identification. The climax, though, does not reveal this identification, it rather challenges the reader to identify the main protagonist (or object) him- or herself. Laghukathās may start off using riddle-like structures to increase the reader's attentiveness: as the folk riddle is one of the oldest literary products and will be well-known to the vast majority of laghukathā-readers, a text which begins in this manner must arouse the reader's 'natural' and socialised curiosity. Some laghukathās even adopt the form of the riddle, like Avadeś Kumār's laghukathā *Kaun*, 'Who?':

A conspiracy in his mind. An insidious smile in his face. Sickness in his heart. Power in his hands. An ulcer in his stomach. Rheumatism in his knees. Pain in his calves. People under his feet. Tell me, who?²¹⁸

The fact that the reader's curiosity is not satisfied in the end increases the impact the text has on his mind.

Representatives of ideas

Representatives of ideas have been said to embody and convey abstract ideas, concepts or attitudes, appearing in different guises. In the laghukathā, these protagonists are especially relevant for the content categories of 'worldly wisdom' and 'contemplations' which deal with abstract themes to a larger extent than the texts on public, societal and private life. In some laghukathās it is the very idea represented by the protagonist which determines the text as belonging to a particular content category, while other texts treat the embodied ideas merely as illustrative aspects. In the following the five possible guises of representatives of ideas in the laghukathā will be described.

The first and purest form of a representative of ideas is what might be termed 'unidentified protagonists' - humans, animals or objects who are of an distinct impersonal nature and often lack primary or secondary identification. They appear as two different types, a collective one, featuring a multitude like 'people' or 'the crowd' (log, jan-samūh), and an individual one which consists of single protagonists intro-

²¹⁸ In: *Hams*, June 1992, p. 33.

duced as ‘someone’ or ‘one from the crowd’ etc. (koī/ek vyakti, bhīr ke bīc se koī). This kind of personnel might be insignificant in longer prose texts where only side effects are achieved by the presence of e.g. a ‘crowd’, but it becomes important in texts of the laghukathā’s brevity. One of many examples is the laghukathā *Parājit*, ‘Defeated’²¹⁹, which shows how the attitude of indifference towards people of lower social status is represented by ‘someone’s voice from the crowd’ (bhīr mem se kisī kī āvāz). Another text is *Saṅkalp*, ‘Resolution’²²⁰, which features ‘unknown people’ (anjāne log) who come to a village and stir up hatred amongst the different religious groups, thus clearly standing for the *idea* of communalism.

The second kind of representatives of ideas used in the laghukathā is the protagonist who is primarily identified, e.g. as ‘husband’, ‘man with torn sleeves’ etc., but neither typified nor characterised in the course of the text. The primary identification merely determines his belonging to a certain group or - in the case of an animal or inanimate object - establishes *what* the protagonist is, i.e. a ‘brick’ or a ‘dog’ etc. In the laghukathā *Sunvāī*, ‘Hearing’, for example, a rich mother complains to a nurse that she cannot breastfeed her child whereas the labourer’s wife has no such difficulties. The nurse thereupon states ‘Bahan Ji, God also hears the poor mothers’²²¹. Not being typified, the nurse has no other function than representing the idea that before God everybody is equal. A classic example is the text *Tīn kāl*, ‘Three tenses’, whose ‘poor’ and ‘rich’ are neither types nor functional agents but represent the abstract ideas of poverty and wealth.²²²

The third form a representative of ideas can take is that of an identified emblematic hero who is well-known to the reader. As shown above, the employment of these protagonists is especially thought-provoking because the heroes are unmasked as not living up to the expectations connected to the ideas and concepts they are usually associated with. Laghukathās outside the sample present, for instance, a defeatable and cheating Arjun and a weak and dependent Aladdin.²²³

²¹⁹ L917 by Mukeś Jain ‘Pāras’.

²²⁰ L2341 by Suśilā Sitāriyā.

²²¹ L743 by Parameśvar Goyal.

²²² L2690 by Surendra Varmā.

²²³ Cf. above, section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 89 f.

The fourth kind of representative of ideas is the personified concept or idea as found predominantly in laghukathās of the category ‘worldly wisdom’. A prototypical text is *Kāmyābī*, ‘Success’²²⁴. It presents the first-person narrator untiringly pursuing the personified ‘beautiful and pompous’ Success who keeps escaping him. During his wild chase he is confronted with several attitudes and concepts: Habit (a puppet), Self-control (an old fairy) and Madness (an ugly old witch). These representatives of ideas very clearly demonstrate their function of embodying and conveying abstract concepts as acting protagonists.

Finally, a representative of ideas can take the form of an allegorical protagonist, using the allegory’s capability of signifying abstract terms and concepts. The laghukathā *Satī*, ‘Sati’²²⁵, for example shows a sati-stupa as a protagonist - animated by the sati’s soul - embodying and representing a wife’s everlasting genuine devotion towards her husband. Another text features ‘indigenous’ dogs epitomising the ideas of poverty and inferiority as opposed to ‘foreign’ dogs standing for wealth and superiority.²²⁶ It can be seen that neither representative of ideas - because of their abstract nature - invites the reader to a direct comparison with persons in his environment: in contrast to types they are not associative.

Functional agents

Functional agents are the least graphic protagonists of the laghukathā. At times their role is even restricted to that of ‘extras’ not having any speaking part. Nevertheless, functional agents can be quite important for the story line, in many cases even indispensable, helping to advance the plot in the desired direction. In the laghukathā *Adhikār*, ‘Power’²²⁷, a man, Ramesh, wants to report the theft of his bicycle but refuses to first bribe the policeman in charge. He is still at the police station when a thief is brought in, giving away the names of his accomplices. In the end, Ramesh’s name,

²²⁴ L2396 by Śrī Tilak (translation in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, pp. 150-151).

²²⁵ L1469 by Kanhaiyālāl Miśra ‘Prabhākar’.

²²⁶ L2386 *Rogī zamīn*, ‘Sick earth’, by Vikram Sonī (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 84-85).

²²⁷ L2618 by Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy.

too, appears on the list of the thieves' names. The thief in this text is the classic functional agent, 'dutifully' providing the list for Ramesh's name to be put on.

The functional agents' other possible task is to illustrate the ongoing events. In *Dahej kī taiyārī*, 'Provision of dowry'²²⁸, the narrator describes the celebration of the chathī-ceremony²²⁹ of his nephew as a cheerful and happy event, illustrating it by introducing the functional agent 'the people' who are 'dancing and singing, eating and drinking'. This cheerfulness is later contrasted with the narrator's horror on overhearing comments which only appreciate the monetary value of the presents given to the child. Small as the role of 'the people' in this text may be, it illustrates the events and thereby also serves to sharpen the contrast. This example also shows that functional agents, just as the representatives of ideas, employ 'unidentified protagonists' who can appear both in their collective and individual form.

A final aspect to be mentioned in this context is the laghukathā's extensive employment of functional agents who are absent from the plot, i.e. protagonists who are mentioned or thought of by other protagonists or the narrator. In *Sattar bhāg sāt*, 'Seventy divided by seven', the members of a whole family are introduced to the plot only by the two present protagonists' talking *about* them:

'Your name?'

'Akshay.'

'Akshay?'

'Yes, doctor saab, that's a picture of the lobe of my lung.'

'I see. How many children do you have?'

'Two boys and two girls, since we have no money, school is...'

'How is your wife's health?'

'She has had asthma for five years.'

'Is there anybody else in your family?'

'There is my unemployed brother.'

'That means - you're the head of a family of seven people.'

'Yes, sir.'

'What do you do, do you have work?'

'Yes, - in a flour mill, I get seventy rupees per month.'

When he filled in the form the doctor thought that seventy divided by seven would make ten²³⁰ rupees per head in the family. This old man works in a mill and ruins himself!

²²⁸ L2228 by Siddeśvar.

²²⁹ Ceremony on the sixth day after the birth of a child which includes e.g. the naming of the child.

²³⁰ The text actually reads 'seven rupees' (sāt rupaye), which seems a mathematical slip on the part to the author; this also applies for the last sentences of the story.

Then he thought better of it and said, 'There you go, take that medicine. That's ten rupees'.²³¹

As so many other devices, this method of populating the *laghukathā* with absent protagonists helps to concentrate the action of the plot, it makes expansion possible without actually leaving the scene and scope of action. Other kinds of protagonists - characters, types and representatives of ideas - may also be found as absent 'protagonists', although generally to a much lesser extent.

Family members

The significance of the family as a frame of reference in the *laghukathā* is not obvious at first sight. Many protagonists are primarily identified through other features, their belonging to a family being only a secondary typifying aspect. However, taking into account both the primary and the secondary determination, an analysis reveals that almost half of all protagonists in the sample are in one or the other way defined by their position within the family, even in texts which do not belong to the category of private life.

One reason why *laghukathās* of the categories of public and societal life often present their protagonists against a family background is that family relations are supposed to be a basis for the ongoing nepotism in the political and administrative sectors. The second and by far more important reason is that in Indian society the family plays a vital role for the individual. Although a progressing urbanisation and Westernisation have encouraged the ideas of individuality and 'self-realisation' in Indian society, a person in the Indian cultural context is still likely to define his own and his fellow-being's role, status and responsibility in terms of the family; the father's profession, the *jāti*-membership indicated through the surname, and one's marital status are common points of reference for a social as well as societal placement.

The *laghukathā*'s handling of the protagonists shows both how the individual is bound by his or her responsibility towards the family and how others - the writer, the

²³¹ L2609 by Mati Mukhopādhyāy.

narrator, the other protagonists - usually see the individual within the context of the family. The individual's responsibility towards the family becomes apparent in texts like *Śīt yuddh*, 'Cold war', and *Dāyitva bodh*, 'Responsibility'²³². They show how the family - parents, brothers and sisters - determine the individual's existence, the choice of job as well as the question whether one can get married. The relevance of the family as a general reference point is on the other hand demonstrated by the relatively large number of protagonists who are presented as family members, regardless of their actual role in the story. An example is the *laghukathā Cīnheṃ safar kā anjān rāhī*, 'May they recognise the journey's unknown traveller'²³³, from the category of public life. The central motif is the ongoing nepotism in the police; the main protagonist is therefore primarily identified as an applicant for a job with the police-force, a job which he cannot get because his father does not have the necessary connections. As the story progresses his frustration increases, and feeling guilty towards his parents he does not dare to go home. In the end, though, even after he has got into trouble, it is his mother and his father who stand by him and welcome him home. This text, like many others, is not content with showing its protagonist merely as a victim of the system but also presents him in a larger context as a son together with whom suffer his mother and father. The family in the *laghukathā* forms a solid - positive as well as negative - background for the protagonists' actions.

The constellations of the protagonists

The formal role the characters are supposed to play within the texts, i.e. their constellation, is mentioned by several critics. Śarmā and Copṛā, on one side, focus primarily on the *laghukathā*'s concentration on a very limited number of protagonists, declaring very generally that there is no capacity for an elaborate system of interactions.²³⁴ Bansal, Śrīvāstav, Kaśyap and Aśok, on the other side, approach the topic from a more detailed standpoint: they proclaim a distinct twofold opposition of characters, i.e. protagonist versus antagonist or 'good' versus 'bad'. Aśok, Kaśyap and Śrīvāstav describe the constellation of the two protagonists in the *laghukathā* as a dialectic relationship of a 'crooked' one who exploits (*dhūrt śoṣak*) and a 'straight' one who

²³² L2112 by Dhirendra Śarmā and L142 by Sumati Ayyar.

²³³ L582 by Santoṣ Dikṣit.

²³⁴ Cf. R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 39, and Copṛā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāern', p.74.

is exploited (sīdhā-sādā śoṣit)²³⁵, or, in Śrīvāstav's words, one who belongs to the problem-producing and who belongs to the problem-enduring strata of society ('...jis varg se samasyā banāyī jāti hai aur jis varg par samasyā ghaṭṭī hai')²³⁶. Bansal goes one step further, stating that the two protagonists in the laghukathā are the individual (or human society) on the one hand and the distress or hopelessness (viḍambanā) inherent in the system on the other hand, an opposition which equals, according to her, the twofold opposition of the protagonist and 'fate' in ancient Greek tragedy.²³⁷ Just as the protagonist in Greek drama is bound to lose in his battle with fate which, almost as an omnipotent goddess, determines his life, in the Hindi laghukathā man fights a hopeless battle against the corrupt conditions of 'the system'.²³⁸

With these statements, the writers and critics point out a constellation which proves correct for the vast majority of laghukathās and determines the general impression when reading the texts. Relying strongly on a perception of the world as dualistic, the laghukathā presents to the reader situations of conflict or - in an idealistic Hegelian sense - tragic conflict, e.g. between individual and society, freedom and law, individual ethics and ethics of responsibility, freedom and necessity etc. In approximately 80% of the sampled texts an opposition of a protagonist and an antagonist is displayed, either directly through the action itself or indirectly by means of persons talking about it. Often, as Aśok points out, the respective sides are clearly identified as playing the 'good' or the 'bad' part. Conflicts, for example, arise between the powerful and the powerless, rich and poor, young and old, villager and city-dweller, man and woman, individual and fellow-being, family, social groups or society as a

²³⁵ Bhūpāl Sirh Aśok, 'Laghukathā lekhan: ek cunautī', in: Hitaiṣī (ed.), *Ātan̄k*, p.93 and Kaśyap, 'Laghukathā ki racnā prakriyā...', p. 82. Kaśyap and Aśok use identical words in a slightly different order to describe this dialectic constellation of protagonists. Unfortunately, neither refers to the other, therefore it cannot be made out whose idea is the original.

²³⁶ Śrīvāstav, 'Laghukathā: ek avalokan', p. 98.

²³⁷ Bansal, in: *Harigandhā*, May-June 1986, p. 23, quoted in R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 39

²³⁸ By equating the laghukathā's antagonist to a supreme abstract power or condition - distress or *viḍambanā* - Bansal gives the laghukathā's situations an implication of tragic inescapability: the human being in the laghukathā has no choice but to surrender to the distress of the system just as the protagonist in the Greek drama is at the mercy of tragic fate. This is a powerful image but problematic at second sight because it absolves the 'real' opponents from their responsibility for their action - they act only as victims of the conditions, every single antagonist representing the dismal system. The laghukathā, however, shows that it is as much an individual's hubris which provokes catastrophes as it is the system's. The distress of the system - like tragic fate - should therefore rather be seen as a *conditio sine qua non* for the particular development of the plot. This is in line with Bansal's proclamation that 'distress' is an indispensable feature of the laghukathā: 'Without distress the form of the laghukathā is destroyed. Its generic nature disappears.' *ibid.*

whole. In many cases a third 'neutral' party is introduced - often a functional agent - illustrating or advancing the action as a tritagonist or commenting and even explaining it like the chorus in Sophoclesian tragedy.²³⁹ In *Īṅṅem*, 'Bricks'²⁴⁰, for example, an opposition is depicted between two groups of bricks volunteering for being built into a bridge and a wall respectively, obviously representing the ideas of unification versus partition. The third party, or tritagonist(s), consists of people and children, illustrating the function and effect of the bridge and the wall; finally, the last party or chorus is made up of the philosopher who, as the text closes, interprets the bridge as standing for 'love' and the wall for 'communalism'.²⁴¹

Half of the remaining approximately 20% of the sample's texts which do not exhibit such a distinct dialectic situation, are *laghukathās* whose constellations are those of either 'good' protagonist or 'bad' antagonist accompanied by a neutral tritagonist. Especially for the first kind - *protagonist* plus neutral tritagonist - Bansal's proclamation of a fate-like system-inherent 'distress' comes into play: in texts like *Yātrā*, 'Journey', or *Abhāv kā dānav*, 'Demon of poverty'²⁴², the protagonists clash with the system which forces them to deal with their personal problems in crass ways: an abortion of a much-wanted child has to be evaluated in terms of the costs of child-rearing versus the costs of the abortion itself, and a man feels forced to kill his father, fake an accident and claim compensation in order to provide for his family. As for the second kind of non-dialectic constellation - antagonist plus neutral tritagonist - texts usually show representatives of the dismal system - corrupt politicians, irresponsible teachers, uncharitable fellow-men etc. - displayed or commented on by the neutral functional agents or types.²⁴³

²³⁹ Śakuntalā Kirāṇ, in her role as a writer, is unwilling to accept the *laghukathā* writer commenting on his protagonists. In her opinion, commentary is a method typical for of the short story; the *laghukathā* should rather hand the protagonist over to the reader who would then have to judge for himself. Cf. 'Kathā-lekhan...', p.13.

²⁴⁰ L241 by Kumār Becain.

²⁴¹ The *laghukathā*'s employment of the dualistic constellations of protagonists is reminiscent of the fable, which also generally relies on a dialectic narrative structure, frequently displaying two animals or two polar behavioural patterns, often in dialogic form. Interestingly, this feature - like the use of animal protagonists - moves the *laghukathā* generically towards the fable, indicating a connection which does not offer itself to the reader at first sight, given the lack of didacticism, the distinctively modern themes and literary devices used.

²⁴² L700 by Rājkumār Gautam and L2323 by Suśīlā Sitāriyā.

²⁴³ Cf. e.g. L1553 *Bhraṣṭacār ke prati putr-moh*, 'Love for a son against corruption', by I. Kedār Nāth, or L2585 *Sikh*, 'Advice' by Dineś Tyāgī.

The last 10% of the sample consist of texts which feature only one party, protagonist, antagonist or even the neutral tritagonist. However, for several of these laghukathās Bansal's supposition of the distress of the system implicitly determining the action is also valid. An example is *Tark*, 'Argument'²⁴⁴: a father has two sons who want to marry a girl outside and inside the caste respectively. Both find arguments for their choices, referring to their family's position within the caste system as well as in society as a whole. Although both sons have it their own way the text shows the societal system as the leading force behind any individual's actions.

Summary

The analysis has shown that the laghukathā in its approach to protagonists largely relies on literary devices which are commonly employed by other narrative genres but adapts them in order to fit its own needs, namely to keep the texts short and pointed, the message concentrated and communicable on an intellectual rather than an emotional level. Protagonists are largely presented as 'types' in order to provoke associative thinking in the reader's mind. The type being typical *for* something, the reader will be motivated to associate the typical features he recognises with a similar situation in his own environment or of his own experience. Representatives of ideas and functional agents are employed to focus the reader's attention on the message, emphasise the intellectual qualities of the laghukathā, illustrate or develop the plot and at the same time help to keep description to a minimum, while still providing the progress the plot needs. Especially where the functional agents are used as a chorus-like party, commenting and explaining, their sole responsibility is evidently directed towards the clear communication of the message.²⁴⁵ The laghukathā's employment of animal protagonists relies on the writer's playful exploitation of the readers' expectations, either by disappointing them and thereby producing a shocking effect or by complying with them and relying on a notion of underlying truth in the fable. Using

²⁴⁴ L1247 by Narendra Kohli.

²⁴⁵ Writers and critics are quite clear about the effect to which the laghukathā's protagonists are to be employed: their primary formal duty is the establishment of the desired contact with the reader. The degree of instrumentalisation, though, varies as protagonists are seen as 'messengers', 'mediating agents', 'human instruments' or 'devices' which serve the purpose of the subject matter, bringing to light the laghukathā-writer's intention. Cf. Śrīvāstava, 'Laghukathā: ek avalokan', p. 98, Bhagīrath, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 146, R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 39 and Balrām Agravāl, 'Laghukathā: āmne-sāmne', in: Hitaiṣi (ed.), *Ātānk*, p. 86.

symbolic protagonists is another means of avoiding description while still providing a comprehensive meaning.

As far as the constellation of the protagonists is concerned, it is the fable which lends a hand, placing its dualistic narrative structure at the *laghukathā*'s disposal. The way in which the protagonists are set against each other dialectically reveals the *weltanschauung* underlying the majority of texts: a twofold opposition of good and bad, exploited and exploiting, reigning in contemporary India. Thus modernising the fable's inner structure, the competition between cunning fox and greedy brahmin has been replaced with the subjugation of the powerless through the powerful because, according to Coprā, the true *laghukathā* 'reveals the most important inner contradictions of the epoch'.²⁴⁶

4.3.3 Space

In the *laghukathā* debate, space plays an even less significant role than the protagonists. The few times space is mentioned, it is dealt with from the viewpoint of its absence rather than any positive qualities: the *laghukathā* does not have the capacity for the creation of place and time (*deś-kāl*) or a scenic plan (*dṛśya-saṁyojan*).²⁴⁷ This call for relative absence of spatial description is an interesting aspect of the genre and thus deserves some attention. Space, in literature, is important in two ways: as narrated space, i.e. space as it is being dealt with in the text, and as narrative or formal space - the outer form and length the text assumes. In the *laghukathā* context the relationship between the two is significant because the restricted narrative space demands that the narrated space is presented in a concentrated manner which can dispense with description. We will see in the following what ways of creating space or place the *laghukathā* adopts in order to avoid overstretching the limits of its formal brevity and how these meth-

²⁴⁶ Coprā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭtāem', p. 73.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Ś. Kiran, 'Kathā-lekhan...', p. 13, and R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 37.

ods affect the communication of the message, the second important aspect of the genre.²⁴⁸

Creating space and place

The creation of textual space or place can be achieved in three basic ways. Firstly, they may be presented to the reader directly, i.e. by designating a location as in ‘the junior engineer stepped into the S.D.O.’s chamber’ or in ‘I am standing in the park’.²⁴⁹ In the *laghukathā* these designations are usually kept short and matter-of-fact as in the given examples; graphic descriptions of the environment are extremely rare and geographical place-names are usually not employed. A second way of determining the place of an action is through an indirect indication e.g. by means of a dialogue or the situation:

‘Tell me, what’s wrong with you?’ the doctor asked when he saw him. He pulled a note from his pocket, held it out to the doctor and said ‘Doctor, I would like a prescription for these medicines.’²⁵⁰

Although no direct account of the environment is given, the reader is presented with sufficient clues as to where the plot takes its course without, however, being inspired to picture the surroundings. Next to these two approaches, which are commonly used in all kinds of prose literature, the *laghukathā* offers a third way of treating narrated space: the complete lack of spatial or local determination. The action, mostly in dialogic form, is left in a vacuum as the following example shows:

‘What’s the matter, why are you sad?’ - one old man asked his friend, another old man. The first one [sic] said, ‘What to say? Today my son came to kill his own mother. He said, ‘I’ll finish her off.’

‘And that’s what you are making all the fuss about? Oh, dear, yes! Mothers have started killing off their own children. Don’t you see? The “government” has resolved on stopping the corruption although it’s her own son.’ The first old man smiled and said, ‘You don’t know anything about a son’s love. The government can never stop corruption.’

²⁴⁸ Many attempts have been undertaken in various disciplines to distinguish ‘space’ from ‘place’. The following analysis will be based on the simple understanding of place being static, in contrast to space as dynamic. Place, in a text, just ‘is’, whereas space comprises and contains.

²⁴⁹ L2052 *Niti-nirdhāra*, ‘Policy maker’, by Sukeś Sāhni, and L616 *Aisā ākāś*, ‘Such a sky’, by Kṛṣṇakānt Dube.

²⁵⁰ L159 *Kaṛiyām*, ‘Links’, by Guḷān Bālānī.

It's only done for show. You can be sure, the relationship between mother and son is quite unique.' Then the two of them settled into a discussion about the relationship between mother and son.²⁵¹

In *laghukathās* like this, a designation of space is of no significance. But its absence not only serves the conciseness of the text, it also prompts the reader to concentrate entirely on the essence of what is being said, undistracted by the motivation to imagine an elaborate situation. A by-product of this manner of creating a space- and placeless plot is a relative or complete lack of atmosphere; the text is reduced to its factual message and addresses the reader on an analytical rather than an emotional level, producing a kind of 'emotional detachment' from the text.²⁵² The isolation of the message is brought to the extreme where not only space and place are omitted but also the direct identification of the speakers, as in the earlier-quoted *laghukathā Cayan*, 'Election'²⁵³. A second effect of presenting a situation in undetermined time or place is the emphasis of the generally validity of the issue: neither time-frame nor place are given because the described situations can occur always and everywhere.

The space- and placeless plot is predominantly used in *laghukathās* dealing with public life and those presenting philosophical questions. Unlike the texts of societal and private life which tend to illustrate a person's situation, texts from public life are detached from personal and interpersonal matters. Similarly, philosophical texts tend to emphasise a general idea rather than an individual's situation; space- and placelessness hint at an eternal and universal truth behind the text's message.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ L1553 *Bhraṣṭācār ke prati putr-moh*, 'Love for a son against corruption', by I.K. Nāth. Some other examples of the sample are: L2394 *Hāthī aur savār*, 'Elephant and rider', by Śrī Tilak, L1437 *Caritra acchā hai*, 'The character is good', by Śrīrām Mīnā, and L2333 *Lajjit*, 'Ashamed', by Suśīlā Sītāriyā.

²⁵² Cf. section 4.3.2 'Protagonists', p. 110.

²⁵³ L5 by Aśok Agravāl (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 76); for the dialogic *laghukathā* cf. section 4.4.1 'Outer form', pp. 132 ff.

²⁵⁴ Although the time- and spaceless text is certainly the strongest expression of a general validity, it is by no means the only kind of *laghukathā* of such inclination. The fact that the majority of texts do not give concrete place names but rather refer to very general determinations like the ones given above, suggests that 'the village' is to be seen as any Indian village, 'the office' can be any office.

The moment of designation

Another aspect to be considered in the realm of the creation of space and place in the *laghukathā* is the moment at which it is determined within the time-scale of the narrated time of the text.²⁵⁵ Basically, there are three possible moments for the designation of a place of action within the text: 1. in the initial sentence, 2. after a short introductory passage and 3. towards or at the end of a *laghukathā*. While the first two possibilities are both common patterns in the *laghukathā*, the third is used in only a few texts. When it is so, the place usually has a very distinct symbolic meaning which, at the conclusion of the story, provides a strong interpretation or comment for the reader. An example is the following *laghukathā*:

- Mummy, look, the children in the street down there are singing with their mother and begging for bread. Please, you give them some bread too.
- Hush, how often have I told you not to look at dirty people, come here. Mummy dragged Mona inside and closed the window.²⁵⁶

Although the initial sentence already indicates space when the daughter is symbolically looking ‘down’ on the children, the real local positioning (‘inside’) and symbolic spatial demarcation (‘closed the window’) occur in the last words of the text, leading to the final climax, the spatial and social ostracisation of the poor.

A fourth possibility of designation has to be seen in the gradual and indirect revelation of place or space: as the story progresses the reader is gradually guided towards the place of the action. This step-by-step disclosure brings a successive illumination of the plot, the action and its meaning with it, constantly offering the reader a new viewpoint, thus sustaining his interest and curiosity. An example is the *laghukathā Jismom̃ kā tilism*, ‘Magic of bodies’:

All the people were standing there with their heads bent. Their shoulders were hanging so much that their backs seemed to protrude like hunchbacks. Seeing them from a distance it seemed as if headless bodies were standing in a line.

I approached them. I asked myself why they were standing in such a long queue.

²⁵⁵ The ‘narrated time’ of a text is to be distinguished from the ‘time of narration’. ‘Narrated time’ is the timespan which is covered by the text, the ‘time of narration’ is the time it takes to narrate the text.

²⁵⁶ L637 *Dr̥ṣṭi*, ‘Viewpoint’, by Satiś Dube.

‘May I ask for the reason for this long queue?’ I asked one of the bodies standing near me.

He made a somewhat unsuccessful attempt to slowly raise his head. I looked at him and was startled when under his nose he had nothing to speak with. But then a low voice came from his stomach which was almost one with his back - ‘We have to fill our stomachs - and this is the ration-shop.’

‘But the shop is closed.’ - I asked - ‘When is it opening, that shop?’

‘We’ve been standing here like this for thirty-six years [i.e. since 1947]. The shopkeeper has assured us many times that the shop would be opening soon and everybody would get a ration for a full stomach.’ - echoed the hollow voices of bodies standing nearby.

‘Why don’t you - open the shop with your own hands?’ I directed my attention to their hands, and gaped in surprise.

I saw that both hands were missing from all the bodies.²⁵⁷

The text opens into an undetermined space but is soon given a spatial dimension when the narrator tells that he sees the people ‘from a distance’ and that they look ‘as if they were standing in a line’. An image starts taking shape before the reader’s inner eye. As the narrator ‘comes closer’ the line becomes a ‘long queue’, and shortly after this it is revealed that the people are queuing in front of a ‘ration shop’. As the space shapes up the story line is revealed in parallel, reaching a first climax when the space takes its final shape: the ration shop turns out to represent the whole of India, its shopkeeper is the Indian government who has, for the thirty-six years since Independence, failed to provide the citizens even with such basic requirements as food. The development of the spatial dimension closes with this revelation. The final climax of the action, the exposure of the people being literally mutilated by their government, is no longer closely connected to the development of the textual space, but creates its own spatial dimension by referring to the people’s inability to ‘open’ the ration shop. Space, in this final stage of the plot, loses all its physical qualities and it becomes exclusively symbolic.

Adjusting the lens

The pattern of space and place gradually opening up leads to another way of creating space: the change of focus. The *laghukathā* employs several cinematic techniques to create space, the simplest being a step-by-step ‘escort’ of the protagonists. The inner eye of the reader, like a camera, follows the protagonists from place to place, viewing the events constantly from the same distance: ‘His

²⁵⁷ L1973 by Satīś Rāthī; cf. also L575 *Mairī majbūr hūm*, ‘I am helpless’, by Rājendra Dhavan.

wife screamed and fainted. In the morning, when she regained consciousness, she went to the hospital. She saw her father-in-law's corpse, too, lying on the pile of dead bodies, and Vishnu was standing in the long queue to put his name on the list'.²⁵⁸

The other possible ways of presenting a place is through the adjustment of the narrator's 'lens' by either narrowing or widening the focus in the course of the text. A close-up on the scene of action has the double effect of gradually confining the view by fading out the surroundings - thereby also leading the reader to a concentration on some central issue - and, at the same time, allowing a generally broader picture by presenting the place of action against a background of a whole. Showing places as parts of a whole emphasises that the action takes place in a social and societal environment, an important issue for a genre most of whose writers claim to be socially committed. An example for a gradual focusing of the view and concentration of vision is the laghukathā *Pradarśanī aur pradarśanī*, 'Exhibition and exhibition':

An international agricultural exhibition's ox-cart market. At the respective provinces' stalls, decorated ox-carts, each in its own fashion beautiful and attractive, and at every stall, identically dressed, a beautifully decorated and attractive young girl. All the assembled people were looking at the girls more attentively than at the ox-carts.²⁵⁹

By leading the reader's view from the 'international' to the rather confined context of the individual girls attending the stands, the text literally 'focuses' on the climax in the last sentence.

But a confined view may also produce a more intimate vision. In the laghukathā *Apmān*, 'Insult',²⁶⁰ a civil servant comes into a slum area to distribute free samples of soap and teach the people about hygiene. She enters first the quarter and then one of the huts and is therein presented with the residents' private domestic predicament of dependency and poverty, a situation which renders her mission absurd. The gradual narrowing of the focus goes hand in hand with the physical progression of the protagonist from the public to the private sphere of the hut and

²⁵⁸ From L2323 *Abhāv kā dānav*, 'Demon of poverty', by Suśilā Sitāriyā.

²⁵⁹ L2678 by Jagvīrsinh Varmā; cf. also L974 *Pāp-punya*, 'Sin and merit', by Prem Janmejaj.

²⁶⁰ L141 by Sumati Ayyar.

its hearth (cūlhā). But the civil servant intrudes into the private space not only physically and but also socially, coming from and bringing with her symbols of another social reality. Space, in this text as in many other laghukathās, becomes socially tinged, comprising and symbolising social activities or social belonging respectively²⁶¹: the confinement to a particular social space represents the confinement to particular social strata and social situation.²⁶²

As indicated earlier, the second possible adjustment of the focus is one of widening: a panning wide-angle lens may lead the reader's view away from or beyond the immediate place or space of action. As with the narrowing of the lens, one effect of this gradual opening of a larger, panoramic view is the creation of a background or context which leads the reader towards the climax-like understanding of the full extent of the plot. Panning, under these circumstances, means revelation. An example is the laghukathā *Jhagrā*, 'Fight':

Second day of the curfew. Leaving the house is forbidden. The children are tired of hanging around indoors. They just open the window a little bit and watch the empty street.
A boy asks, 'Grandfather, what are they fighting for?'
The grandfather answers, 'My son, that's a fight for daily bread.'
'But Ma has said it's a fight between Hindus and Muslims.'
'No, my son... Ramu from next door has taken 100 rupees... he started a fire in the town. He has received some payment... his family will have a full stomach today.' And the grandfather sighed heavily.²⁶³

Gradually, the scene opens up: from the house through the window into the street, by means of the grandfather's explanation towards the neighbourhood, and finally into the town, thus revealing the full meaning of the actions and creating the climax of the story.²⁶⁴ An example for a similarly explanatory but less revealing widening of the view is the laghukathā *Golī bilakh paṛī*, 'The bullet burst

²⁶¹ Cf. above L637 *Dṛṣṭi*.

²⁶² In a more general understanding, the term 'social space' can also be interpreted as representing a sphere for social encounter. Typical representatives of this kind of space in the laghukathā are the market, the train compartment, the platform, the queue etc. Although some social spaces are discussed for their symbolic values in section 4.5.3 on rhetorical devices, an in-depth analysis of social space in the laghukathā cannot be given at this point. It is, however, an interesting topic for further research.

²⁶³ L557 by Y. Dave.

²⁶⁴ Cf. above: the gradual approach towards a place of action has already been shown as 'revealing' for the laghukathā *Jismom kā tilism*.

into tears'²⁶⁵. Here the narrator's camera pans momentarily from the operation table of an emergency room in a hospital into the town - thereby providing the fictional background of riots - and then focuses back on the emergency room. Laghukathā critics like Śarmā and Kiran, who claim that the laghukathā does not have the capacity for 'space and time' (deś-kāl) or a 'scenic plan' (dṛśya-saṃyojan), are thus proven wrong. It has to be noticed, however, that the scenic plan is not created through description but through artfully constructing a spatial environment by using various cinematic techniques of shifting the reader's viewpoint in the very literal sense of the word.

Summary

It has been shown that the laghukathā writers employ several techniques of creating textual place and space in such a way that description is mostly avoided, not least to comply with the genre's demand for brevity. As a result the majority of laghukathās - especially those of public and societal life - lack distinctly in atmosphere and thus address the reader on a rational rather than an emotive level. The reader is forced to concentrate on the message in a very blunt and matter-of-fact way, especially in the place- and space-less laghukathā which leaves the action - mostly consisting of pure dialogue - in a vacuum.

Where place or space are indicated directly or indirectly, they often have a significant symbolic or philosophical dimension. The symbolic value of various places is emphasised by the fact that the spatial determination is revealed only towards the end of the story and thus coincides with the climax. An important aspect of the symbolism of space in the laghukathā is furthermore that space, in many cases, must be read as social space. Social intrusion, exclusion and demarcation are reflected in the spatial arrangements in the laghukathā, underlining the social concern of the writers.

²⁶⁵ L1788 by Ś. Puṇatāmbekar.

4.4 Form

In literature the term 'form' may refer to two aspects, the outer form or 'shape' of a text and its inner form or 'structure'. While the shape of a text is apparent to the reader at first sight, the text's structure either organises the story without becoming obvious to the reader, or - if easily discernible - reveals itself only gradually during the reading-process. Both structure and shape are important means for the writer to communicate with the reader, to raise expectations, lead the reader through the story and produce the desired effect. In the following, the outer and inner form of the *laghukathā* and their mutual influence will be investigated and we will see how formal aspects of the *laghukathā* are employed to produce a particular impression.

4.4.1 Outer form: size and shape

The first thing to leap to the eye when examining the outer form of a text is its size and shape, i.e. the way the text is represented, for example in verse or prose. From the size of a work the reader infers the probable duration of the reading-process and the likelihood of an uninterrupted reading of the whole text; from both size and shape he infers the type of text he is likely to be presented with, this type being anticipated with regard to known texts of similar appearance. Size or - in the *laghukathā*'s case - brevity and shape are therefore highly important features as far as the reader's reception and perception of a text is concerned. They prepare the reader for the reading process.²⁶⁶

Shape

In the *laghukathā* context we find four basic types of shape, each probably producing a particular kind of reader-expectation. These expectations are likely to correspond

²⁶⁶ In his book *A History of Reading* (London 1997) Alberto Manguel states in the chapter about the shape of the book: 'Books declare themselves through their titles, their authors, their places in a catalogue or on a bookshelf, the illustrations on their jackets; books also declare themselves through their size. At different times and in different places I have come to expect certain books to look a certain way, and, as in all fashions, these changing features fix a precise quality onto a book's definition. I judge a book by its cover; I judge a book by its shape.' p. 125.

with the traditional understanding of the respective formal type.²⁶⁷ Firstly, a text can be represented as a ‘straightforward discourse’²⁶⁸, with one sentence after the other being set down in a simple narrative way, often organised into paragraphs; the large majority of laghukathās is represented in this ‘prose’ fashion. Confronted with such a prose-shaped text, the reader will expect to be told a ‘story’ or a recounting of any kind of happening which is closed and to some extent pointed. Since it lies in the responsibility of the narrator, who acts as an intermediary between the story and the reader, to convey significant clues for the understanding of the story, the reader takes an attitude of expectant waiting.

A second way of presentation is the earlier-mentioned dialogic form. Texts of this type often consist of pure dialogue without any narrator’s description or explanation; an example is the aforementioned laghukathā *Cayan*, ‘Election’²⁶⁹. Other laghukathās supplement their dialogue with one or two prose sentences which, often positioned at the beginning or end of the text, allow the writer to add a short comment or explanation. These texts might be considered hybrid forms but ought to be seen as dialogic as long as the dialogue dominates the appearance of the text as e.g. in the laghukathās *Dṛṣṭi*, ‘Standpoint’ or *Rīṣṭedār*, ‘Relation’²⁷⁰. Another example is the following laghukathā *Intazām*, ‘Something will have to be done’:

‘Ma, I’m hungry.’
‘Eat me then, you parasite.’
‘Ma, can I go to play.’
‘Go to hell.’
‘Bhaiya, look at these tomatoes.’
‘But they are rotten.’
‘But I *am* hungry, bhaiya.’
‘Come on then.’
‘Bhaiya, let’s also take some for Ma and father. They’ll also be hungry.’

²⁶⁷ K.E. Bryant shows in his investigation of narrative strategies in Surdas that the initial contract between the author and the reader always relies on the framework of traditional knowledge of the audience. A reader or listener, upon experiencing a work of art, will, from the first moment, automatically classify and interpret the piece according to his or her knowledge of the context, e.g. in terms of a known story-line as in Surdas, or in comparison with similar known genres. The writer can exploit the audience’s expectations to different effects, e.g. by disappointing them, as in many laghukathās, or by reinforcing them. Cf. Kenneth E. Bryant, *Poems to the Child-God*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London 1978, pp. 43-71.

²⁶⁸ Cuddon, *Literary Terms*, p. 750 (headword ‘prose’).

²⁶⁹ L5 by Aśok Agravāl (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 76).

²⁷⁰ L637 by Satīś Dube (translation in section 4.3.3 ‘Space’, p. 126) and L363 by Kṛṣṇaśaṅkar Bhaṭnāgar.

‘Ma, Ma. Look what I’ve brought. Here, eat.’
 ‘Hey, where did you get them from? Anyway, that’s eased my hunger a bit.’
 ‘Here, keep them for your father.’ Mohan said today, ‘He is hungry.’
 ‘Strangle him, and yourself too while you’re at it.’
 ‘After all, something will have to be done.’
 (Looking at the tomatoes) ‘Yes, now something will have to be done.’

The next day three corpses were lying in the room, and the father looked silently now at the corpses and now at the rotten tomatoes.²⁷¹

Despite the narrative passages towards the end of the text the overall impression is a dialogic one. Besides, an interesting feature occurs when the dialogue finishes: the bracketed phrase ‘looking at the tomatoes’ takes the form of stage directions and thereby moves this laghukathā towards a drama-like form. Some laghukathās draw even more heavily on dramatic features by indicating the speakers at the beginning of every statement not by a sentence but by simply naming the person followed by a colon. This kind of presentation is highly self-reflexive, it allows a seemingly more neutral, matter-of-fact portrayal but at the same time reminds the reader of the text’s artistic and hence artificial nature. The following, rather experimental, laghukathā *Alag rājya* (*Panīr kā ṭukrā*), ‘A different rule (A piece of cheese)’ may serve as an example:

Question: When the crow caws, what happens?

Answer: When the crow caws the piece of cheese falls down.

Question: When the piece of cheese falls down, what does the fox do?

Answer: The fox takes the cheese and disappears.

Fox (to himself): I can hear the cawing, but why isn’t the piece of cheese falling down?

Backstage a cassette with cawing is playing.

Question: Where is the crow sitting in the above picture?

Answer: The crow is sitting high up in a tree.

Question: What is the fox doing in that picture?

Answer: The fox is staring with his mouth wide open.

Question: What is the crow’s beak like?

Answer: The crow’s beak is larger than life.

Fill in the gap.

Question: fox is singing to the crow?

Answer: The hungry fox is singing to the crow.²⁷²

Unlike the prose-shaped laghukathā, the dialogic text - especially in its pure form - has more of an inherently fragmentary character with a ‘before’ and ‘after’ hanging in

²⁷¹ By Anil Janvijay, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK1*, p. 256.

²⁷² By Jasbīr Cāvlā, in: *Haṃs*, December 1992, p. 33.

the air. Besides, the fact that the narrator does not step in or at the most limits himself to a commentary at the beginning or end, lends the dialogic *laghukathā* more immediacy as well as more authenticity; instead of being told *about* a conversation the reader experiences it. At the same time the total lack of direct identification of time, space or even protagonists which is to be found in many dialogic *laghukathās* results in the reader's attention focusing on the factual message.²⁷³

This is different, however, for the drama-like *laghukathās*. Their use of stage directions not only reverses the disappearance of the narrator, it also allows the writer to give necessary details while omitting unnecessary description. A special situation arises for the reader because he expects to be closer to the action on the one hand, but is 'disillusioned' by the self-reflexiveness of the text and more emotionally detached from it on the other.

The third and fourth kind of shape a *laghukathā* may take - a poem- or verse-like form and a letter-form - are far less important than the prose- and dialogue-appearance, since they make up only a fraction of whole body of texts. An example for the poem-form is the *laghukathā Asaphaltā*, 'Failure'²⁷⁴. Its single prose sentence is arranged over three lines and thereby takes the appearance of a lyric verse. Texts which are represented in the form of a letter usually feature an opening salutation and a closing statement as for instance the *laghukathā Nimantran*, 'Invitation':

Dear Mr. Poverty,

Your firm control of history has impressed me deeply. It is my dearest wish that you make sure to come to my inaugural ceremony and that you will always grant me your support ...

Obligingly yours,
21st Century²⁷⁵

Both the verse- and the letter-form produce in the reader an expectation of being presented a relatively intimate view into personal matters, thoughts or emotions.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Cf. above pp. 125 & 110.

²⁷⁴ L1174 by D. Kharse (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 101).

²⁷⁵ By Ś. Simh 'Śyāmal', in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK1*, p. 222.

²⁷⁶ Cf. section 4.3.2 'Protagonists', p. 110.

Another important aspect of the outer shape of the *laghukathā* is that all the above-given forms can be presented in two different ways, namely, first of all, as a coherent whole and, secondly, clearly sectionalised. The representation of the text as a coherent whole characterises the majority of *laghukathās*; the text, although perhaps visibly structured, is still presented as a single entity. The sectionalised representation displays the text as divided into several passages which are separated from each other, sometimes marked by headings as ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’ or ‘now’ and ‘later’ and sometimes partitioned by a horizontal line of signs (e.g. ‘*’ or ‘□’) between the sections. These externally separated sections naturally go hand in hand with the internal structure of the plot, as will be seen later. In general, they serve either to blatantly stress the chronological progression of the action or to contrast two or more events with each other. Illustrative of the former is, for instance, the text *Niṣṭhura*, ‘Cruelty’, which under the headings ‘morning’, ‘afternoon’ and ‘evening’ shows how a poor man’s child starves to death within one day because nobody is ready to give a few coins.²⁷⁷ The *laghukathā Khīr*, ‘Rice-pudding’²⁷⁸, gives an example for the latter kind of sectionalisation: the generosity of the ordinary people and the greed of the rich are set against each other in the form of two separate passages divided by a row of ‘crosses’ (‘×’). A result of this kind of sectionalisation is a matter-of-fact tone; the writer describes the situation to the reader in well-chosen words but presents it to him in the most direct way possible. The lack of comment and description guarantees that the reader must draw all conclusions him- or herself.

Size

The question of size is an indispensable part of the critical discussion of the *laghukathā* since an indication of the possible dimensions of the texts is given in the very generic term ‘*laghukathā*’. Although the term ‘laghu’ may refer to a variety of aspects - e.g. the concentration of the content or theme or the speed of narration and the speed of conveying the message - the majority of *laghukathā* writers and critics sees it as an indicator of the formal size, i.e. brevity in terms of the number of words, lines or pages.

²⁷⁷ L1676 by R. Pāṇḍey ‘Unmukt’ (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84).

²⁷⁸ L762 by Bindeśvar Prasād Guptā [sic].

Interestingly, the critical debate on the question of the *laghukathā*'s brevity is concerned with a problem well known from both Indian and Western short story criticism, namely the fact that 'shortness' is a relative value. 'Smallness and bigness cannot be inherent properties of anything, they can only occur relative to something else' states Pratt, talking about the short story.²⁷⁹ The idea of the *laghukathā*'s brevity therefore demands a value for comparison, which is readily given by the majority of writers and critics as the *kahānī* or short story.²⁸⁰ Just as the Western short story in the beginning strove for recognition as a genre in its own right rather than a short form of the novel, the Hindi *laghukathā* now tries to demarcate itself from the short story. 'Just as the *kahānī* is not an abbreviated form of the novel, the *laghukathā* is not an abbreviated form of the *kahānī*', declares Ś. Kiraṇ.²⁸¹ However, any description of a new genre in comparison with an already existing and well established one holds a danger: it can evoke the disparagement of the newcomer, especially if the aspect of small size is concerned which is easily interpreted as a lack of greatness. Again parallel to the early short story, the *laghukathā* fights for its shortness not being interpreted in terms of shortness of quality; its authors stand up against the accusations of being trivial, insubstantial and merely a practising ground for new writers; P. Bansal states: 'After all it is not a Bonsai art'.²⁸²

In order to escape this trap of describing the *laghukathā*'s size in relation to other genres by stating what it is *not* rather than what it *is*, several writers have taken refuge in searching for an absolute value by prescribing an upper and lower word limit. The general opinions about this word limit vary between 15-500, an average value being given as 300-500; some writers, however, allow the *laghukathā* to consist of as many as 1500 or even 3000 words. Most writers, though, refuse to set a limit to the number of words. As to the texts of the sample, the average number of words lies at around 200, with approximately 70% of the *laghukathās* having between 100 and

²⁷⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, 'The Short Story. The Long and the Short of It', in: Charles E. May (ed.), *The New Short Story Theories*, Athens, Ohio 1994, p. 98.

²⁸⁰ Other genres like the anecdote or folk tale are mentioned only marginally in the discussion of the *laghukathā*'s size.

²⁸¹ Ś. Kiraṇ, 'Kathā-lekhan...', p.7.

²⁸² P. Bansal, in: *Maharṣi Dayānand University Research Journal /Arts* (MDURJ), April 1987, MDU, Rohtak, p. 110, cit. in: R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 36.

350 words, thus lying slightly below the estimations of the writers and critics.²⁸³ Less or more words than this are only to be found in around 15% of the texts respectively, and a word number of more than 550 is the exception. The following diagram illustrates this distribution:

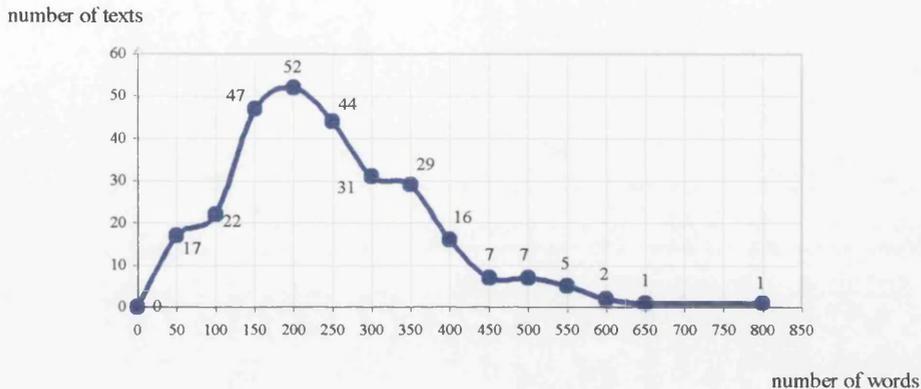


Diagram 2: Distribution of number of words

Considering the original place of publication of *laghukathās*, namely journalistic print media, it can be said as a general rule of thumb that a *laghukathā* is of a length which allows the reader to perceive the whole body of the text at one single glance, i.e. without having to turn a page. Looking at a *laghukathā*, the reader is able to retain a sense of the whole in terms of size as well as the above-mentioned form of representation.²⁸⁴ In the context of the competitive magazine- and especially newspaper-environment the genre's brevity is furthermore significant because short prose texts - like short articles - are more likely to be read.

Although the writers are considerably concerned about the *laghukathā*'s size, the question of whether brevity has to be seen as a symptom of the other literary devices or as their cause, cannot be answered with certainty. On the one hand there are writ-

²⁸³ Interestingly, with a word number of around 300 the average length of texts from the content categories of 'individual and family' and 'man and woman' - which have been shown to often exhibit short- story-like features - lies considerably higher than the general average.

²⁸⁴ Anthologies and collections do not always adhere to this principle of publication; texts are often printed in such way that a story extends over two back-to-back pages. The impression made by *laghukathās* thus published is therefore heavily altered. However, as mentioned earlier, these are only secondary media of publication intended to preserve rather than to attract a large and new readership. Cf. section 3.2 'Means of publication', p. 58.

ers like Coprā and Agravāl who proclaim the *laghukathā*'s brevity as programmatic. 'The form of a *laghukathā* has to be short' declares Agravāl, and he elaborates: 'the *laghukathā* writer's skill lies in achieving completeness while keeping the action short'.²⁸⁵ Coprā, too, sees brevity as an aim which has to be achieved with the help of other literary devices: 'In terms of its technique the *laghukathā* is a supporter of brevity ... It is therefore necessary to create a solid structure [of the text]'.²⁸⁶ On the other hand, writers like Jain and Niśāntar reject brevity as a prerequisite of the genre. Jain's statement that a given content spontaneously assumes the form of a particular and appropriate genre shows that the shortness of a text can also be an outcome of any other given feature, here the chosen subject matter, and Niśāntar clearly states: 'When we [...] employ a single-stranded event taking place within a single time-unit [to create a *laghukathā*] [...] the form of the *laghukathā* becomes short naturally. [...] But [...] although brevity is an indispensable quality of the *laghukathā*, it is not used in the form of a [programmatic] title in the word '*laghukathā*'.²⁸⁷ It becomes clear that, as has been shown already in the above-analysed features of theme, protagonists and space, brevity and the usage of literary devices determine each other with a changing degree of influence.

4.4.2 Inner form: the plot

The *laghukathā* is a narrative genre, it *tells* the reader something, usually a story. A story on its own, though, does not yet make a literary work, it simply presents events in their time sequence. In order to induce, for example, curiosity, suspense, surprise or shock in a reader, a piece of literature relies on its story made into a plot, i.e. a temporally ordered story, structured according to principles like causality, contrast, fate or miracle. It is the structure of the plot that leads the reader through the story towards the end and creates the particular intended impression and effect. It will be shown in the following what particular effect is intended by the *laghukathā* writers and how the structure is used to produce it.

²⁸⁵ Agravāl, 'Laghukathā: āmne-sāmne', p. 88.

²⁸⁶ Coprā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāerṁ', p. 74.

²⁸⁷ M.P. Jain, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 15; and Niśāntar, 'Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān aur ālocanā ke pratimān', in: Satiśrāj Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Tatpāścāt. Laghukathā-ālocanā ki taraf pahalā prayās*, Nagpur 1983, p. 237.

Impression and effect

We have seen that the awakening effect of the laghukathā is among the foremost aims of most writers: they want to provoke and shock the reader, thereby forcing him to think about the socio-political realities surrounding him.²⁸⁸ For this effect to gain in force it is deemed important that it should be, above all, of a single and unified nature; Coprā, Sonī and Niśāntar explicitly declare the ‘unity of impression’ or ‘unity of effect’ (prabhāvānviti) as one of the main characteristics of the laghukathā.²⁸⁹ What is meant by this ‘unity’ becomes clear when looking at the metaphors used to describe the nature of the effect or impression: the laghukathā, it is said, equals a ‘rocket’ (rāket) as opposed to the kahānī which moves forward like an ‘ox-cart’ (bailgārī); the laghukathā produces the pain and effect of a needle (sūī; takuā kī noṅk), of a high-powered bullet (hāī pāvard choṭī golī), a sharp lancet (tez naśtar) or a crossbow-arrow (nāvak kā tīr) and resembles a flash of lightning (bijlī kī kaundh).²⁹⁰ All these images indicate the rapidity and pointed single-mindedness of the laghukathā’s action which is supposed to lead the reader unerringly towards *one* message, ‘ekānvit kathya’, not allowing him to look right or left and get distracted by secondary impressions. Strongly connected to the unity of impression and effect are other literary unities - the unity of theme, place, time, action and plot. They are significant means of creating a unitary impression and effect, as will be seen in the following. Another feature of the laghukathā that supports the single impression and effect is the texts’ brevity: apart from the fact that a narrative text as short as the laghukathā is bound to be very focused in its statement, the brief outer form which can be taken in at one single glance contributes to the creation of a single impression as well as an impression of singleness at first sight.

²⁸⁸ Cf. section 3.1 ‘Authors’ intentions’, pp. 48 ff.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Coprā, ‘Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāem’, p. 75, V. Sonī, ‘Laghukathā: paribhāṣā evam svarūp kā nirdhāraṇ’, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, p. 84, and Niśāntar, ‘Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān...’, p. 233. This concept is strongly reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe’s short story theory. Poe states in 1842 in his review *Hawthorne’s Twice-Told Tales* that ‘the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance [in almost all classes of composition]’ since ‘without the unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about’. Poe is, however, not explicitly referred to in the critical debate and similarities may thus be coincidental. (Cf. A.H. Quinn & E.H. O’Neill (eds.), *The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 2, New York 1958, p. 949).

²⁹⁰ Cf. Cand Muṅgerī, ‘Laghu se kathā tak’, in: Hitaiṣī (ed.), *Ātaṅk*, p. 79; Niśāntketu, ‘Laghukathā...’, pp. 99, 100, 106 and 108; R.K. Śarma, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 28; Kaśyap, ‘Hindī laghukathā...’, p. 43.

Unity of theme

Unity of theme (*viṣay kā ekātva, vicārānviti*) is a characteristic of almost all *laghukathās*: 99% of the texts focus on only one central idea. It is therefore surprising that this feature is mentioned only occasionally in critical essays. Next to Coprā who explicitly asks for ‘one single theme’ (*ek hī viṣay*) leading in ‘one single direction’ (*ekonmukhtā*) to be presented in the *laghukathā*, it is mainly Śrīvāstav and Bhagīrath who claim that the theme or subject matter should be limited (*viṣay vastu bāndhnī ho*) and concentrated on one special purpose (*viṣeś kām par kendrit*) to ensure that the single message is communicated effectively.²⁹¹ The importance of upholding both the unity of theme and of message is best illustrated by quoting one of the few texts which fail to meet this demand - *Surakṣā*, ‘Security’:

Once upon a time there was a very important security officer at a very important institution. He wore a spick and span uniform. He had loads of medals and stars fixed to it. He had been appointed for this position after many investigations, examinations and interviews. Vast wages, residence, allowances and loads of privileges!

One day a fire broke out at the institute. Goods worth hundreds of thousands were burnt. The committee of enquiry sat. The security officer was heard.

‘Why didn’t you attend to the fire? So much damage has been done and you were sitting there doing nothing!’ the chairman of the committee bellowed.

‘This accusation is false, I devoted all my attention to the fire; it broke out at ten o’clock, I can give you the minute and second if you want!’

‘Why then didn’t you call the fire brigade?’

‘I have orders to attend only to accidents, not to rescue operations,’ the security officer said innocently.

The chairman of the committee merely gave the security officer a warning and dismissed him, because he was his own brother-in-law.²⁹²

The central idea of the text first seems to be the inability of bureaucrats to think independently and do their work efficiently. The theme is pursued straightforwardly throughout the text until its culmination in the absurd and naive answer of the security officer. The message that modern Indian bureaucracy is all ‘red tape’ rather than a competently working official body is conveyed clearly in the penultimate paragraph. Nevertheless, another theme is addressed in the end, namely that of nepotism: the last sentence states that no consequences arise for the security officer from his incompe-

²⁹¹ Cf. Coprā, ‘Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāem’, p. 73, Śrīvāstav, ‘Laghukathā: ek avalokan’, p. 97, and Bhagīrath, ‘Laghukathā: śilp aur śaili kā prayogātmak rūp’, in: S. Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: sarjānā*, p. 131.

²⁹² L1402 by Maniṣrāy.

tent behaviour because he has the necessary family connections. Instead of adding to the vigorousness of the effect as probably intended by the author, this ‘double climax’ seems slightly out of place and also diverts the readers attention from the effect built up in the course of the plot. In this *laghukathā* not even title of the story helps to decide what the main message is, since *Surakṣā* may be interpreted as either mockingly referring to the fact that one is ‘secure’ when one knows the right people, or ironically commenting on the security officer who cannot guarantee security. Not surprisingly, only a very small portion of *laghukathās* show this weakness.²⁹³ To what extent the unity of theme and message is linked with other aspects of unity will be shown in the course of this section.

Unity of place

Place and space play, as we have seen, only a minor role in the *laghukathā* debate in general.²⁹⁴ Correspondingly, they are also relatively insignificant in the context of the *laghukathā*’s unities; it is only Copṛā who explicitly calls for the unity of place (*sthānānviti*)²⁹⁵, a feature indeed characteristic of the majority of *laghukathās*. Even those texts whose plots require various scenes of action mostly create the impression of unity of place or space through the artful employment of several techniques of spatial representation.

The first technique is the earlier-described ‘adjusting of the lens’. Panning or closing up of the view not only serves to increase the suspense, underline the message or deepen the impression on the reader, as demonstrated above; they are also - consciously or unconsciously - employed to maintain the impression of a unity of place and space in texts that span different places. This allows the *laghukathā* in its limited formal size to reach out into a larger world and, at the same time, retain the spatial unity of the main action, as demanded by Copṛā. Space and place, when seen through a tightly focused or a wide-angle lens, are expanded associatively or implicitly, often, as in classical Greek drama, with the help of a ‘messenger’ who bears witness to

²⁹³ The other texts of the sample are L136 *Caritra kī hatyā*, ‘Murder of character’ by A. Aśok and L517 *Manorañjan*, ‘Entertainment’, by K. Copṛā.

²⁹⁴ Cf. section 4.3.3 ‘Space’, pp. 123 ff.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Copṛā, ‘*Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāem*’, p. 75.

events at other places through oral report, dreams, visions or memories. The 'messenger' in this context must not exclusively be seen as a real person coming in from the outside; any protagonist - even the omniscient narrator - can take this role of introducing a glimpse of the outside world or another space; examples are the grandfather in the *Jhagrā*, 'Fight' or the narrator in *Golī bilakh parī*, 'The bullet burst into tears'²⁹⁶. Another typical method of permitting movement whilst retaining the impression of unity of space is to employ a vehicle as the place of action; in several laghukathās cars, trains, tongas or rickshaws provide the background for encounters.

An example illustrative of the techniques described so far is the laghukathā *Anu-karan*, 'Imitation'²⁹⁷. It starts with the narrator's explanatory introduction: the minister of a certain province can only sleep when touring the constituency in his car. An unnamed 'province' and a bungalow are mentioned but they are not part of the actual plot, they are rather 'messenger'-like brought in from the outside to provide a background for the action to follow. The action begins with the minister sleeping in his car but waking up when the driver stops and tells him that they had crossed the province's border and were now being taken for smugglers and held up by the police. The minister thus gets out of the car and 'officially' inspects the police station. The laghukathā ends as it begins with the narrator's commentary: 'People say that the minister upon his return had a decree issued to the police departments in his own province, ordering them to follow this police station's example'. The text manages to span two provinces, a bungalow and two police departments without actually breaking up the unity of the place and space of action, which consists of the car in front of the police station and the police station itself.

Unity of Time

Like the unity of space, the unity of time (*samay kī ikāī/samay-ikāī kā sātatyā*) is seldom referred to explicitly but we find it mentioned implicitly in the recurring emphasis of the short, momentary nature of the laghukathā's plot: the laghukathā, according to writers and critics, presents a moment of life (*jīvan kā ek kṣaṇ*), a short

²⁹⁶ L557 by Y. Dave (translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', p. 129) and L1788 by Ś. Puṇatāmbekar.

²⁹⁷ L565 by S.R. Dharṇidhar.

time (alpkāl), a part (amś) or a fragment (khaṇḍ) of time.²⁹⁸ When it comes to the texts of the sample, however, a slightly different picture presents itself. Only around 60% of the texts present time-units which display a momentary character, i.e. whose actual action does not exceed a time-span that is given or will be perceived as longer than several minutes or 'moments'. The remaining 40% deal with all possible periods from one or more hours up to a hundred years. One text outside the sample even covers the time from the creation of the earth up to the present day.²⁹⁹

Besides, less than half of the momentary laghukathās (around a fourth of the whole sample) can be called 'truly' momentary texts, namely those in which narrated time and narrative time are strictly identical and no narrator interferes expanding or compressing the time of the action. Examples of this kind of laghukathā are the earlier-given *Cayan*, 'Election', or the following text *Lajjit*, 'Ashamed':

My son! I am ashamed that I couldn't give you a job. I worked with my hands to give you an education. I gave you whatever you asked for, even though it was beyond my means. I have sacrificed every flower of my love and tenderness to you.

If only my loins could bear nepotism and bribes? I want to tell all mothers that before they bear children they have to give birth to nepotism and bribes so that they don't have to be ashamed in front of their children.³⁰⁰

Next to such monologic statements or the pure dialogue of *Cayan*, dreams, thoughts and interior monologue are the preferred stylistic devices for the 'truly momentary' laghukathā which leaves the most immediate impression on the reader.

The question remains whether the 40% of texts which deal with a time-span longer than a short moment are 'proper' laghukathās. In this context it is especially Niśāntar's and Bhāṭiyā's approaches which offer a solution. They claim that it is not so much the temporal brevity which guarantees the impression of a unity of time but the way in which events are connected and intertwined. According to Niśāntar, the laghukathā's time-unit (samay kī ikāī) must not only be short but also continuous

²⁹⁸ Cf. A. Caudhari 'Abz', 'Laghukathā: ek vicār', p. 53, Coprā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāerṁ', p. 76, Vikram Sonī, 'Laghukathāerṁ: tab se ab tak...', in: N. Hitaiśi (ed.), *Ātaṅk*, p. 100, K. Coprā, 'Laghukathā saphal, sampūrṇ, sārthak evarṁ saśakt kathā vidhā hai', in a discussion on 'Laghukathā svatantrata vidhā hai athavā cuṅkulebāzī?' chaired by Aśok Lav, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, p. 121.

²⁹⁹ *Caṭṭān aur per*, 'The rock and the tree', by Avadeś Kumār, in: *Haṁs*, June 1992, p. 32.

³⁰⁰ L2333 by Suśilā Sitariyā.

(satat) or incessant (anvarat): a laghukathā may therefore contain events which are not strictly part of one single time-unit as long as the impression of a continuous time-sequence is maintained.³⁰¹ An event from the past, Niśāntar says, may for example be connected to an event in the present through memories in such a way that it is not revealed that several time-units are linked up.³⁰² This argument is backed up by Bhāṭiyā who says that ‘to judge a laghukathā according to its taking place within a single time-unit is to suffocate it’.³⁰³ Proceeding from this criterion of continuity rather than mere shortness, around 90% of the laghukathās can be said to present a unity of time: they show their action taking place within a time-unit that appears to be coherent. In order to produce this impression various means are employed to hold together events positioned on different ends of the time-scale.

The most commonly used method is the creation of a unified strand of action: a series of events is arranged in such a way that even where several days, months or years are covered the reader is not left with the impression that he misses out on an important incident. A good example is the laghukathā *Mahīne bhar kī pratibaddhatā*, ‘A whole month’s commitment’³⁰⁴. It presents the first three months of a young man’s administrative career: working enthusiastically during the first month, he is reprimanded for doing his work ‘too well’; consequently, as he feels the uselessness of his efforts, he starts to ‘sleep the sleep of the just’ during the second month. Now being accused of not doing his work at all, he spends the third month in writing reports to justify his behaviour. Although the text jumps abruptly twice from one month to the next, a strong impression of unity is created through the straightforward progression of those events which are important for the main line of action. Besides, this text reveals causality as another principle of linking events of a longer period of time. A lapse of time may not be perceived as such if a causal connection creates the impression that the events belong together.

Another means of unification is the application of the unity of theme. It guarantees that an action in the form of separate events happening at different, un-linked mo-

³⁰¹ Niśāntar, ‘Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān...’, p. 234.

³⁰² Cf. below, the concept of ‘review’ (Rückblick), p.155.

³⁰³ Aśok Bhāṭiyā, ‘Laghukathā aur śāstrīya savāl’, in: Devguṇ & Nijāt (eds.), *Hariyānā*, p. 94.

³⁰⁴ L2166 by R. Śarmā.

ments is still recognised as temporally coherent. In the *laghukathā Mānyatā*, ‘Belief’, for example, the central idea linking the events is the politicians’ mendacity:

In the middle of the village, a big tree. Meetings small and large would be held under this tree. The villagers believe that the more lies are told underneath the tree, the more it will wither.

Election approaching. The time of the speeches has begun. Party members and opposition members came to make election propaganda. They all held their gatherings under that tree. After every gathering some of the tree’s branches are dead. The villagers are afraid that the tree will have died by the time the election comes.

Three days before the election day the highest leader of the country comes. A big public meeting is held under the tree. The leader speaks for about one hour.

The next day the villagers saw - the tree was dead and lying uprooted on the ground.³⁰⁵

After a short general exposition which introduces the leitmotif - the tree whose leaves die when someone lies while standing under it - the narrator first of all collectively introduces the ‘ordinary’ politicians who are, one by one, unmasked by the slowly dying tree. Then, after an undetermined interval, the leader of the country delivers the death-blow to the tree by giving an hour-long speech under it. Although the action of the story spans a period of several weeks or even months, the reader gets an impression of the temporal closeness of the events because of their portraying thematically identical situations. Another strong link is provided by the above-mentioned leitmotif, the tree. Next to objects, other kinds of leitmotifs which are used to produce a unifying effect on events happening at different moments in the story are, for example, recurring phrases or situations as in the earlier-given *laghukathā Niṣṭhurtā*, ‘Cruelty’³⁰⁶.

The last method of referring to a moment in time not directly linked to the story’s action is the employment of ‘memories’ as mentioned by Niśāntar or, as a variant of these memories, the ‘messenger’ who also serves to uphold the unity of space. Several *laghukathās* make use of different retrospective techniques in order to provide the reader with background information or comments without disturbing the temporal and spatial unity. These techniques will be discussed in more detail in the section on the unity of plot.

³⁰⁵ L558 by Y. Dave.

³⁰⁶ L1676 by R. Pāṇḍey ‘Unmukt’ (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84).

The last aspect to be discussed here is the group of texts whose unity of time is not being upheld. As stated earlier, around 90% of the *laghukathās* of the sample use one or several of the above-described methods to create a unified impression in spite of their extension over a longer period of time. The remaining 10% do *not* bridge the temporal gap between the events but rather, in most cases, consciously use it to mirror a contrast from the level of content on the temporal level. The *laghukathā Ādhār*, ‘Foundation’³⁰⁷, for instance, shows the fragility of well-being based on corruption: it describes how a corrupt officer’s life changes when he is transferred to a new post where the taking of bribes is no longer possible. After illustrating the rich and comfortable if not necessarily exemplary life his family can lead thanks to the bribes, the phase of rapid deterioration of ‘domestic happiness’ without the extra money is indicated formally by a new paragraph, and, in terms of content and inner form, by a change of place (his transfer to a new position) and the beginning of a new period which is initiated by the phrase ‘and one day...’. Instead of linking the periods before and after this temporal break, the text uses all possible means to distinctly separate them in order to deepen the impression of the fatal outcome. Nevertheless, the impression is a unified and single one, because such contrasts may serve to emphasise the message. Lack of unity of time or place, therefore, does not inevitably result in the loss of the straightforward and pointed effect and message.

Historical time

Historical time does not occur frequently in the texts but is interesting insofar as it emphasises the fact that the *laghukathā* is a post-Independence genre: most of the examples which explicitly identify historical events or periods involve the date or time of Independence as a reference-point.³⁰⁸ They may, for instance, contrast the time before and after independence, as *Mānasiktā*, ‘Mentality’, show long-term effects of partition, as *Niśān*, ‘Scar’, thematise partition itself as something forced upon the country by the English, as *Mairī majbūr hūm*, ‘I am helpless’, or simply present the

³⁰⁷ L2615 by R. Upādhyāy.

³⁰⁸ Other historical events explicitly referred to are e.g. the American intervention in Nicaraguan politics in the 1980s (L1772 *Sāmrājyavād*, ‘Imperialism’, by N.Prasād ‘Navin’) or the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 (*Ayodhyā* by R. Kumār, in: *Hamṣ*, August 1993, p. 92).

post-Independence situation of India, as *Gulmohar*, 'The gulmohar-tree' or *Jismom k̄ā tilism*, 'The magic of bodies'.³⁰⁹ The latter text is an example of a *laghukathā* which is only fully understandable if the reader knows the context - here the year of publication - because the date 1947 as a reference-point must be inferred from the protagonists' statement that they have been standing in the queue 'for 36 years'. It must be assumed that other texts, too, refer to contemporary socio-political events, although they may not reveal their historical reference-point easily unless they are read in the immediate context of their creation and publication. Since the *laghukathā* considers itself to be a comment on modern life it is highly probable that texts like ⁵ *Bhraṣṭācār ke prati putr-moh*, 'Love for a son against corruption'³¹⁰ allude to ongoing political affairs which can be identified by the contemporary reader without difficulty but may be lost when the text is re-published later in an anthology. However, the fact that these texts are comprehensible even if taken out of their immediate context proves their themes to possess a sense of general validity.

Unity of plot and action

We have seen that time as a temporal agent is concerned with historical time on the one hand and temporal placement as well as the duration of action on the other. As a structural agent, however, time is the most important means of organising a plot because it is responsible for the order of the events within the time-frame of the action. The importance of the connection of time and plot for the *laghukathā* will be shown in the following.

Dynamic and static presentation of action

In the *laghukathā* events are basically organised in two ways, a dynamic one which presents the development of action - a change takes place - and a static one which presents the revelation of a state: no change takes place, but the reader - sometimes in unison with a protagonist - is gradually or suddenly acquainted with a given situa-

³⁰⁹ L952 by S. Jāngir 'Uday' (translation in section 4.2.1 'Themes', p. 90), L313 by K. Bhāratīya, L18 by B. Agravāl, L1973 by S. Rāthī (translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', pp. 126-127).

³¹⁰ L1553 by I.K. Nāth (translation in 4.3.3 'Space', pp. 124-125).

tion, or with the circumstances which have led to it. An example for a plot of revelation is the *laghukathā Āj kī rājnīti*, 'Modern politics':

People with weapons in their hands were fleeing heedlessly in one direction. Like a storm rising at sea.

The noise and fear grew so intense that in no time windows and doors began to close. People were running helter-skelter from their houses.

Curious people who didn't know anything about the incident were running away, raising hell.

I asked a gentleman, 'Bhai, what's going on?'

'Bhai, I'm running just to find that out,' he replied.

Someone said, 'I've heard that at a sacred place something...'

The crowd came together at a sacred place. Someone climbed up on something and said, 'Brothers, on our sacred place they have thrown...'

He was still speaking when someone from the crowd cried 'Kill them! Kill them!' Stones and bricks were hovering in the air - like black kites and crows... the fire of communalism sprang up throughout the town. Countless innocents, completely unaware of what was going on, entered their final sleep. Vermilion was wiped from the foreheads of mothers and sisters without number. *Rākhi*³¹¹ torn from wrists fell to the ground. It was as if a curfew was declared in the city.

At a secure place a conference was taking place, during which some people burst out laughing - 'the Chief Minister... will certainly resign now... because I have provoked such a situation that...'³¹²

In two stages first a typical situation of violent communal unrest is presented and then the cause for this situation is disclosed as the vicious plan of politicians who want to gain political power. Within the plot no change of situation occurs, it is only the reader who learns in the very last sentence about the shocking background of the events and the morally abominable character of the politicians responsible. The same situation, the incitement of violent communal tumult by politicians in order to bring down a rival, is depicted in the *laghukathā Upāy*, 'Strategy', only here the main theme - the politicians' unscrupulousness - is not revealed in the end but develops along with the plot:

The leader said, 'it's only one more week till the elections. But where's the strategy?'. All the active members sitting in the room were silent. The leader was anxious. One member got up and whispered something into the leader's ear. The leader beamed. The meeting came to an end. In the morning there was a new bulletin about communal riots: 'In these communal riots eleven women and five children have died; many people have been injured'.

Addressing a general meeting in the evening, the leader demanded a judicial enquiry into the riots, and called for appropriate compensation for the bereaved families and for the

³¹¹ *Rākhi*: a thread tied by a sister around her brother's wrist as a protective talisman on the full moon day of the month Śrāvana.

³¹² L2531 by R. Trivedi 'Bandhu'.

government to resign; and he declared that free food would be provided for the whole village for seven days by his party. Two weeks later I saw a huge parade coming along the main road and asked 'someone' and he said 'the leader has won by a vast majority. That's him in the front, coming in the jeep with the garlands'.³¹³

Here, the situation changes: in a classic Aristotelian beginning-middle-end fashion, a leader is first shown before the elections, then the measures taken by his advisors are presented, and finally, as the result of these measures, the leader is portrayed as the winner of the elections. Remarkably, two completely different impressions are created by representing an identical motif in either a revealing or a developing way. In the first case the emphasis lies on the creation of a feeling of bewilderment and incredulity in the reader; the text closes with a surprising and shocking ending. In the second example the reader has full knowledge of the situation's progress, the effect is not one of surprise but rather of suspense and anticipation. In general, the *laghukathā* prefers development (around 80%) over revelation (around 20%), i.e. a dynamic presentation of the action which engages the reader throughout the reading-process, over a static one which catches the reader's full attention especially with the surprise ending.

However, the impression on the reader does not only depend on the plot being presented in a revealing or progressive manner, it also varies according to the different kinds of plot in the texts. In connection with the *laghukathā*, three kinds of organisation of events can be distinguished, namely an arrangement into a chronological, a retrospective or an episodic plot.³¹⁴

In the *laghukathā* the common feature of all these plots is that usually - even in relatively complex structures - their unity is sustained, which helps to produce the intended unified impression. *Laghukathā*-writers understand the unity of plot (*kathānak kī ekātmaktā*), above all, as a single-strandedness (*ek tanutā*) and a point-edness (*pvāvanṭiḍ*).³¹⁵ The action has to be straightforward (*saral*), single-stranded or

³¹³ L463 by Amarnāth Caudharī 'Abz'.

³¹⁴ The following analysis roughly follows an overview over possible structural types of German short stories which has proved useful for the *laghukathā*-context. The fact that the structural features of the post-war short story are applicable to this context identifies the *laghukathā* once more as a distinctively modern genre. Cf. Leonie Marx, *Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte*, Stuttgart & Weimar 1997, pp. 77-82.

³¹⁵ Cf. Coprā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāern', p. 75.

unified ('ek hī honā') and integrated (intīgreṭeḍ), it forms 'a complete thread' (ek sampūrṇ sūtra) which moves unswervingly in one single direction towards its aim (ekonmukhī - 'pointing into one direction').³¹⁶ Ś. Kiraṇ states, that 'the message should not run loose but remain concentrated on its target-point'.³¹⁷ How these demands are put into practice in different kinds of plot will be shown in the following.

The chronological plot

The chronological plot presents the events of the story in their natural time-sequence. It moves in a linear fashion towards the end, increases the suspense gradually and conveys the message straightforwardly without retrospective delays. A simple progression usually takes up the above-mentioned threefold beginning-middle-end structure, i.e. an initial situation, a change, and a changed situation. Texts as short as the laghukathā may also rely on a merely twofold form where beginning and middle or middle and end are either not distinguishable or simply do not exist as separate events. Often this twofold organisation of events reflects a contrast of content on the structural level, thereby intensifying the reader's perception of the portrayed opposition between situations or characters.³¹⁸ An example for a contrasting twofold structure is the previously quoted laghukathā *Mānasiktā*, 'Mentality'³¹⁹. Around 60% of the laghukathās are based on a simple chronologically progressive plot.

Next to the simple progressive plot the laghukathā may feature a multi-part progression, a series of 'stations' through which the action must proceed. This serves to increase the suspense leading up to the climax. A classic example of a multi-part progressive plot is the following laghukathā *Kāmyābī*, 'Success':

When I saw Success, whose famous beauty and elegance had driven the whole world crazy, from close by for the first time, I didn't believe my eyes. I rubbed my eyes and saw that she, too, was staring at me with a charming expression.

When I rushed towards her, she fled. The faster I pursued her, the more her speed increased. I began to pant but kept running and finally I reached the aura of her fragrance, but

³¹⁶ Cf. Nisāntar, 'Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān...', p. 237, Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śilp aur śailī...', p. 131, and Ś. Kiraṇ, 'Kathā-lekhan...' p. 15.

³¹⁷ Ś. Kiraṇ, 'Kathā-lekhan...', p. 10.

³¹⁸ Cf. above (this section), p. 146.

³¹⁹ L952 by Sureś Jāngir 'Uday' (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 90).

having come so close I saw that this was not Success but a puppet whose body parts - hands and feet, calves and eyes - were all shaking violently.

When I saw this I became a little nervous. But then the puppet reassured me and said, 'Don't be nervous. My name is Habit. I'm the servant of Success and await your orders because you have now come so close to Success.'

Having said this, the puppet disappeared and once again I saw Success beginning to run away. This time, too, she really tricked me. My feet were covered in blood but my ambition held steady. I continued my pursuit and finally I managed to grab her skirt. No sooner had I grabbed her skirt that she turned into an elderly fairy.

I asked: Who are you? And the fairy answered: 'My name is Self-control. I am the maid of Success and your obedient servant because you have spared no effort for her sake'.

Having said so, the fairy disappeared and once again Success began to run away from me. I ran after her. While running, I became breathless, my calves began to tremble and everything went black before my eyes but I kept running and finally imprisoned her in my arms.

But I was utterly astonished to see her taking the appearance of a terrifying ghost, imbued with horror. When I saw her my eyes began to forsake me, my hair began to turn grey, my teeth began to fall out, but when I did not let go in spite of all that, she let out a great laugh that made my soul tremble. She said:

'People call me Madness. I am the soul of Success, but I am your prisoner. Success is now yours, under the condition that can take care of her.'

As soon as she spoke thus, Success began to smile in my arms.³²⁰

In his relentless pursuit the protagonist has to pass three stations - the stages of habit, self-control and madness (rāb, zāb, khāb) - before reaching his goal. On the way his physical efforts result in increasingly serious bodily harm until in the end the price he pays for his ultimate aim - success - is his youth, health and sanity. If one reads this text as a parable for the human being's blind life-long pursuit of success, the loss of youth is not to be understood symbolically but literally: the text spans the protagonist's lifetime. Nevertheless, a strong sense of temporal unity is created by the presentation of one single theme throughout. Multi-part progressive plots make up around 20% of the *laghukathās*.

A special kind of chronological *laghukathā* is the circle-form in which the last paragraph or sentence refers back to the beginning or repeats sentences or phrases of it. This circular structure usually indicates the inevitability of events and the powerlessness of the protagonists who literally move in - sometimes vicious - circles. Most circular *laghukathās* proceed in the aforementioned simple threefold progression but add a *dénouement* by showing the world or the protagonist, in spite of all his sufferings or actions, in exactly the same state as before - as if nothing had changed. An

³²⁰ L2396 by Śrī Tilak.

example is the *laghukathā Akāraṇ*, 'Groundless'. It starts with the protagonist going through the streets in the evening on his way home from a teaching job:

I was hurrying home; only because of Guddu's mischievous naughtiness was I so late today. In the lonely streets silence had spread, and no one was about, only some stray dogs were accompanying me. They were watching me suspiciously and barking loudly.

Then suddenly a police car approaches. The protagonist is groundlessly taken to the police station, questioned the whole night and robbed of his belongings by the policemen. After all this he finds himself back in the streets:

Once again I was in the same lonely street, and the same stray dogs were accompanying me, watching me suspiciously and barking loudly.³²¹

The general tenor of this and other circular *laghukathās* is that an individual's fate is just a part of the wheel of life which will keep turning without the world's taking notice of it. The circle-form also suggests a sense of repeatability, leaving the reader with a greater sense of general validity of the message. A circular arrangement of events occurs in around 6% of the texts.

Chronological plots are, by their very nature, ideal for constructing a unified and pointed plot. They pursue one action, moving, as we have seen, in a linear way straight towards the end which usually presents its conclusion in the last or penultimate sentence. Because of the single-strandedness of the action the reader is not distracted by side- or sub-plots and concentrates fully on the events to come. Chronological plots, therefore, make up the large majority of *laghukathās*; in the sample they account for approximately 85%.

The retrospective plot

At first sight the retrospective plot seems to stand in contradiction to the demand for directness and single-mindedness since 'retrospection' usually involves an interruption of the chronological time-sequence. Yet, on looking carefully the majority of retrospective insertions do not aim at delaying the action but serve one or more of the

³²¹ L2083 by Anvar Śamīm.

three purposes of explanation, commentary or comparison.³²² Lämmert distinguishes five basic types of retrospection, four of which are significant for the *laghukathā* and will therefore be introduced in the following.³²³

The first possible retrospection named by Lämmert is the ‘subsequent exposition’ (*nachgeholte Exposition*). It usually forms the second narrative phase after a beginning *in medias res*. Since the reader has already been presented with a first impression of the situation, everything told in the subsequent exposition appears in connection with this situation. While the significance of the facts given in an opening exposition may be revealed only later in the story and surprise the reader, the importance of the events of the subsequent exposition becomes immediately clear as the following *laghukathā Khāmoṣī*, ‘Silence’ shows:

When he returned to his village with his seven year old grandson, his house had turned into a heap of ashes.

This time his whole family had come to the village to celebrate Holi. Therefore the old man had been very happy. In spite of his advanced age and his frail body he had gone to the town together with his grandson to buy the materials for Holi. When they were coming back they heard on the train that rioters had set fire to that part of the village where the huts of the poor were.

Thus his legs were shaking when he entered the village. He frowned. Then he looked helplessly and forlornly at his burnt-down hut, and tears filled his eyes. Going a bit further he saw the corpses lying around everywhere and he collapsed on the ground. The boy was looking for his mother amongst the corpses. But the faces were so badly burnt that he couldn’t recognise her. Crying he asked his grandfather, ‘Ma is not here, Dada! Ma is not here... Tell me, where is Ma? ... Tell me ...’

The old man had fainted before he could give an answer. Nevertheless the boy was repeating his question. Suddenly the sound of gunshots was heard. He became silent. Exactly as he had done when Ma used to frighten him telling him the hyenas were coming, and he closed his eyes in terror.³²⁴

The text opens with the presentation of a dreadful situation, but the full horror of the circumstances is only revealed when a context is created: not only had the man been looking forward to a happy and festive occasion - a stark contrast to the facts he actually has to face - he is also old and, above all, poor, two pieces of information

³²² The investigation of retrospective plots follows a study on the inner structures of narratives by E. Lämmert. Cf. Eberhard Lämmert, *Bauformen des Erzählens*, Stuttgart 1955, pp. 100-139.

³²³ The fifth type, the ‘retrogression’ (*Rückschritt*) plays a minor role because it introduces a second narrative strand to the main action of the text, a characteristic which usually does not feature in the *laghukathā*.

³²⁴ L1191 by K. Khurṣīd.

which deepen the sense of anger and sympathy to be aroused in the reader. The subsequent exposition, therefore, serves to create an explanatory context and, at the same time, intensify the unified impression by creating a shocking contrast. It also allows the writer a beginning *in medias res* which attracts the reader's attention more strongly than an expository beginning.

The second retrospective method is the 'resolving retrospection' (auflösende Rückwendung). It is part of - or helps to prepare - the final situation of the story and often comes in the penultimate position. Its main purpose - the resolution and explanation of the preceding action - becomes clear in the *laghukathā Agnimukh*, 'Spitfire'. The text portrays how a man, 'he', distinguishes himself as the town's foremost critic of the leader. When one day he suddenly changes his attitude the people are disappointed:

[...] contrary to all hopes he flew into a rage, 'Oh shut up! Don't even speak to me again about the leader, okay?' And 'he' looked around and sneaked away. From now on this person looked away when something went wrong. The pan-seller said, 'Bhai, the leader has taught his son all he needs to know'. And he immediately had become insignificant.³²⁵

The text shows clearly the sudden unmasking character of the resolving retrospective in the penultimate sentence. Often, like in our example, it coincides with the climax of the story which is then followed by a short commentary of the narrator. Instead of interrupting the action, the resolving retrospective, in the *laghukathā*, pushes it forward.

Thirdly, the retrospection can assume the form of a 'recollection' (Rückgriff)³²⁶. A recollection refers back to an event from the past in order to put the present into a context, but unlike in a text with a subsequent exposition the ongoing action is not discernibly interrupted. A recollection is therefore often represented as direct speech: a protagonist's memories are related in the course of a conversation without interrupting that conversation or forcing it into the background.³²⁷

³²⁵ L2348 by R.K. Sonī.

³²⁶ A 'recollection' need not necessarily be carried out by the protagonist, the narrator, too, can 'recollect' incidents for the reader. The literal translation of Lämmert's term 'Rückgriff' is 'grip back'.

³²⁷ Cf. for example L872 *Vidrohī man*, 'Rebellious mind', by Kuldip Jain.

A fourth and last form of retrospection to be found in the *laghukathā* is the ‘review’ (Rückblick). It sums up a life or, in the *laghukathā*-context, an episode of life which has taken place in the past and is completed. The past, in such plots, becomes the present because the present action is reduced to a mere frame. The *laghukathā Sikh*, ‘Advice’³²⁸, for example, presents a man recalling his life as a criminal, revealing to his fellow-criminal in the course of his narration that the police are the ‘real’ dacoits. The framing sentences only serve to introduce the reader to the situation and to emphasise the message of the review by showing the fellow-criminal being shocked about the police’s manners. The significance of the review for this *laghukathā* is also indicated in its title which refers to what is being said rather than the situation of the conversation.³²⁹

The examples have demonstrated that even in retrospective plots with their ‘interruptive’ character the *laghukathā* maintains an impression of unity: the different methods are either employed to support the creation of a strong and unified effect or they are presented in such a way as not to interfere with the main action, as demanded by *Niśāntar* in the context of the unity of time. Altogether, approximately 10% of the *laghukathās* have retrospective plots.

The episodic plot

Like the retrospective plot the episodic plot arranges the events of the text in a way which is generally considered untypical for the single-stranded *laghukathā*, because it connects different actions in an add-on or ‘jigsaw-like’ manner: distinguishable narrative strands which may differ from each other in terms of protagonists, time and place are presented as parts of *one* *laghukathā*. Although, at first sight, such texts do not appear to meet the demands of the genre, they prove to be ‘real’ *laghukathās* when the mechanisms of this technique are considered. Leonie Marx mentions two possible kinds of episodic actions, the ‘successive action’ and the ‘simultaneous action’, which both connect their episodes in particular ways.³³⁰ Two examples will demonstrate

³²⁸ L2585 by Dineś Tyāgī.

³²⁹ Cf. section 4.4.3 ‘Titles’, pp. 171 f.

³³⁰ Cf. Marx, *Deutsche Kurzgeschichte*, p. 81.

how these connections strengthen the unified effect of the respective text rather than disturb it.

The ‘successive’ text presents separate and closed actions one after another. It lacks the intertwining ‘thread’ of *one* single action running through them, which is so strictly demanded by most writers. Nevertheless the actions are connected, usually by a common theme, motif, object or person. The *laghukathā Khīr*, ‘Rice-pudding’, illustrates this point:

‘Bhagirath, my son, take this bucket of milk to your teacher. The poor man has nobody in his village.’

‘Okay, Ma.’

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As soon as I had set foot into his house to teach I smelled the sweet smell of rice-pudding.

A little later Pappu came, bade me a ‘good evening’, and went to fetch the books.

From inside I heard Pappu’s voice -

‘... Ma, ... you’ll give some rice-pudding to the teacher, won’t you?’

‘Hush, ...you foolish oaf ... how can you talk so loud!... When you shout like this you announce to everybody that I’ve made rice-pudding today. Do you think we’ll get away with just giving him a plate?’

Pappu had difficulty lifting the bag.³³¹

The two actions clearly differ in place, protagonists and even narrative viewpoint, and a common time is also not indicated. The only connection consists of the common motif, a mother’s attitude towards the teacher of her son, which is not identical for the two plots but rather lives through the contrast. The single theme has already been shown as the uniting element of different moments of one action, here it serves as the unifier of two actions into a whole. Like many other texts which do not follow the main line of presentation - the single-stranded chronologically and spatially unified plot - this *laghukathā* can justify its peculiar technique with the fact that it emphasises the contrast on which the message is based. In this text the contrast is not only reflected in the different actions but also clearly marked by the text’s sectionalisation.

³³¹ L762 by B.P. Gupta [sic].

In a 'simultaneous' text, on the other hand, the actions are completely separate but overlap as simultaneous episodes, joined thematically by a 'catalyst'. A classic example of this kind of text is the *laghukathā Nirjan van*, 'Deserted jungle':

'Thieves, thieves... help... help!'

'Did you hear that?'

'Ah... yes... seems as if there are thieves over there in Guptaji's house.'

'Yes! Mrs. Gupta was shouting for help... what shall we do now?'

'Well...! Yes... yes... we should close the doors and windows properly... and the skylight as well...'

'Why...?'

'Now Mrs. Gupta is shouting. The thieves are afraid, they run here and there and will hide somewhere around here...'

'Yes... yes... she needs help... but first we have to protect ourselves.'

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'Thieves, thieves... help... help!'

'What was that?'

'Seems... as if there are thieves in Guptaji's house to the left... Mrs. Gupta's shouted for help....'

'...'

'Yes, yes, help... in Guptaji's house there isn't even a phone... we've got one, we should call the police.'

'Lie quiet... the police will carry out enquiries. Don't I have to go to the factory tomorrow morning...?'

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'Thieves, thieves... help... help!'

'What-what.... who...?'

'She's panicking... don't worry, looks like there are thieves in Guptaji's house to the right... his wife is shouting for help.'

'We *should* help then...'

'Yes... bring my stick... but...'

'... afraid?... Well then! I won't let you ask for trouble...'

'But this is a chance to gain respect in the quarter...'

'Well then... wait for another ten or fifteen minutes... let the thieves run away... take a look through the skylight... when a couple of men have come out you can also brandish your stick and go and challenge the thieves.'

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'Thieves, thieves... help... help!'

'That voice... maybe that's Mrs. Gupta... and you are still reading... why aren't you sleeping yet?'

'Well... but these....'

'To hell with your "buts"... quick, turn off the light... if somebody sees it he will say they were still awake but didn't help.'³³²

³³² L518 by Kamal Coprā.

In this text the catalyst which joins the different actions is Mrs. Gupta's cry for help. Its unifying power is increased by the repetition of the identical sentence 'Thieves, thieves... help... help!'. Recurring sentences or phrases are also employed to produce a unifying effect on the level of time.³³³ Here, four different *actions* happening at the same time are linked by the same method. The catalyst triggers off responses by the four neighbours who all react simultaneously, though in different places and ignorant of the others' responses. Again the separateness of the four actions is underlined by the sectionalised presentation of the text. The message of this *laghukathā* does not derive its power from the principle of contrast but from reinforcement by means of addition. Although *laghukathās* with episodic plots make up only around 3% of the sample, they appear on a regular basis and must therefore not be considered 'exceptions'.

Summary

It has become clear from the investigation of the *laghukathā*'s plots that the writers' demand for a single-stranded and straightforward progression of the action is indeed met in the about 85% of the *laghukathās* which are based on a chronologically progressive plot. The respective texts lead the reader undeviatingly towards the end, producing, on their way, various degrees of suspense but normally only one single message. Interestingly, the approximately 15% of the *laghukathās* which have been shown to either interrupt or even abolish the unity of plot have been proven to employ various other unifying devices in order to guarantee the unified effect of the text. At times, the very abandonment of the unity serves to emphasise the message instead of diluting it. This is especially the case where the message is based on the depiction of a contrast.

It can be noticed in general, that the abolishing of any of the several unities usually goes hand in hand with a strengthening of other aspects of unifying character: a lack of the unity of action may be compensated by a stronger unity of time, a lack of unity of time by the introduction of a unifying leitmotif etc. The only unity which cannot be abolished without leaving the reader with a sense that the text is flawed or faulty, is

³³³ Cf. above (this section), p. 145.

the unity of theme and message. A text which ends in a double climax leaves the reader unsatisfied. The theme and the message, thus, function as the main link between different features of the text.

Beginning and end

A final aspect to be considered in the context of the *laghukathā*'s inner form is the design of the beginning and end of the text. The extensive research on this topic in the context of the Western short story gives an idea of the general importance of these factors, above all for a short text. In the *laghukathā* context, however, the discussion of the beginning in particular has been almost totally neglected by both writers and critics. Although sporadic statements can be found to the effect that the beginning is an important part of the *laghukathā* or that a *laghukathā* should not start in the fashion of memoirs (*saṁsmaraṇ*) or in a biographical style (*caritrātmak śailī*), a clearly expressed view on the topic seems to be missing. This is surprising, considering the significance of the beginning and end of a text for the nature of the contact established with the reader.

Besides, an analysis of the sample shows that the *laghukathā* does have preferences, namely, as general rule, for the open beginning rather than the closed one: more than half of the texts start *in medias res*, displaying various degrees of abruptness. One of the most immediate ways of commencing the action is the opening with direct speech like 'Hey! Bhai Sahab! What has left this deep scar on your beautiful face?'; other possibilities are to address the reader directly - 'Didn't you say God gives no fingernails to the bald?', to make use of a provocative opening like 'On the veranda of the shop on the right side of the Lal Chowk there was a corpse' or to simply leap straightforward into the action as in 'Screams... Thunder... Noise... It seemed as if a storm had risen'. All these open beginnings force the reader to orientate himself within the action without any initial help from the narrator, and therefore demand a high level of attention. Once the reader's attention has been caught, the suspense initiated in the first sentence increases, motivating the reader to read on. The open beginning is an important means of engaging the reader into the text's single-minded progress towards its aim.

It is therefore rather surprising to find almost a quarter of the *laghukathās* introducing the reader to the action by a closed beginning or ‘opening exposition’ which - like the subsequent exposition - produces an explanatory context. Usually, the opening exposition acquaints the reader with at least the ‘who’ of the action to come, often a ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’, ‘why’ or ‘when’ are also given in different combinations. Opening expositions vary in length, they may consist of only one sentence like ‘He was an unemployed writer’ or may make up one or more paragraphs. One possible reason why the opening exposition is relatively prominent in the *laghukathā* has been mentioned above: it may serve to provide the reader with facts which then in the course of the action are contrasted or reversed and thus produce an effect of surprise or shock. An excellent example is the *laghukathā Vijñāpan*, ‘Announcement’:

In order to uplift the poor, in order to improve the conditions of the poor and their housing the government this year grants the poor a big financial contribution.

The poor population is told that the large majority of the poor population is to obtain this contribution provided by the government.

The application forms for this contribution are to be had for twenty rupees.

In order to get these twenty rupees in a shivering winter’s night a poor man put up these announcements everywhere in the city. And he died before the morning came.³³⁴

In this text the exposition stretches over three paragraphs, making up three-quarters of the whole text. The actual action starts only in the last paragraph and consequently comes to an end very quickly. The fact that a strong effect is nevertheless produced is due to the slow step-by-step progression of the preparatory exposition which increases the reader’s anticipation and curiosity. The concluding sentence makes an especially strong impact because it stands in stark contrast to the rest of the text in terms of content as well as structure and style. Although closed, the explanatory exposition serves to strengthen the effect of the text, emphasising the absurdity of the action.

However, the *laghukathā*’s intention of captivating the reader’s interest and suspense from the very first line of the text has produced another possible form of beginning which accounts for the remaining quarter of the texts: the hybrid form of what will be called an ‘open exposition’. The open exposition combines the explanatory features

³³⁴ L2691 by S. Varmā.

of the exposition with an open initial sentence. This is done in such a way that the first sentence demands the same level of attentiveness as the abrupt open beginning. An example is the *laghukathā Apamān*, 'Insult', which begins as follows:

In the course of the campaign of hygiene she had to go into the quarter of the huts and explain the significance of personal hygiene. Her bags were filled with soap-bars and the dreams of civil service. In the afternoon almost all the huts were empty. One or two children were certainly playing in the dust. Oblivious of their mother and father's absence, the parents' presence, too, was of no importance to them. She was about to go back, hopeless, when she happened to see one of the huts open.³³⁵

The first sentence is open but still introduces the reader to the protagonist's situation. The fact that it is not yet fully clear who 'she' is adds to the sense of openness; in the Hindi original it is not even evident whether the protagonist is male or female because the personal pronoun '*vah*' does not distinguish gender and the sentence is constructed in an impersonal way. The introductory sequence first reveals to the reader that the protagonist is an idealistic civil servant and then presents in due course the where and when of action, even adding a narrator's comment about the neglected and hopeless situation of the inhabitants of the huts. The action commences in the last sentence of this first paragraph whose verb form also reveals the protagonist as being female.

Another special form of opening exposition is the fairytale beginning 'once upon a time' (*ek thā*), the classic introduction to tale-telling. Like many other devices in the *laghukathā* this kind of exposition produces an impression on the basis of contrast: it can either be linked with an alien character, as in 'Once upon a time there was a leader' (*ek the netā jī*), or it can use the 'right' personnel, e.g. kings, queens or princesses, but present them in an alien, i.e. anachronistic, context. In the text *Ek laghukathā*, 'A *laghukathā*'³³⁶, for instance, a princess's admirers stop coming to see her because they have to queue for oil in front of a ration shop.

Unlike the beginning, the *laghukathā*'s conclusion is well documented, partly in the form of explicit statements and partly in the form of the writers' insistence on a tight and linear construction towards a pointed ending: the reader has to be presented with

³³⁵ L141 by Sumati Ayyar.

³³⁶ L2596 by Ravindranāth Tyāgī.

an appropriate conclusion, preferably in the last line or sentence, which can provide the ‘piercing’ effect described above. ‘In the Laghukathā [...] the essence of the action can be found [...] in the last line. This line is the soul [of the laghukathā], which shakes the reader up’³³⁷, declares Muṅgerī, and Śrīvāstav remarks that it is only in the end of the text that the meaning or message of the story are revealed. A coincidence of climax and end of the laghukathā therefore suggests itself and is indeed favoured by many writers. Yet, Kaśyap and Aśok warn against the uncritical pursuit of the ‘astonishing conclusive point’ (camatkār samāpan bindu) at the price of losing sight of the proper creation of the laghukathā.³³⁸ Nevertheless, pointed conclusive endings can be found in more than 90% of the texts. This includes texts whose climax occurs in the penultimate sentence and those with the aforementioned double climax.

We have seen that the laghukathā writers aim at the communication of a message to the reader, thereby awakening and possibly even motivating him or her to change things. A solution must therefore not be offered since it would tempt the reader to passively consume the text rather than think about it. Consequently, possible solutions are proposed only by a few texts and mostly presented in a Premcandian way of an idealistic change of the protagonist for the better, as, for example, the Hindus and Muslims who unexpectedly bury the hatchet and embrace each other in a tear-jerking scene, or the hard-hearted new-rich mother who suddenly remembers her past as a poor woman and withdraws all objections to her son’s marriage to a poor girl.³³⁹ Although such protagonists might serve as role models they are more likely to simply show the reader that a solution is possible if people, not least the readers themselves, start acting responsibly.

Interestingly, the writers do not refer to an open or closed ending, when discussing the conclusion of the laghukathā. Especially for the frequently advocated long-

³³⁷ Cf. Muṅgerī, ‘Laghukathā: laghu se kathā tak’, p. 79, and Śrīvāstav, ‘Laghukathā: ek avalokan’, p. 97.

³³⁸ Cf. Kaśyap, ‘Laghukathā kī racnā prakriyā...’, p. 82, Aśok, ‘Laghukathā lekhak...’, p. 93.

³³⁹ L1560 *Mānvatā ke āge sab jhūthā*, ‘In the presence of humanity everybody is a liar’, by I.K. Nāth and L2636 *Pharj*, ‘Duty’, by Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy; the other texts of the sample are L577 *Ātmānubhūti*, ‘Self-perception’, by Santos̄ Dikṣit and L1890 *Praśāsān*, ‘Administration’, by Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā.

lasting impression on the reader's mind one might expect a conscious decision for an open ending rather than a closed one. Yet, a surprisingly small number of texts, only around 45%, feature a genuine open ending, as opposed to almost 30% which present the reader with a closed ending. Remarkably, the remaining texts again resort to a hybrid structural form, which could be called 'closed ending with an outlook'.

The open ending, like the open beginning, may feature various degrees of openness. Firstly, we find conclusions which literally withhold the result of the last action of the text from the reader, as in 'As soon as I had said this, the lion who was sitting there like Gautama Buddha roared and jumped at me'; other open endings are indicative of the further development of the action, as 'They were happy, this was a good omen'.³⁴⁰ The strongest impression of openness is achieved in final sentences which are also formally open, either ending with three dots '...' - 'Lying on the bed he mumbled, 'my son, having fulfilled our own needs, we forget that others, too, have their needs...!''', or concluding the text with a question: 'If now the dog starts biting his master, what difference is then left between dog and master?'.³⁴¹ The final question in particular addresses the reader directly, challenging him to find an answer.

The fact that openness usually stimulates the reader's mind by pointing beyond itself is likely to be responsible for the employment of the above-mentioned 'closed ending with an outlook' in almost a third of the *laghukathās*. Most of these texts may be described as structurally closed but open as far as the content is concerned, as *Mukti*, 'Release', shows. A boy, Raddhu, is forced to work as a bonded labourer for a coal-merchant in order to work off his father's debts. One day the coal-merchant informs him that due to governmental orders he is free to go; at the same time he tells Raddhu that debts are not settled on earth but in heaven. The story concludes:

For a few moments Raddhu was standing there lost in thought, then he said to the Lala with an infinitely humble expression, 'No, master, I don't have to make business with the help of a governmental order. I won't ruin my life in the other world for the sake of a few rupees. I will keep the promise my father has given you until my last gasp'.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ L2659 by Asghar Vajāhat and L2720 by Sinhā Virendrā.

³⁴¹ L132 by Pṛthvīrāj Aroṛā and L2733 by Jñānprakāś Vivek.

³⁴² L2407 by Śrīnāth.

The text is structurally closed, the boy's decision is final and the action as demanded by the theme - the strong exercising power over the weak - is closed: the coal-merchant has succeeded in keeping the boy in bondage by frightening him. Still, the last sentence points beyond this closed ending by literally indicating the boy's prospective fate: he will have to work for the coal-merchant until he dies, an image which is intended to stay with the reader even after he has finished the story.

Unlike open endings, closed ones tend to confirm and reinforce knowledge which has been with the reader before, provoking recognition rather than an urge to think or even act further. The different impression of two structurally identical texts, which differ in their beginnings and especially their endings will prove that an open end is more apt to engage the reader in a thinking process. The first *laghukathā*, *Honā hī thā*, 'Inevitable', has a closed ending. The second text *Cayan*, 'Election' - with an open beginning and especially ending - has been given earlier but will be quoted again in order to illustrate the contrast:

I

One asked another, 'Do you drink alcohol?'

'No.'

'Do you take bribes?'

'No.'

'Do you bribe the boss?'

'No.'

'Then your suspension was inevitable. You cannot be of any use to the police.'³⁴³

II

'Do you steal?'

'No.'

'Ever been to a brothel?'

'No.'

'Do you drink alcohol?'

'No.'

'Do you take drugs - bhang, caras, ganja or opium?'

'No.'

'But you must certainly smoke?'

'No.'

'Pan...?'

'No.'

'Why, then, do you stand for election?'³⁴⁴

³⁴³ L729 by Parameśvar Goyal.

³⁴⁴ L5 by Aśok Agravāl.

Although the first text does have a perturbing effect on the reader, most possibly validating his view of the corrupt police, the second example which ends with the question is much more provocative. Formally, the question might even address the reader himself, thereby inviting him to identify with the ‘bad guy’ rather than the ‘good guy’.

The last question to be considered is the climax of the *laghukathā*. It has been said earlier that the majority of *laghukathās* employ a pointed climax which reveals the message towards the end of the text, as claimed by Śrīvāstav. However, Muṅgerī’s statement that the last line should be the soul of the *laghukathā* does not prove correct. All together, only approximately 63% of the texts feature a climax in the last sentence; in around 31% the plot reaches its culmination point in the penultimate sentence, followed by a *dénouement* which is often used by the narrator to comment on the action. A classic example is the *laghukathā Saṅkalp*, ‘Resolution’³⁴⁵: a bride is rejected by her in-laws on her wedding day because the dowry turns out to be incomplete. Her father is devastated, only to be reminded by the daughter herself that he had once done the same thing to his son’s bride. The text ends: ‘...again he started to cry, tears were rolling down his cheeks, but inside he came to the resolution that from now on he would never again demand dowry from or give dowry to any father. This would be the only way to rid society of this leprous dowry’. The climax, his decision to renounce the concept of dowry forever, is here followed by a narrator’s comment, once again pointing out the wickedness of the concept and at the same time indirectly urging the reader to follow the example. The climax, although not occurring ‘in the last line’, does not lose its vigorousness, the following *dénouement* serves to open the otherwise closed ending and thereby address the reader more directly.

In the remaining 6% of *laghukathās* which have their climax before the penultimate or last sentence, two kinds of concluding sequences dominate. On the one hand the climax may be followed by an explanation - often in the form of a short review as described above - or a comment; on the other hand a second ‘climax’ on a more ‘ethical’ or thoughtful level may follow the climax of the action, as e.g. in the above-

³⁴⁵ L2105 by Santos̄ Saras.

quoted *laghukathā Khāmoṣī*, ‘Silence’³⁴⁶. Although the action culminates in the sentence ‘Ma is not here, Dada! Ma is not here... Tell me, where is Ma? ... Tell me ...’, another paragraph follows whose last two sentences, in spite of the decrease of suspense, may be seen as the atmospheric climax which emphasises the horror of the situation, providing an opportunity for comment by allowing the narrator to compare the rioters to hyenas.

Summary

It has become clear that the shaping of the beginning and end is immensely important for the *laghukathā* since the question whether they are open or closed strongly influences the effect on the reader. Although openness and closedness are not clearly thematised by the writers, their significance becomes evident through the two unusual hybrid forms of the ‘open exposition’ and the ‘closed ending with outlook’ which are used to a relatively high extent. Openness, therefore, turns out to be the preferred feature because it generally has a longer-lasting effect - in the beginning of creating suspense and provoking attentive reading, in the end of not letting the reader ‘off the hook’ as easily as a closed text would. As far as the position of the climax in the plot is concerned, a strong tendency towards the end can be discerned, a logical result considering the general demand for a pointed organisation of the plot which is to progress *towards* the point which reveals the message. The last sentence has proved to be less significant for the climax than for openness, i.e. less significant for the *communication* of the idea than for the *way* this idea is impressed on the reader’s mind. It can be said that the *laghukathā*’s inner form, first of all, serves the effective communication of the message.

4.4.3 Title

The title of a text is significant because it is the connecting link between the outer and inner form. Like shape and size it is one of the first elements to become apparent and prepare the reader for the content to follow. Besides - as *laghukathā* writers and critics point out - the title provides an opportunity for explanation, comment or em-

³⁴⁶ L1191, cf. above (this section), p. 153.

phasis of the message without using too many words: it is the title's function rather than its form, content or relationship with the text which is of interest in the critical debate. Śarmā and Nāth, for example, both draw attention to the title as a designation of the writer's attitude and aim: the title is 'a denomination of the viewpoint of the writer' (lekhak kī dṛṣṭi kā ek nām), it indicates the writer's 'intention' (uddeśya) and, according to Nāth, shows the 'purpose of the message' (kathya kā prayojan).³⁴⁷ Caudhari 'Abz', too, attaches importance to the title because for some texts it provides the only means for a 'correct' reading of the story.³⁴⁸ As will be seen later, the function of the title as the only and therefore indispensable identifier of the laghukathā's theme proves correct for quite a few texts.

Naren Miśra, finally, devotes a whole article to the title of the laghukathā.³⁴⁹ He names six different types of titles but fails to present valid categories, not finding a unified pattern of classification. Although Miśra touches upon some interesting aspects as ironical or eye-catching titles, he does not elaborate on the implications these features have for the significance of the title as a part of the text. Like his fellow-critics, Miśra neglects the titles' form, content or actual relation with the text. These features are therefore outlined below, followed by an investigation of the titles' function.

The first thing to meet the reader's eye is the title's outer form and its self-contained, not yet text-related meaning. Like the body of the text itself, the title of the laghukathā is preferably kept short: one-word titles are used for around 50% of the texts and two-word titles for approximately 25%, the latter combining either two nouns in a compound-like manner (e.g. *Rakṣā-kavac*, 'Protective armour'), joining a noun with a qualifying adjective or - very rarely - presenting a noun preceded by a demonstrative pronoun. Both, one- and two-word titles, may name a protagonist (e.g. *Śer*, 'The lion', or *Vah veśyā*, 'That prostitute'), an object (e.g. *Khālī peṭ*, 'Empty stom-

³⁴⁷ Cf. R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 37 and Kumār Akhileśvarī Nāth, 'Laghukathā-samīkṣā aur mānak-tatva', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: sarjñā*, p. 136.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Caudhari 'Abz', 'Laghukathā: ek vicār', p. 53-54. Cf. also V. Sonī, who indicates the interpretative power of a title by calling for a symbolic (pratīkātmak) title; Sonī, 'Laghukathā: paribhāṣā...', p. 81.

³⁴⁹ Nareś Miśra, 'Laghukathā ke śīrṣakoṃ ki bhāṣā', in: *Āgaman*, July-September 1985, year 9, part 20, no place 1985, pp. 19-21.

ach') or an abstract idea, state or concept (e.g. *Dāyitva bodh*, 'Responsibility'). Around 10% of the texts feature titles consisting of three elements, presenting either a genitive construction (e.g. *Dharm kī rakṣā*, 'Protection of the dharma') or two nouns joined by an 'and' which sometimes gives the title a fable-like appearance (e.g. *Śaitān aur buddhimān*, 'The devil and the wise man'). Most of these rather short titles present themselves straightforwardly, they do not demand any special attention from the reader and reveal their deeper meaning often only after the whole story has been finished. Surprisingly few titles are provocative or aimed at catching the reader's eye, for instance by presenting bold statements (e.g. *Aur Jaik mar gayā*, 'And Jack died'), alliterative or otherwise phonetically marked wording (e.g. *Jismom kā tilism*, 'The magic of bodies', or *Rozī roṭī*, 'Daily bread') or questions or ellipses (e.g. *Kaun*, 'Who?'), the latter furthermore producing suspense and curiosity. Unlike many titles of - especially satirical - short stories the title of the laghukathā does not generally serve to attract the readers attention. This is even more striking considering that a laghukathā is usually first of all published in a magazine or newspaper where it has to compete for the reader's attention with the titles of other texts or the eye-catching headlines of articles surrounding it. The laghukathā rather relies on the text's whole appearance as well as the above-described first sentence of the story to interest the reader and motivate him to read on.

The title plays a more important role where its relationship with the text and its function with regard to the reader are concerned. The two aspects are closely related since the title's significance and effect on the reader vary, depending on what the title refers to. It is also important to see if its actual words occur in the text. Four major types of title-text relation can be distinguished, each connected to especially one of the two most significant functions of the title: summarising and commenting.

The first possible title-text relation is the appearance of the title - or parts of it - in the beginning of the story, i.e. in the very first sentence or at least the first half of the text (around 9%). Given the general anticipatory nature of the title, its early appearance helps to focus the reader's attention on a particular aspect from the start; yet, at the same time, the reader's curiosity as to what the title might refer to is temporarily satisfied. Because of this the moment of complete understanding of the title's meaning

becomes all the stronger, especially in those cases where the title turns out to be ambiguous or ironic. An example of an ambiguous title whose full implication becomes clear only after finishing the whole story is the *laghukathā Nīśān*, 'Scar':

- He! Bhai Sahab! What has left this deep scar on your beautiful face?
- Don't ask, friend, don't ask!
- Why?
- A painful accident is connected to this scar.
- Tell me about it if you think you should.
- Can you bear the truth? Can you sympathise with my pain?
- Come, tell me, only a human can help a human!
- This scar on my beautiful face is a memory of - the partition of this country!
- You speak in riddles!

I'll solve the riddle - during the time of partition the people were fleeing in great troops to escape from the chaos. Our elders told us that the women were seen as prey and robbed of their honour. With their own hands the elders started to cut their wives' throats as if cutting carrots and radishes. Being a small child I was sitting on my mother's lap. In all the haste nobody thought of taking me from her lap and the sword-slash which cut my mother's throat cut my face, too. Ah! The scar of partition has grown even deeper now! Do you have a cure? Tell me, can you give me a cure for my pain?³⁵⁰

From the very first line of the story the reader is left under the impression that the 'scar' is referred to as the result of a bodily injury of one of the protagonists. The reader, though being curious about what might have caused this scar, believes he has identified the meaning of the title. Towards the end of the text, however, he is presented with the full implication of the title: not only the protagonist's body and emotions have been scarred but the whole country has been deeply wounded by the 'scar' of partition. By putting the reader's preconceived idea in its true light, the effect of the point of the story is deepened. Like other features of the *laghukathā*, this kind of title, too, plays with the reader's expectations and achieves a disturbing effect by disappointing them.³⁵¹

The above-quoted *laghukathā* is also an example for a second kind of title-text relation which does not refer to the position of the title's words in the text but on the relationship of the 'content' of the title with the text. Titles of this second kind pick

³⁵⁰ L313 by Kamleś Bhāratiya.

³⁵¹ Other examples for the playing with the reader's expectations are e.g. protagonists acting in an unforeseen and untypical way (c.f. section 4.3.2 'Protagonists' pp. 108 & 115) or the shape of a *laghukathā* not delivering an expected and 'typical' content (cf. section 4.4.1 'Outer form' p. 131 ff.).

up a central motif of the story - mostly an object or protagonist - which may occur at any point in the course of the action. Further examples of this kind of title are the earlier quoted texts *Bagnakhe*, 'Claws', or *Sirfirā*, 'The Madman'. Titles relating to the central motif not only anticipate and emphasise a certain aspect's significance for the story and help the reader focus his attention on this aspect, they often also summarise the theme of the text symbolically as e.g. in *Niśān* - the scar symbolising the pain of partition - or in *Lāin*, 'Queue', the queue standing for the state's failure to run its institutions effectively. Around 20% of the laghukathās present their titles in this fashion, mostly just naming the person, object or situation.

The most significant relationship between the title and text seems to be the literal or near-literal anticipation of the climax or a term central to it, a method which is found in around 35% of the laghukathās. Especially in those cases where the climax forms the last sentence of the story, the text is literally 'framed' by its point, as for example in the following laghukathā *Āmne-sāmne*, 'Right opposite':

Right opposite

'Rikshaw! Can you take me to the police lines?'

'I'm not free, sir,' - and the empty rikshaw drove off quickly.

'Rikshaw! Can you take me to the State Bank?'

'Yes, sir, sit down, why shouldn't I?'

The irony is that the police lines and the State Bank are right opposite each other.³⁵²

In laghukathās like this, the title hovers over the text like an unspoken commentary, as if a narrator repeats the point to himself - and thereby to the reader - in anticipating disbelief before telling the story. The curious anticipation on the side of the reader is strengthened by the fact that the revelation of the title's significance for the text is only revealed in the end. Titles of this kind therefore contribute to the pointed structure of the plot. This is confirmed by the fact that almost all texts with a climax-related title rely on the straightforward chronological plot. Thus, next to providing a space for a silent comment on the outcome of the story, the main function of such titles is to sustain the reader's attention and suspense until the end of the reading process.

³⁵² L812 by Nandal Hitaiṣī.

The last group to be mentioned here is the large number of ‘unrelated’ titles: around 40% of the *laghukathā*’s titles are totally unconnected to the text as far as the actual wording is concerned. Their significance lies, above all, in the fact that they provide a platform for the writer to stage his personal opinion: around 80% of the unrelated titles are authorial comments or value judgements. Titles like *Rogī zamīn*, ‘Sick earth’, *Maim̄ majbūr hūm̄*, ‘I am helpless’, or *Abhāv kā dānav*, ‘Demon of poverty’, clearly show the writer taking a position, as has been claimed by Śarmā and Nāth. Most significantly, this kind of title allows the writer to comment directly without even using the narrator as a mouthpiece, the narrator being a part of the plot itself which usually takes its starting-point in the first sentence rather than the title.

Another striking aspect of the unrelated titles is their form: unlike the majority of titles of the above-given groups which are mainly formed in a simple one- or two-word fashion, unrelated titles make more use of genitive constructions, ellipses, whole sentences or a combination of a subject and a qualifying adjective. Considering their often deliberately judging nature, this seems to be a logical outcome: more complex titles give the writer the opportunity to formulate his opinion more accurately. However, simple wordings like the earlier-quoted *Niṣṭhurtā*, ‘Cruelty’, can still be found in around 45% of the unrelated titles.

A typical example of an unrelated title functioning as the identifier of the theme as mentioned by Caudharī ‘Abz’ is the *laghukathā Sattādhārī*, ‘Administrator’³⁵³. It describes how a mistletoe engulfs several young trees who start screaming for help. Hearing their screams, a nearby peepul tree comments that they should have listened to his advice and been on their guard against the mistletoe: ‘this traitor wears the robe of idealism, he takes the form of a benefactor, speaks of renunciation and duty, but his heart is filled with nothing but poison’. Although the reader might have imagined this text to be a parable for a high-standing powerful figure without the help of the title, an interpretation truthful to the writer’s intention is only possible when the title ‘Administrator’ is considered. Around 6% of *laghukathās* employ their titles in this fashion. In several cases the theme-identifying title is not imperative for an un-

³⁵³ L740 by Parameśvar Goyal.

derstanding of the text, it simply shifts the emphasis of the text towards a certain direction.³⁵⁴

Summary

All in all, the title of the *laghukathā* proves to be surprisingly little concerned with attracting the reader's attention, considering the competitive environment of publication in newspapers and magazines. Far more important is its function as a mouthpiece for the writer's personal opinion which he can present without interfering with the actual story and therefore without taking the roundabout way through a mediating narrator. Thus, instead of 'attracting', the title is concerned with 'directing' the reader's attention towards a particular aspect of the story. The *laghukathā*'s title can be seen as a bridge between reader, author and text. As to the title-text relation, the title is concerned with the main objective of the *laghukathā*: the effect on the reader. By raising and disappointing expectations as well as keeping up the reader's suspense and concentrating it towards the end of the story, the various kinds of titles help to intensify the text's impression.

4.4.4 Points of view

A concept of narrative perspectives seems to be of no significance for the *laghukathā* debate. This is surprising insofar as the narrator's viewpoint forms the background against which the reader evaluates the events - be it in approval or disapproval of the narrator's attitude. The role of the narrator is therefore closely connected to a central issue of the *laghukathā*, the nature and the intensity of the text's impression on the reader: while a first-person or limited third-person narrator is likely to produce a rather intensive and intimate impression, a detached omniscient narrator with an Olympic perspective will offer a more dispassionate presentation of the story. Yet, neither do we find articles mentioning the question of the narrator and his viewpoint, nor does an investigation of the texts show any significant features. Only some general tendencies can be discerned which will be outlined in the following.

³⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. L1307 *Loktantra*, 'Democracy', by Madhukānt (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 76).

The first thing to be noticed is that the *laghukathā* prefers its narrators to ‘report’ events rather than ‘experience’ them: around 80% of the texts are presented by third-person narrators talking *about* the events of the plot from the viewpoint of an on-looker, whereas approximately 20% make use of a first-person narrator who relates something that he or she has participated in.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, about half of the texts are presented by an omniscient narrator - either silent or intrusive - as opposed to only around 30% which make use of a ‘limited’ third person point of view, i.e. focus the narrator’s knowledge through a particular character. This limited viewpoint allows the narrator to bring the reader closer to a single protagonist, while maintaining the position of an uninvolved observer.

However, too much distance between the reader and the text - a possible result of the employment of the omniscient third-person narrator - cannot be the aim of the *laghukathā*, since it wants to touch its audience. Consequently, two means are employed to overcome this distance at least temporarily. On the one hand, writers make use of the free indirect discourse to increase the immediacy of the reader’s sympathy with a protagonist by giving a first-hand account of the protagonist’s feelings and thoughts. An apparently detached report of events thereby immediately gains a certain level of ‘intimacy’ as e.g. in the *laghukathā Pūt-kapūt*, ‘Son, bad son’. The text shows a young man who has a difficult position in his family because of his lasting unemployment. After a short description of the father’s disapproval of the son the text continues:

Today, like every day, he sneaked into the house late at night and turned on the light on the roof but it didn’t come on. *Nor had his mother left any food for him on the table. That meant that father had threatened her today.* He drank water from the surahi-jug, lay down on the bed and started thinking - *what was the point of leading a life like this, like a worm. Was he a complete good-for-nothing?*³⁵⁶ (my emphases)

Although the reader is presented with a story *about* the protagonist’s problems, the narrative distance is bridged by these interpolations, shifting the reader’s empathy towards the son early in the story. Yet, the third person viewpoint discourages an identification of the reader with this protagonist; an intellectual rather than an emo-

³⁵⁵ Interestingly, 30% of the writers who chose the more authentic and intimate perspective of the first person narrator are women. For comparison, women writers account for only around 10% of all the writers of the sample.

³⁵⁶ L1097 by Jagdīś Kaśyap.

tional involvement of the reader is achieved. The free indirect discourse is a regular feature of the *laghukathā*: it appears in around 18% of the texts, compared to only 2% of *laghukathās* featuring an interior monologue which, as literary device, promotes the identification of the reader with the protagonist.

The second way of narrowing the gap between the reader and the story is the use of an inside rather than an outside view. The third-person narrator - omniscient or limited - knows and presents the inner thoughts and feelings of one or several protagonists in circa 50% of the texts as opposed to around 30% where he or she only describes what can be observed from the outside. Again, being acquainted with the protagonists' inner life - their feelings of curiosity, relief, fear or shame - brings the reader closer to the acting persons; fragments like 'he didn't feel like going to work' or 'he was shivering inside' make it possible for the reader to feel concern without getting emotionally involved or identify with the protagonist. These insights into the protagonists' thoughts and emotions, however, are only given in small doses, they hardly ever dominate a text.

Summary

All in all, the analysis of the perspective confirms the supposition that the *laghukathā* addresses the reader's intellect rather than his emotions. *Laghukathā* writers do not use the device of the narrative point of view to convey the text's message to the reader on an emotional level, they do not aim at presenting the reader with a protagonist to identify with. The communication of the message is rather a matter of the structure and, especially, the content. In the majority of *laghukathās* the intended perturbing effect is brought about by the 'story' itself.

4.5 Style

When dealing with the *laghukathā*'s style one encounters a problem inherent to every stylistic investigation, namely that 'style defies complete analysis or definition'³⁵⁷. Style may roughly be described as the 'unmistakable pattern' which characterises an

³⁵⁷ Cuddon, *Dictionary*, p. 922 (headword 'style').

artistic creation, but this pattern can be determined in relation to various aspects as the artist(s) (national, regional or individual style), the historical environment (period style) or the typical artistic patterns of a particular genre or individual work of art (generic style, *Werkstil*).³⁵⁸ In the laghukathā context the two last approaches offer the most suitable stepping stone: stylistic patterns typical of the genre have to be deduced from the analysis of individual texts.³⁵⁹ These patterns may, yet again, be investigated in relation to a multitude of diverse areas - e.g. the choice of words, figures of speech, rhetorical devices, the shape of the sentences or paragraphs.³⁶⁰ For the following investigation these areas have been divided into three groups which also encompass most aspects mentioned in the critical debate on the laghukathā's style, namely, first of all, language, i.e. the employment of diction and syntax; secondly, modes and tones, comprising for example areas referred to by critics or writers as 'descriptivity'; and, thirdly, rhetorical devices, including various figures and tropes. Next to aspects of these areas we also often find features mentioned in the laghukathā debate which are not typically related to style. The obvious confusion about the general understanding of the term 'style' reflects the situation in Western literature criticism. Thus Caudharī 'Abz', Ś. Śarmā and R.K Śarmā indirectly refer to the form of the text when they state that the laghukathā can be written in a 'letter-style' (patr-śailī) or 'diary-style' (*dāyari-śailī*)³⁶¹, and Niśāntar and Bhagīrath implicitly deal with the proximity of the laghukathā to other genres in their respective references to the 'bodhkathā-style' (bodhkathā-śailī) and the 'lokkathā-style' (lokkathā-

³⁵⁸ Cf. Günther & Irmgard Schweikle (eds.), *Metzler Literaturlexikon: Stichwörter zur Weltliteratur*, Stuttgart 1984, p. 423 (headword 'Stil').

³⁵⁹ Regional or authorial approaches do not offer themselves here because of the large number of writers who are represented in the sample by as little as one to four texts; the historical angle cannot be taken into account because the aim of this thesis is to lay down the basic artistic principles of the contemporary laghukathā; this thesis may however serve as a starting point for further, diachronically comparative, studies which might show how the writers' approaches and styles have changed over the decades.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Schweikle, *Metzler*, p. 423. Correspondingly, the laghukathā writers, when discussing the topic, refer to various different concepts and terms which are related to as many diverse literary areas. Most essays touch upon the question of style only superficially, mentioning single stylistic possibilities amongst several other topics; exceptions are Bhagīrath's 'Laghukathā kā śilp aur preṣāṇiyatā kā savāl' (pp. 108-112) and Ś. Śarmā's 'Laghukathā: śilp aur samracnā' (pp. 113-120). Both these articles are devoted predominantly or exclusively to the laghukathā's style.

³⁶¹ Cf. Caudharī 'Abz', 'Laghukathā: ek vicār', p. 53; Ś. Śarmā, 'Laghukathā...', p. 119; and R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 40. Other writers refuse to acknowledge these styles as appropriate because the laghukathā lacks the capacity to accommodate them. The section on the outer form of the laghukathā, however, has shown that the letter-form is indeed used on a regular basis. Cf. section 4.4.1 'Outer form', p. 134; laghukathās in the form of a diary entry, too, can be found occasionally.

śailī).³⁶² The direct effect the style of a text can have on the reader is referred to in R.K. Śarmā's discussion of the 'awakening style' (udbodhanparak śailī)³⁶³, and the 'autobiographical style' (ātmacaritra śailī), offered by Ś. Śarmā, refers to the narrative perspective.³⁶⁴ Since all these features have already been touched upon earlier in the literary analysis they need not be investigated again in the following sections which will focus on the aforementioned areas of language, modes and rhetorical devices.

4.5.1 Diction and syntax

We have seen that one of the central aims of the *laghukathā* is to have a strong, even awakening, effect on the reader. It is therefore not surprising that language is deemed especially important by writers and critics, since, as Ś. Kiraṇ states, 'the language of any literary genre is the bridge across which the writer communicates his message to the reader or listener'.³⁶⁵ Consequently, language, for the *laghukathā* writer, cannot be an end in itself. This demand which is commonly voiced in the critical debate summed up by Īśvar Candra who says that a *laghukathā* writer's motto is not 'language for the sake of language' (bhāṣā, bhāṣā ke lie) but rather 'language for life', 'for the purification of life' or 'for the uplift of life' (bhāṣā jīvan ke lie, jīvan pariṣkāra ke lie, jīvan ke unnayan ke lie).³⁶⁶ The general attitude towards the use of language in the *laghukathā* is thus characterised by a distinct demand for functionalism - language must help to affect the reader by conveying the message which, as M.P. Jain reminds us, should be above all socially and societally awakening: 'The *laghukathā* can only uphold its *social role* as long as it gives a straight and truthful description in simple words of the condition of man, thereby motivating the public opinion to share the emotions evoked [by the text]'.³⁶⁷ (My emphasis)

³⁶² Cf. Niśāntar, 'Laghukathā banām laghukahānī', in: S. Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathādeś*, p. 696; Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śilp aur śailī...', p. 133. Unfortunately, both critics fail to indicate which particular features of these genres may be found in a *laghukathā*.

³⁶³ Cf. R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 40. The 'bodhkathā-style', too, can be considered as being concerned with the reader in so far as Sanskritic bodhkathās used to be of an explicit didactic nature.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Ś. Śarmā, 'Laghukathā...', p. 120.

³⁶⁵ Ś. Kiraṇ, 'Kathā-lekhan...', p. 14.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Īśvar Candra, 'Laghukathā kī bhāṣā', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Laghukathā: bahas*, p. 53.

³⁶⁷ Jain, 'Hindī laghukathā...', p. 17.

By pointing out that the *laghukathā* needs to use ‘simple’ words in order to function as a social agent, Jain draws attention to another linguistic concern of the writers, namely the *laghukathā*’s diction as the basis for the conveyance of the message and the creation of the desired effect. Depending on the choice of register, a text may, for example, address the reader’s intellect or conscience or evoke particular kinds of emotions. So far, the analysis of the literary features of the *laghukathā* has shown a tendency towards appealing to the reader’s intellect rather than his emotions: several elements - the lack of atmosphere, the absence of protagonists to identify with, the self-reflexiveness of many texts and the employment of an outward rather than an inward and personal narrative viewpoint - have been proven to produce an emotional detachment on the part of the reader.³⁶⁸ But while these features are not claimed by the writers themselves to be employed in this way, the diction is implicitly and explicitly proclaimed to address the reader mainly on a rational level of ‘understanding’ when it is said that the *laghukathā*’s choice of words should be simple, straightforward and easy to grasp (*saral, sahaj grāhya / sugrāhya / subodh*). Accordingly, the writers prefer a natural (*prāñjal / svābhāvik*) and plain (*sādagīpūrṇ*) diction over a ‘maze of words’ (*śabdom kā her-pher*) or a language characterised by ostentation (*āḍambar*), ‘unintelligibility (*kliṣṭatā, durūhtā*), Sanskritic phrasing (*sanskṛtaniṣṭhatā*) or intellectuality (*bauddhiktā*). Ś. Kiraṇ sums this view up, declaring: ‘The plainer and simpler the language, the more easily perceivable and more effective is the message for the ordinary man’.³⁶⁹

Next to intelligibility, the second language-related aspect considered important is the creation of an authentic presentation of situations or protagonists. Although a claim for ‘authenticity’ itself has not explicitly been made by writers or critics, the significance of this concept is implied by various statements concerning the usage of different language-codes, e.g. a protagonist-, situation- and environment-related diction. Thus, Ś. Śarmā calls for the usage of a language in ‘correspondence with the topic’ (*viṣayānurūptā*)³⁷⁰ while Niśāntar elaborates on the connection between language and environment: ‘A message from a village environment [...] can be communicated

³⁶⁸ Cf. above, sections 4.3.2 ‘Protagonists’, 4.3.3 ‘Space’, 4.4.1 ‘Outer form’ and 4.4.4 ‘Points of view’, pp. 110, 125, 133 and 172 ff.

³⁶⁹ Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘*Kathā-lekhan...*’, p. 14.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Ś. Śarmā, ‘*Laghukathā...*’, p. 116.

only in the language of the village. [...] One could say that the soul of a message from the village will die [when clad] in the language of the city. It will not be able to produce an impression.³⁷¹ Correspondingly, several writers and critics go beyond the recommendation of just a familiar everyday language (sarvjanīn / pracalit bhāṣā, rozmarā) or a conversational or colloquial language ([ām] bolcāl kī bhāṣā) and support the employment of dialect (upabolī) or regional (āñcalik, prādeśik) codes. The writers' call for the employment of the language of the ordinary people (jan-sāmānya / ām ādmī kī ām-phaham bhāṣā) is not surprising, given the fact that the analysis of the protagonists has shown that the ordinary man (ām ādmī) stands at the centre of most writers' attention. In order to create an authentic picture the laghukathā, therefore, has to echo this ordinary man's language: 'Literature which aims at reflecting reality - and certainly reality remains the laghukathā's topic - can do so only in the language of the people. The language of the laghukathā is indisputably the language of the people (janbhāṣā).³⁷² Such demands imply that not only the narrator speaks a common Hindi but also that different codes are employed to portray the protagonists through their own direct speech: language should be used in 'accordance with the protagonists' (patrānūkultā), as Ś. Śarmā states.³⁷³ We will see in the following to what extent diction and syntax are used to create this simple, straightforward and authentic language as intended by the writers, and how the employment of various possible registers reflects the laghukathā's concern for the common man.

Modern Standard Hindi

Any attempt at determining different styles or dealing with the employment of different registers of Modern Standard Hindi must proceed from the fact that Hindi is a 'borrowing language'. Unlike 'building languages' - such as Sanskrit, Arabic or German - which create new words largely on the basis of language-inherent linguistic

³⁷¹ Niśāntar, 'Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān...', p. 246 f.

³⁷² Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śīlp aur śailī...', p. 130.

³⁷³ Cf. Ś. Śarmā, 'Laghukathā...', p. 116. Cf. also Sonī who sees the protagonists' region, place, caste and profession (prānt, sthān, jāti, vyavasāy) as indicated through their direct speech, and Bhagīrath who states more generally that 'the dialogue should be in correspondence with the protagonist and his environment'. Cf. Sonī, 'Laghukathā: paribhāṣā...', p. 83; Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śīlp aur śailī...', p. 130.

material, 'borrowing languages' like Hindi or English, when in need of new words, mostly 'go to some other language and take a word from it or create words with the help of elements from that other language, rather than from itself'.³⁷⁴ An example is the English word 'pneumonia', (< Greek 'pneumonía') as opposed to the German 'Lungenentzündung' ('lung-inflammation'). Modern Standard Hindi - based on the Khaṛī bolī dialect of the Delhi region - 'borrows' vocabulary mainly from the various other Hindi dialects as well as Perso-Arabic languages, English and, last but not least, Sanskrit which, as the 'older form' or 'mother language' of the Hindi dialects, provides a natural source for borrowings and loan words.³⁷⁵ Corresponding to these lexical sources, an investigation of the registers used in a text has to proceed from four categories of vocabulary each of which, when dominating a text may influence its style and communicability. Next to the Hindi i.e. tadbhav words (e.g. āñkh < Skt. akṣi - eye), which are the basis for any kind of Hindi and therefore not stylistically significant to the same extent as the groups of loan words, we find 1. dialect (e.g. jamānā badal gāil); 2. Sanskritic words, i.e. tatsams (e.g. kāraṇ), arddh-tatsams (e.g. jātrā < Skt. yātra), and neo-Sanskritisms (e.g. prajātantra < Skt. prajā, 'people' + tantra, 'system'); 3. Perso-Arabic words (e.g. P. nazdīq or A. tūfān); and 4. European words, e.g. from English (e.g. pulis < police) and Portuguese (e.g. mez < mesa). Furthermore, the colloquial usage of words has to be considered when dealing with diction, as for example phonetically spelled words ('ssāle' for 'sāle') or colloquial exclamations like *bas!* and *are!*

Hence, when dealing with the vocabulary of Hindi and the possible different registers used in its literature, a combination of words from these sources has to be assumed to be natural. Although the prevalence of one or the other register may lend a particular tone to a text, it is difficult to establish at what point a literary work should be seen as significantly and thus stylistically dominated by this code: a 'normal' register as a background against which other registers might be defined as stylistically marked is difficult to determine. Consequently, the following analysis draws on the writers' and critics' demand for a simple and straightforward language in order to attempt to define a 'normal register' for the laghukathā. In this context it has to be borne in mind

³⁷⁴ Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*, Calcutta 1963, p. 54.

³⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 55.

that the body of texts examined consists of laghukathās by as many as 150 different writers; it is therefore not surprising to find the genre presenting its readers with a remarkable variety of codes and styles. In the following, examples for different kind of registers of the laghukathā will be given and their significance for the relationship between the text and the reader will be discussed.

Ām ādmī kī bhāṣā - the language of the common man

We have seen that most writers and critics call for a simple and authentic ‘language of the common man’. But while authenticity may theoretically involve all kinds of linguistic codes, the demand for a simple language of the people suggests a general preference for a non-formal register and clearly structured, rather short sentences. Unlike the syntactic features, which are relatively easy to establish, non-formality of register is rather problematic to determine as it may encompass a variety of linguistic styles which do not necessarily have to occur simultaneously, as for example a colloquial style (vs. written or literary language), an everyday style (vs. ceremonial language), an unpretentious or self-effacing style (vs. self-consciously ambitious language) or a simple and plain style (vs. ornate and elaborate language). Since each of these non-formal styles may employ words from all of the earlier mentioned categories of vocabulary (Sanskritic, Perso-Arabic, European, dialect), a positive (inclusive) definition of the ‘language of the common man’ based on diction is difficult to formulate. What appears to be less problematic is a ‘negative’ (exclusive) definition, i.e. an account of lexical features which, according to the writers and critics, must *not* occur. This allows us to delineate a particular style considered as ‘common’ without limiting the wide range of registers inherent in this rather broad category.

The writers’ and critics’ understanding of the language of the common man centres around the ideas of simplicity, straightness, clarity and plainness - features which they consider to be conveyed best by avoiding two lexical features: ornate and Sanskritised diction. As to the former it is especially verbosity (āḍambar) and obvious artfulness which are rejected: the employment of decorative rhetorical figures (ālaṅkāriktā) is considered inappropriate for the common man’s everyday lan-

guage.³⁷⁶ This suggests not only a rejection of embellishment but also an abandonment of visible linguistic self-reflexiveness, as has been seen, for example, in the earlier quoted *laghukathā Alag rājya (panīr kā ṭukṛā)*, ‘A different rule (A piece of cheese)’.³⁷⁷ Unlike most other *laghukathās* this text does not reveal its message easily, it requires an active intellectual effort on the part of the reader to decode its linguistic and literary playfulness.

The second means of creating a simple ‘everyday language’ - the restraint from Sanskritisation (*sanskṛtaniṣṭhatā*) and intellectuality (*bauddhikā*) which might render a text unintelligible (*kliṣṭ*, *durūh*) - is more problematic since ‘Sanskritisation’ is a very general term for a rather complex phenomenon which may include, on the one hand, the usage of ‘natural’ words (*tatsams*), and on the other the employment of neo-Sanskritic words which are often direct translations or substitutes for English words. Since Sanskritic words in general are part and parcel of the Hindi language, Sanskritisation in this context must be understood primarily as the usage of demanding *tatsams* constructed in a compound-like manner, involving, for example, *sandhis* - such as ‘*praśnottar*’, ‘question and answer’ - or conjunct characters as in ‘*kruddh*’, ‘angry’ or ‘*kliṣṭ*’, ‘difficult to grasp’. This also includes neo-Sanskritisms, which are, too, constructed in a compound-like way and often assume a rather artificial character, as e.g. ‘*yuddhottar*’, ‘post-war’. Overly ‘intellectual’ words may be interpreted as rarely used, distinctively literary, terms - e.g. ‘*kṣutpipāsā*’, ‘hunger and thirst’ - or technical vocabulary of any kind of area, such as ‘*ṛṇātmak*’, ‘negative’ (in mathematics and physics). The aforementioned self-reflexiveness of a text, too, may be understood as ‘intellectuality’. In addition, the rejection of Sanskritisation may also indicate an inclination towards Perso-Arabic rather than Sanskritic loan words, for example a preference of ‘*zyādā*’ over ‘*adhik*’ or ‘*sāl*’ over ‘*varṣ*’. However, this can be seen as a tendency only and not as a striking stylistic form.

Interestingly, the usage of English is not discussed in the debate on language. The employment of English loan words is acknowledged by only one critic who neither

³⁷⁶ This usage of language corresponds to the relative lack of decorative descriptive elements in the *laghukathā*. Cf. below, section 4.5.2 ‘Stylistic modes and tones’, pp. 205 ff. The employment of rhetorical figures will be discussed in detail in section 4.5.3.

³⁷⁷ By Jasbir Cāvlā (translation in section 4.4.1 ‘Outer form’, p. 133).

supports nor rejects it. The reason for this might be that English words have to be considered on an altogether different level which is not directly connected to the question of the simpleness and straightforwardness of diction: instead of formalising or de-formalising a literary style, the employment of English vocabulary tends to give contemporary texts a 'modern' outlook, its usage in the *laghukathā* often involves an ironic or derisive tone as to the person or thing referred to. Examples of this kind of usage will be given later.

A final step towards delineating a 'language of the common man' is the illustration through concrete textual examples. Candra, for instance, quotes the following *laghukathā* by Durgeś, to illustrate the usage of simple, straightforward and easily understandable words (*sahaj, saral, subodh śabd*)³⁷⁸:

आदमी

आदमी भीड़ से बचता हुआ सड़क के किनारे चल रहा था । अचानक सामने पड़े पत्थर से ठोकर लग गयी । पैर का अंगूठा बुरी तरह जख्मी हो गया । नाखून उखड़ गया ।

वह पैर पकड़कर वहीं बैठ गया और जोर जोर से लोगों को गालियाँ देने लगा । कुछ देर बाद वह खड़ा हुआ और पत्थर को सड़क के बीच में रखकर आगे चल पड़ा।³⁷⁹

Three things can be noticed when reading this *laghukathā*: a straightforward syntax, a plain and undemanding lexis, and very few conjuncts. The register relies entirely on *tadbhavs* and commonly used Perso-Arabic words which do not stand out from the text as loan words. Sanskritic or English loan words are not included in this example of 'simple and easy' Hindi, nor is dialect. As to the syntax, the text is characterised by short main clauses and hypotactical constructions made up of no more than two clauses which are linked by means of a participle construction (*bactā huā*), absolutes (*pakarṅkar, rakhkar*) or the conjunction 'and', i.e. through *co-ordination* rather than *subordination*. Since *co-ordination* means that each clause of the hypotactical sentences may stand on its own if the verb takes its finite form, the reader does not have to think ahead or keep parts of the first subclause in mind while reading. While the style of this *laghukathā* may thus be interpreted as an everyday register it is not

³⁷⁸ Cf. Candra, 'Laghukathā...', p. 50.

³⁷⁹ Originally published in: *Kālpātr*, p. 35.

reminiscent of colloquial language - typical markers such as ellipses, inversions or phonetic spelling cannot be found. Likewise the text dispenses with any kind of rhetorical embellishment. Despite the symbolic usage of 'man' (ādmī) for 'mankind', the language is used in a plain and direct manner.

Another example which is predominated by a similar, easily intelligible and tadbhav-orientated diction, is the earlier-quoted *laghukathā Dṛṣṭi*, 'Viewpoint':

- मम्मी, देखो वे बच्चे नीचे सड़क पर अपनी माँ के साथ गाने गाकर रोटी माँग रहे हैं। एक रोटी तुम भी दे दो ना।
- हिस्स, कितनी बार कहा, गंदे लोगों को देखते नहीं, चलो इधर आओ।
मम्मी ने मोना को अन्दर खींचकर खिड़की बंद कर ली।³⁸⁰

The vocabulary includes a small number of familiar Perso-Arabic words (*baccā*, *gandā*, *andar*), one English word ('*mammī*' for 'mummy') and some colloquialisms ('*nā*' as a rhetorical question at the end of a sentence and the onomatopoeic exclamation 'hiss'-sh!, hush!). Again, Sanskritic words are not to be found. The usage of the English 'mummy' as opposed to the Hindi 'mām' serves two purposes in this text: in the direct speech of the girl the juxtaposition of the two terms within one single sentence emphasises the contrast between the 'common' mother in the street and the 'elevated' supposedly middle-class mother looking 'down' on her. In the last sentence - the indirect speech of the narrator - the repetition of the word 'mummy' carries a distinct ironic notion and thus illustrates the earlier-mentioned ironic usage of English loan words: in Hindi, like in English, 'mummy' is a term of address and not normally to be used as a third person singular noun when talking 'about' someone, unless the person being talked to is a child or equally familiar with the person talked about. By taking up this term 'without permission', the narrator produces an ironic tone and distances himself from the mother's action.

As far as the syntax is concerned, both speakers as well as the narrator employ short, logically straightforward sentences, consisting mainly of co-ordinated clauses linked by absolutives or asyndetic parataxi (... *dekhṭe nahīrṁ*, *calo idhar āo*). The only subordinate clause (...*kahā*, *gande logorṁ ko*...) is marked by the colloquial omission of

³⁸⁰ L637 by Satiś Dube (translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', p. 126).

the conjunctive particle 'ki'. A notion of colloquialism on the syntactic level is furthermore conveyed through the emphatic position of 'tum bhī' in the sentence 'Ek roṭī tum bhī de do nā'. It can be seen that this text, unlike the *laghukathā Ādmī*, gives an example of non-formal everyday language with a colloquial manner.

As to the rhetorical devices, only a few symbolic usages are to be detected - like the *laghukathā Ādmī* the text does not use any kind of figurative or ornamental language. The symbolism in *Dṛṣṭi*, however, is more marked than in the former text. Not only do some of the objects have symbolic meanings - bread (roṭī) for life, window (khīrkī) for the interface between inside and outside - but whole actions and situations may be interpreted symbolically, i.e. the girl's 'looking down' on the people in the street and the mother's 'closing' the window, thereby ostracising the poor.³⁸¹

A third example of a plain and clear language is the *laghukathā Niśān*, 'Scar'. Unlike the two above-given texts, its diction also includes a number of Sanskritic words and a higher amount of Perso-Arabic vocabulary. English words do not occur and the amount of colloquial lexis is negligibly small. The following two sections of the text will illustrate the register:

- अरे ! भाई साहब ! आपके खूबसूरत चेहरे पर ये गहरा निशान कैसा ?
- मत पूछो मेरे भाई, मत पूछो !
- क्यों ?
- इस निशान के साथ दर्दनाक हादसा जुड़ा हुआ है ।
- मुझसे सुनाने लायक समझते हों तो सुनाएंगे ?
- आप सह पाएँगे ? बाँट सकेंगे मेरा दर्द ?

[...]

- पहेली हल किए देता हूँ, देश के बटवारे के वक्त जो भगदड़ मची, लोग काफिलों में जान बचाकर भागने लगे । हमारे बुजुर्गों ने सुना कि औरतों को लूट का माल समझ कर उनकी इज्जत लूटी जा रही है । बुजुर्गों ने तलवार के वार से अपने ही हाथों अपनी औरतों को गर्दनें गाजर-मूली की तरह काटनी शुरु कर दीं । एक नहे बच्चे के रूप में मैं माँ को गोद में था । [...]³⁸²

This example is significant on the one hand because it illustrates how common Sanskritic words (*deś*, *vār*, *rūp*) go totally unnoticed within the overall everyday collo-

³⁸¹ L637, cf. *ibid*.

³⁸² L313 by Kamleś Bhāratīya (translation in section 4.4.3 'Title', p. 169).

quial register of the text.³⁸³ It therefore demonstrates that the Sanskritised register rejected by the writers and critics must be seen as referring to the more distinctive and elaborate Sanskritic diction as mentioned above. Examples of this kind of diction will be given later. The second important aspect of this *laghukathā* is that it shows how Perso-Arabic loan words (e.g. *khūbsūrat* or *buzurg*) can help to de-formalise a register without rendering the text stylistically marked. The relative high proportion of Perso-Arabic words corresponds with the general colloquial notion of the text but does not strike the reader as exceptional. Colloquialisms like *are!* simply add to the colloquial tone as does the syntax.

It is interesting to see that while both the dialogic section and the monologic last paragraph are characterised by an easily intelligible lexis, a mixing of styles can be detected on the syntactic level. Although the entire text is dominated by a generally uncomplicated and colloquial syntax, the speech of the second speaker is slightly more formal and 'demanding' when it comes to his monologically describing the incidents of the past. In the first part of the text both speakers use short simple main clauses (*Kyom?* - *Is niśān ke sāth dardnāk hādsā juṛā huā hai.*), at times characterised by colloquial ellipses (*...ye gahrā niśān kaisā?*) and inversions (*Āp bāñṭ sakeriṅge merā dard?*). The only subordinate clause of this dialogic section - the conditional sentence '*mujhse sunāne lāyak samajhte hoñ to sunāeṅge*' - is absolutely clear in its briefness and straightforward structure, despite the omission of '*agar āp isko/yah*'. In the monologic account of the 'accident', however, the sentences become not only longer, they also contain more subordinate clauses. Thus the narrator inserts for example a subordinate temporal clause (*jo bhagdaṛ macī*) into an absolute sentence, which itself is co-ordinated to the main clause asyndetically preceding it and to the finite verb following it: '*Pahelī hal kie detā hūñ, deś ke baṭvāre ke vakt jo bhagdaṛ macī, log kāfilom merñ jān bacākar bhāgne lage.*' Although this example as well as the other sentences of this section are still easily comprehensible, they gain a touch of formality, not only because of their length and complexity but also because the speaker temporarily abandons ellipses and inversions.

³⁸³ This effect is helped by the fact that these words are morphologically rather simple and thus less likely to be affected by linguistic change in the normal *tatsam-tadbhav* process which makes their absorption into plain Hindi easier.

As far as the rhetorical devices are concerned, the text presents itself in a plain manner. Next to the symbolic value of different features (e.g. the physical scar of the human symbolising his emotional as well as the country's scar), an emphatic repetition of central phrases (e.g. 'khūbsūrat cehrā', 'talvār ke vār se') can be detected as well as a simile: 'gājar-mūlī kī tarah kāṭnā', 'as if cutting carrots or radishes'. The usage of this simile, however, does not serve as an apparently artistic figurative embellishment; it occurs as a colloquial idiom in the direct speech of a protagonist and therefore serves to enliven his speech rather than point out the author's artistic interference. The few rhetorical devices in this text are used in such a way that they make their impact without being noticed as markedly artistic.

The three examples give an idea of what writers and critics generally mean by a simple and plain language, namely a combination of easily intelligible, unpretentious and commonly used words of all etymological categories, presented in a logically straightforward syntax. However, the idea behind the 'language of the common man' will only become entirely clear in comparison with *laghukathās* which show the kind of register generally rejected by critics and writers. Besides, the usage of English and especially colloquial language in the *laghukathā* needs to be examined to explore the whole range of meanings of an *authentic* 'language of the people'.

Sanskritised Hindi

As indicated earlier, the determination of the term 'Sanskritisation' in the *laghukathā* context must proceed from the writers' and critics' idea of what this concept implies, namely that Sanskritisation is to be avoided when it renders a text unintelligible and lends it an 'intellectual' and unnatural tone. This suggests that Sanskritisation is interpreted as an employment either of too large a proportion of Sanskritic words per text or as the usage of a class of words which are not considered 'natural' to the everyday Hindi language. Therefore, in order to examine the application of Sanskritic words, various kinds of usage have to be distinguished.

Another aspect to be considered is that the use of a Sanskritic diction often goes hand in hand with a distinct mixing of codes which may occur in three basic forms: firstly,

codes may vary from speaker to speaker, thus characterising them in terms of their social status, origin etc., as suggested by Sonī and Bhagīrath; secondly, the narrator may use a different linguistic style in his indirect speech than the protagonists in their direct speech, with the narrator generally using more Sanskritic expressions than the protagonists; finally, different codes may be employed *within* the indirect speech of the narrator, either depending on the situations or moods which are being described, or in order to emphasise or ironicise certain aspects of the plot.³⁸⁴

The first kind of employment of Sanskritic vocabulary is the usage of simple and commonly used words which have been completely naturalised. Terms like ‘rūp’ (form), ‘kāraṇ’ (reason), or ‘nirṇay’ (conclusion) are everyday words and are simple in so far as they seldom consist of more than two syllables and display few and only familiar conjuncts. The above-given *laghukathā Nisān* has demonstrated how such words may be employed even in colloquial texts without elevating the diction or leaving any kind of stylistically ‘Sanskritic’ imprint.

A second way of using Sanskritic vocabulary is the employment of less common words which are more elaborate but nevertheless ‘natural’ insofar as they have come into Sanskrit via the usual etymological route, namely through borrowing a term *and* its meaning from the original language. Examples are ‘abhijñā’ (skilful), ‘sarvottam’ (best) or ‘anupasthiti’ (absence); similarly, Sanskritic adverbs ending in -ḥ convey a rather formal tone (e.g. *prāyaḥ*, ‘often’ or *sambhavataḥ*, ‘possibly’), although they are commonly understood. Even though the range of words belonging to this second category is very large and the border between this and the first class of ‘familiar’ Sanskritic words is blurred - especially since the determination is a highly subjective one - they can be seen as a category of their own. The reason is that they often stand out from a non-formal Hindi text even if used only moderately, not least because of the employment of Sanskritic conjuncts (e.g. *ज्ञ, ष, ष, स्थ, ळ*), sandhis, and the polysyllabic compound-structure of the words. An accumulation of such words is more likely to leave a text stylistically marked than a large number of ‘familiar’ tatsams.

³⁸⁴ The ironic fusion of Perso-Arabic and Sanskritic vocabulary in the *laghukathā Sirfirā*, ‘The madman’ has been mentioned earlier in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 87.

An example for the usage of only a few natural but therefore slightly elevated Sanskritic terms is the following paragraph from the *laghukathā Mukti*, 'Release':

[...]
 रद्ध ने कोयल छाँटना रोक कर पसीना पोंछा । गुड़ खा कर पानी पीने के इरादा से वह दुकान के बाहर निकला ही था कि उसके कानों में लाला को पुकार गूँजी । वह सशंकित हृदय से बैठक में दाखिल हुआ पर लाला की सौम्य मुद्रा देख कर उसकी हिम्मत बंधी ।

[...] ³⁸⁵

The passage demonstrates a situation-related code-mixing, with the two elaborate Sanskritic phrases 'saśaṅkit hr̥day se' (with a fearful heart) and 'saumya mudrā' (placid gesture) standing out from the otherwise informal lexis. While the first expression, following a smooth flow of Hindi and Perso-Arabic diction, emphasises the element of shock and fear in the boy's mind, the second phrase lends an air of solemnity to the Lala's behaviour. Sanskritic words used in this manner do not fall into the category of 'Sanskritisation' as understood in the *laghukathā* debate, as long as they are used only sparingly to create a special tone - e.g. distanced, elevated or possibly ironic - for individual passages or phrases of a text. However, if a text contains a large amount of these words, it will still be seen as stylistically Sanskritised. It has to be said though, that there are hardly any *laghukathās* which are over-burdened with elaborate tatsams.

More interesting therefore is the way of using Sanskritic vocabulary which does leave the reader with the impression of a stylistically marked text. This third kind of Sanskritisation is above all characterised by exceptionally long and 'unnatural' neo-Sanskritic terms which are often thinly disguised translations of underlying English terms, brought into Hindi after 1800 with the growing influence of the English language on the educational sector. Some examples for neo-Sanskritic terms are 'antardvandva' (internal conflict), 'pañktibaddh' (arranged in a line) or 'ātmaviśvās' (self-confidence); the polysyllabic compound-structure is brought to the extreme when technical terms or phrases are translated or created, such as 'karmanyatāvād' (activism) or 'prāk-svātantrya-kāl' and 'svātantryottar-kāl' (pre-Independence /

³⁸⁵ L2407 by Śrināth.

post-Independence); a neo-Sanskritic terminology is also characteristic of modern administrative Hindi (e.g. 'svacchā abhiyān' - department of personal [sic] hygiene). Evidently neo-Sanskritic terms, when used in abundance, may easily lend a text a haughty and artificially 'intellectual' tone, whereas a cautious use may serve to characterise or ironise protagonists or themes, or even to create a particular atmosphere, e.g. when giving a *laghukathā* the appearance of a Sanskritic *bodhkathā*. It must therefore be assumed that writers and critics refer mainly to an 'overdose' of this kind of register - especially in combination with other elaborate Sanskritic words - when they speak of undesirable 'Sanskritisation'. Two examples will demonstrate this feature.

The first example - some paragraphs of the *laghukathā Apamān*, 'Insult' - will illustrate the usage of neo-Sanskritic words according to theme (administration) and the employment of code-mixing in order to set apart the narrator's diction from the protagonists':

स्वच्छता अभियान के तहत उसे झोपड़ पट्टियों में जाकर स्वच्छता (पर्सनल हाइजीन) का महत्व समझाना था। उसने झोले में साबुन की टिकियों के साथ समाज सेवक के सपने भी भर लिये। दोपहर का वक्त, लगभग सभी झोपड़ियाँ खाली थीं। एकाध बच्चे जरूर धूल में खेल रहे थे। माँ बाप की अनुपस्थिति से बेखबर उसकी उपस्थिति भी वहाँ बेमतलब ही रही। निराश लौटने लगी थी कि इतफाक से एक झोपड़ी खुली मिल गयी।

[...]

एक अघेड़ उम्र की औरत कमर और सिर पर घड़ा लिए भीतर आयी। लड़की ने सिर का घड़ा उतार लिया। कमर के घड़े को ज़मीन पर रखकर सुस्ताने लगी। 'देखिए, मैं स्वास्थ्य केंद्र से आयी हूँ -।' उसने अपना रटा रटाया टैप शुरू कर दिया। बच्चों के बंडल बनाते हाथ रुक गए। कभी उनकी आँखें साबुन की टिकिया को देखती, कभी माँ को।

चेहरे को आंचल से पोंछते हुए औरत ने बच्चों को झिड़क दिया, 'जल्दी से हाथ चला। शाम तक तीन सौ बंडल बनाने हैं फालतू बातों का वक्त नहीं है यहाँ।'

[...]

'आ जाती है, झोला लटकाए। अरे तीन मील चलकर पानी लाने का परी तौ जाने। हियां, पीने को पानी लाने में ही ससुरी कमर टूट जानी है, नहाने को ऐय्याशी कउन करे। कोई पूछो उनसे।' साबुन की टिकिया बाहर नाली में आ गिरी। उसका चेहरा लाल हो गया। उसे लगा, उस औरत की गीलियों ने उसे इतना अपमानित नहीं किया है, जितना झोले में भरे साबुन और सपनों ने।³⁸⁶

The text shows on the one hand how the narrator as well as the civil servant use a slightly Sanskritised diction whereas the slum-dwellers speak an informal Hindi; on the other hand it illustrates the usage of neo-Sanskritic phrases of administrative Hindi. Thus the registers of the narrator and the civil servant include several 'natural' tatsams - e.g. 'mahatva' [sic] (importance), 'upasthiti' (presence), 'anupasthiti' (absence) and 'nirās' (without hope) - next to the artificial administrative terms 'svāsthya kendra' (Public Health Centre), 'samāj sevak' (civil servant) and 'svacchā abhiyān' (Department of Personal Hygiene). The word 'svacchā' - although a natural if elaborate tatsam word - obviously causes unease even to the writer herself: she feels obliged to give the English translation 'personal hygiene' in brackets. The slum dwellers' informal diction, on the other hand, relies on tadbhav and Perso-Arabic words, it shows colloquial inversions and phonetic spellings like 'tau' for 'to', 'hiṃyārī' for 'yahārī' or 'kaūn' for 'kaun'. Therefore, the high-flying technical terms as used by the narrator and civil servant do not so much serve to formalise their diction, they rather underline the disparity between the civil servant's mission and the harsh reality of the slum-dwellers.³⁸⁷ In this context, therefore, both neo-Sanskritic and informal diction serve to render the respective protagonists more authentic. The general non-formality of diction is underlined by a mostly plain and straightforward syntax which relies largely on short main clauses or co-ordinated subclauses and makes frequent use of inversions (Koī pūcho unse) and ellipses (Dopahar kā vaqt, ...), even in the narrator's indirect speech.

The next laghukathā, *Nirvighn*, 'Undisturbed', will show how in texts which take Sanskrit fables or anecdotes as a model - featuring kings, queens and princes rather than leaders or MLAs - an extensive usage of Sanskritic vocabulary seems to be naturally connected to the style and setting of the plot rather than the content:

³⁸⁷ The situation-related choice of vocabulary becomes furthermore obvious in the fact that the first half of the text which deals with civil servant and her thoughts and impressions makes more use of Sanskritic words than the latter half which revolves around the concrete situation in the hut and the slum-dwellers' perspective: most of the Sanskritic vocabulary appears in the first two paragraphs of the text. Cf. also L2691 *Vijñāpan*, 'Announcement', which switches from a fairly formal Sanskritic lexis (e.g. 'tathā', 'āvās' and 'anudān') in the paragraphs about the general operations of the government to a less distanced, Hindi and Perso-Arabic diction (e.g. 'sardī', 'īstahār' and 'śahar') in the concluding sentences which deals with the effect these actions have on a single person's fate. (For the translation cf. section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 160).

राजा आनंदादित्य का नियम था कि प्रातः उठ कर महामंत्री के साथ अपने महल को छत से नगर का विहंगम दृश्य देखते और जिस ओर से धुआं उठता न दिखाई देता, महामंत्री को आदेश देते कि पता करें कि उस घर में अंगीठी क्यों न जली, उसकी व्यवस्था की जाए ।

महामंत्री प्रातः इस नियम से बहुत दुःखी थे । देर रात तक होते रहने वाले राग-रंग के कारण सोने में विलम्ब होता था और प्रातः जल्दी जागकर राजा के पास पहुंचना पड़ता था । उन्होंने अपने दुःख का भेद अपने मित्र राज-वैज्ञानिक तारादत्ताचार्य को बताया ।

राज-वैज्ञानिक ने कुछ ही सप्ताह में धुआं-रहित अंगीठी का आविष्कार किया । पर्यावरण की शुद्धता को दुहाई देते हुए महामंत्री ने हर घर में नई अंगीठी पहुंचवा दी ।

...अब कहां खाना बना, न बना, इसका भेद लगना कठिन था । अब राजा भी देर तक सोते थे और महामंत्री को नींद में भी विघ्न उपस्थित नहीं होता था ।³⁸⁸

The relatively high percentage of Sanskritic words and the setting of the plot in by-gone times and a courtly environment harmonise neatly, giving the text an archaic connotation which is further emphasised, on the one hand, by the employment of the compounded and allusive Sanskritic names 'Ānandāditya' and 'Tārādattācārya', and on the other hand by the fact that the text includes hardly any Perso-Arabic and no English vocabulary. In addition, several of the tatsam words used are distinctly and deliberately elevated, as, for example, 'prātaḥ' (in the morning) or 'rahit' (without), for both of which common tadbhav alternatives exist in 'savere' and '[ke] bina'. The phrase 'dhuārṁ-rahit' is also interesting because it seems to be a pseudo-technical translation of the English 'smoke-free', thus emphasising the somewhat anachronistic and ironical impression conveyed by the neo-Sanskritisms 'vihaṅgam dṛśya' (bird's-eye view), 'rāj-vaijñānik' (court scientist), and 'paryāvaraṇ kī śuddhā' (purity of the environment). This text, unlike the *laghukathā Apamān*, conveys a general elevated and archaic tone because the neo-Sanskritisms are part of a wider Sanskritic diction.

The elaborate tone of the text is also reflected in the syntax. Unlike earlier-mentioned *laghukathās* this example consists of rather long and demanding syntactic constructions, often containing several interlocked clauses as the following analysis of the first sentence shows. With square brackets indicating co-ordinated and curved brackets subordinated sentences, the structure of this sentence can be indicated as follows:

³⁸⁸ L1582 by Hariś Naval.

[{Rājā Ānandātiya kā niyam thā} ki {[prātaḥ uṭh kar] [mahāmantrī ke sāth apne mahal kī chat se nagar kā vihaṅgam dr̥śya dekhte]}}
 aur
 [{jis or se dhuām uṭhtā na dikhāi detā,} {mahāmantrī ko ādeś dete} ki {patā karen}]
 ki {us ghar meṁ aṅgīṭhī kyom na jalī,} {uskī vyavasthā kī jāe.}]

The first part is made up of two subordinated subclauses the second of which again contains two co-ordinated clauses; it is relatively easy to follow since the three clauses are arranged in the 'straight' logical order 1-2-3. The second part of the sentence, however, consisting of five subordinated clauses, is far from straightforward. The correlative clause (us ghar meṁ...), relating to the relative clause in the first position, comes fourth; in between the two there are two more clauses which, from the logical point of view, should come in the first and second position of the sentence. Therefore the logical order would read 3-1-2-4-5. Furthermore, the last subclause of this part of the sentence (uskī vyavasthā kī jāe) is dependent on clause number 1 (mahāmantrī ko ādeś dete), the reader is therefore required to jump back and forth within the sentence in order to connect the different subclauses correctly and grasp the full meaning.

The investigation of the two texts shows that laghukathā writers use neo-Sanskritic words cautiously in correspondence with the stories' plots or protagonists. Although the latter text might be considered 'Sanskritised', it has to be seen that the elaborate diction is part and parcel of the story, it is not used *in order* to elevate the text or lend it a particular 'intellectual' appearance but rather *because* the storyline allows elevation to comply with the writers' and critics' demand for authenticity. Likewise it is not surprising that the texts which have politics or administration as a topic feature an ample amount of technical terms - e.g. 'sāmpradāyik' (communal), 'saṁsthān' (institute) or 'adhikārī' (an official) - as may be observed, for example, in the laghukathās *Upāy*, 'Measures', or *Surakṣā*, 'Security', which deal with political and administrative failure. It is important to notice that neo-Sanskritic terminology may also serve to carry a touch of irony into the text, for example, showing protagonists or situations to be far removed from the common man's everyday reality as in *Apamān*, or emphasising a gap between the protagonists supposedly dignified behaviour and their 'common' or even morally detestable personal world as in *Upāy* and *Surakṣā*.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ Irony will be discussed in more detail in section 4.5.3 'Rhetorical figures', pp. 243 ff.

Usage of English

The application of English words in Hindi texts differs from the usage of Perso-Arabic and Sanskritic loan words in a fundamental way: while the latter are usually completely assimilated by Hindi in terms of sound, graphic appearance and inflection or grammar, English interpolations often stand out from the text on the intra-syntactical level and the level of graphic appearance: leaving aside commonly used English terms like 'police' or 'school', a lot of English words are so contorted in their Devanagari spelling that they are hardly recognisable. Although Devanagari has introduced the sign ॆ to write the English open 'o' as in 'ball', other sounds like the 'th' cannot be represented as clearly; peculiar transliterations like 'व्हाउचर' (vḥāucar, 'voucher') or रेस्टीकेट (reṣṭīkeṭ, 'rusticate') are therefore often the result, and when whole phrases or sentences are reproduced the outcome can be especially intrusive in terms of appearance as e.g. in 'यू दोण्ट नो' (yū doṅṭ no, 'You don't know') or 'यू जस्ट गो टु दैट कार्नर... एण्ड कम अलांग विद दैट...' (yū jaṣṭ go ṭu daiṭ kārnar... eṅḍ kam alāṅg vid daiṭ..., 'you just go to that corner... and come along with that...'). The last two examples also illustrate the aforementioned second special feature of English vocabulary: unlike loan words from Perso-Arabic or Sanskritic sources which are inserted as individual words into a Hindi sentence structure, English segments are often interpolated as whole phrases or even sentences, retaining their specific syntactical and grammatical features. Thus, the English lexis generally does not fit into Hindi texts as naturally as Perso-Arabic or Sanskritic vocabulary which might also be the reason why it does not usually dominate a text to the same extent as the former.

Another significant characteristic of the application of English loan words - especially in direct speech - is that they are not simply used to formalise or de-formalise the register of the speakers and indicate their level of education or place of origin, they also often serve to identify the speakers' social status and aspirations as typically new rich middle-class, thereby usually implying their being untruthful, ruthless, superficial and immoral. The aforementioned laghukathā *Dṛṣṭi*, 'Viewpoint', has shown the

difference between the usage of the English word 'mummy' and the Hindi 'mām'³⁹⁰; another example is *Rogī zamīn*, 'Sick earth' in which a 'native lady of foreign type' (*videśī kism kī deśī mahilā*) gets out of her 'car' and takes 'bread' out of her 'bag' to feed the dogs. Even where English terms are used for objects or concepts which do not exist in the Hindi context and therefore do not have native equivalents, their employment must be seen as well-calculated because the writer, as we have seen, often has the opportunity to substitute neo-Sanskritisms, even for everyday words like 'prempatr', 'love letter'. Thus, the choice of 'car' over 'gārī' and 'bread' over 'rotī' can be seen as a deliberate classification of the woman as Westernised Indian middle class. The above-mentioned ironic tone which is often produced or emphasised by the employment of English words is also illustrated in *Dr̥ṣṭi*.

Finally, some paragraphs of the *laghukathā Tār vṛkṣ kī chāyā*, 'Shade of a palm tree' will be given as a rare example of strong Anglicisation. Again the English phrases serve primarily to identify the speakers as belonging to the modern Indian new rich middle-class, which is portrayed as corrupt and unconcerned about moral and ethical values:

हर काम समय से करने का पाबंद दोनों कान्वेटी बच्चे अभी भी जाग रहे थे । मिकी ने वाल-क्लॉक में पौने ग्यारह बजते हुए देखे तो कह उठा - 'बेबी, मम्मी... नाट कम... सो फार!'

'मिकी, लैट मी स्लीप!'

'बेबी, ये कॉट रेड हैण्डिड क्या है? वो सामने वाली कोठी में मेरा क्लास मेट अनु कह रहा था - हमारे पापा किसी से दस हजार रुपया ले रहे थे - आई मीन टेन थअउसेंड रूपीज?'

[...]

[...] मम्मी जोर-जोर से कह रही थी - 'तुम्हें उस मिनिस्टर से उलझने की जरूरत क्या था? यू दोण्ट नो - वो कॉन्ट्रेक्टर, मिनिस्टर का आदमी है। एट लास्ट टेण्डर उसी को तो मिला। उसके थ्रू काम हो रहा था तो क्या तुम्हें नहीं मिलता कुछ? अगर मेरे ब्रदर बीच में नहीं पड़ते... तो वह मिनिस्टर का बच्चा कब मानने वाला था। तुम्हारा ये एज-पर-ला हम सबको ले डूबेगा।'

[...] मम्मी लगभग चीखती हुई बोली - 'मिकी-बैली तुम लोग अभी जाग रहे हो - डैमफूल। गो-इन-बेड!'

[...] ³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Cf. also L762 *Khīr*, 'Rice pudding', in which the poorer but generous mother's son uses 'mām' whereas the rich and stingy mother's son says 'mummy' (translation in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 156).

³⁹¹ L1113 by Jagdīś Kaśyap.

In this story the Anglicised atmosphere is conveyed through both the direct and the indirect speech. A nice example of how foreign words may be assimilated to the Hindi language is the usage of the term 'kānvenṭī' which makes the English noun 'convent' into a Hindi adjective by adding the adjectival ending -ī. However, on the level of direct speech, the protagonists' usage of English is shown as less innovative and rather simplified: grammatically wrong or incomplete English sentences ('mummy... not come... so far', 'go-in-bed') leave the reader with a sense of critical disrespect of the speakers: the impression conveyed is that they use Anglicisms at any cost - even in expressions for which appropriate Hindi formulations exist - without, however, mastering even the basic grammar. This is further fuelled by the fact that one of the boys, Mickey, switches to English in order to emphasise the meaning of his utterance: '[...] das hazār rupayā [...] - I mean ten thousand rupees?'

The examples show how the laghukathā employs English vocabulary to unmask and criticise particularly the modern Westernised Indian mentality. Like the English words themselves, persons associated with their usage are considered alien to the indigenous culture.³⁹²

Colloquial Hindi

Unlike Sanskritic, Perso-Arabic and English vocabulary, colloquial Hindi wording is used mainly in the direct speech of the protagonists. It serves first of all to characterise and identify individual speakers, either as uneducated and crude or simply as the 'common man' whose case the laghukathā writers want to present before the reader. Through the employment of colloquial language the common man is given a 'voice' in the literal sense of the word, his oral diction and expressions being truthfully echoed in the literary medium of the laghukathā. Colloquial lexis is therefore seldom characteristic of an entire laghukathā's style; in the form of direct speech it can be incorporated into a text of any stylistic appearance. A colloquial syntax on the other

³⁹² The writers follow a trend that can also be detected in other modern Hindi genres. Kriṣṇā Sobtī's short story *Na gul thā, na caman thā*, 'There was neither flower nor garden', for example, illustrates how a Westernised Indian woman - wearing e.g. a 'blouse', 'clips', 'powder' - appears like an alien element, especially to the more traditional woman who orientates herself by conventional Indian norms. In: Sobtī, *Bādlom ke ghere*, pp. 146-150.

hand may well be central to the overall style of a text. As seen in the discussion of the *laghukathā*'s 'normal' Hindi, ellipses and inversions are used regularly, resulting in a non-formal style.

But even within the direct speech of the protagonists the degree of colloquialisation may vary from text to text. Most *laghukathās* are content with merely showing the stray phonetically spelled word of everyday language or featuring exclamations, thereby de-formalising, simplifying and at the same time enlivening their protagonists' diction. Some texts, however, use a more strongly colloquialised style: they also adjust their protagonists' grammar and sentence structure to the level of colloquial speech or even dialect, introducing, for example, faulty, reduced or regional grammatical constructions and phrases, as e.g. 'hamārā se' (substitution of the genitive for the simple oblique 'ham'), 'ham jāegā' (employment of masculine singular endings for all kinds of grammatical subjects) or 'kāhe na calāb' (Bhojpuri for 'kyom̄ na calūmgā'). Chatterji calls this kind of language 'Bāzār Hindī' or 'Hindusthani of the masses ... a Protean speech, differing more or less from Khaṛī-Bolī grammar in the different tracts of northern [...] India'.³⁹³ He elaborates: 'It is a debasement or simplification of Hindi-Urdu [...]. It has reduced the grammar in some essential matters; and in vocabulary, idiom and grammatical forms, it is frankly modified by the [...] local languages.'³⁹⁴ However, only very few texts show a strong predominance of this kind of colloquial speech. In the following some examples of the various degrees of colloquialisation will be given.

The simplest employment of colloquial speech - the usage of individual colloquialisms scattered through the text - is used in a large number of *laghukathās*. Its primary function is to de-formalise the direct speech and decrease the distance between the reader and the protagonists by making their speech less literary and elaborate and more lively and natural. However, a characterisation or social identification of the speakers by means of colloquialisation is only achieved when more than individual

³⁹³ Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Indo-Aryan & Hindi: Eight Lectures Originally Delivered in 1940 Before the Gujarat Vernacular Society, Ahmedabad, Calcutta 1969* (2nd revised and enlarged edition), p. 170.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

expressions are used. In the *laghukathā Mrtyubodh*, 'Presentiment of death'³⁹⁵, for example, colloquial wording is limited to the two exclamations *are!* and *arī!* and the usage of 'vo' for 'vah'. Yet, the writer paints a vivid picture of the various protagonists by letting them also use colloquial idioms, as e.g. 'Ab cār din se yahām baiṭhkar makkhiyām mār rahe hairm' (Now we've been sitting here swatting flies for four days already). Compared to this, in the *laghukathā Apamān*, 'Insult', which has been quoted earlier as an example of situation- and protagonist-related code-mixing, the direct speech of the slum dweller shows a stronger element of colloquialisation and therefore characterises the speaker more distinctively as lower class:

[...] 'आ जाती है, झोला लटकाए । अरे तीन मील चलकर पानी लाने का परी तौ जाने । हियां, पीने को पानी लाने में ही ससुरी कमर टूट जानी है, नहाने को ऐय्याशी कउन करे । कोई पूछो उनसे ।'. [...]

In a similar fashion the policeman in the *laghukathā Akāraṇ*, 'Groundless' exhibits a certain roughness when he shouts 'Hujūr! Ī sasurā vo hī hai .' (Boss, this sonofabitch, it's him.) and the poor man in *Sattar bhāḡ sāt*, 'Seventy divided by seven' reveals his lack of education, amongst others, by his pronunciation of the phrase 'doctor saab' as well as the employment of the wrong gender for the feminine word 'chavi' and the omission of the oblique case before the postposition: 'Hām ḡaḡdar sāb, yah merā phephrā kā chavi.' (Yes, doctor saab, that's a picture of my lung).³⁹⁶

The unmasking aspects of colloquial speech become even more blatant where a protagonist's diction consists entirely of dialect. The *laghukathā Nīti*, 'Policy' illustrates this point aptly:

'च्यों इन नीचन कूं सर माऊं चढ़ाय रए औ । वैसेई चांद पै नाचतु हैं । अब इन्हें पढ़ा-लिखाय कै का कलट्टर ई बनाय द्योगे । हमाई तो...' नम्बरदार बहुत गुस्से में थे । विधायक जी हरिजनों के टोले में एक स्कूल खुलवा रहे थे । इसी सिलसिले में वे नम्बरदार के यहाँ आये थे । नम्बरदार ने अपने गुस्से को बिलकुल नहीं छिपाया ।

'आजादी क्या मिली सबरे सेग्गा-मुग्गा जवाहरलाल ई बन गये ।' उन्होंने विधायक जी से साफ कह दिया कि यही हाल रहा तो इस बार 'बूथ कैपचरिंग' में वे कोई मदद नहीं करेंगे । सालों ने खेत में काम करने में सौ नखरे कर दिए हैं ।

³⁹⁵L2046 by Sukeś Sāhni (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 94-95).

³⁹⁶L2083 by Anvar Śamim and L2609 by Mati Upādhyāy.

उनका इलाज सिर्फ जूता है । लेकिन आप लोग रोक देते हैं कि हमारे 'सालिड वोट' हैं । अब इन्हें पढ़ा लिखा कर और सत्यानाश कर दो हमारा ।

विधायक जी ने मुस्कराते हुए नम्बरदार को शांत किया । उन्होंने समझाया, 'जब बैल मस्ता जाता है तो क्या करते हो ? बधिया कर देते हो न । हम भी यही कर रहे हैं । बे पढ़े-लिखे गांवार को तुलना में पढ़ लिखे को संभालना ज्यादा आसान होता है । समझे न । तुम्हारी जूतागिरी बराबर चलती रहेगी । 'नीति' को समझो । जहाँ गुड़ काम कर जाये, वहाँ जहर का इस्तेमाल नहीं करते । समझे ।' लगा कि नम्बरदार काफी कुछ समझ गया हैं ।³⁹⁷

The ironic last sentence and the truthful presentation of the village headman's own rustic diction go hand in hand when it comes to ironising his high-flying arrogance towards the harijans. His lexis and pronunciation, as transcribed in his direct speech, reveal him as being himself badly educated and uncouth. This impression is emphasised by the contrast between the headman and the MLA's speech. Although the MLA uses an easily intelligible Hindi - short sentences, a largely Hindi and Perso-Arabic vocabulary, metaphorical rather than theoretical explanations - his linguistic pattern is more refined than the headman's. Besides, the MLA's constant inquiry whether the headman has understood his arguments ('na?', 'samajhe na?', 'samajho!', 'samajhe?') gives further impetus to the idea of the headman's dullness. In this text colloquialisation, i.e. the imitation of 'spoken language', is used, above all, in its capacity of showing the speaker's true colours.

In other laghukathās, however, the 'language of the people' is used in favour of the common man: colloquial speech is not meant to ridicule or ironise a protagonist but to characterise him or her 'neutrally' and thus bring him closer to the reader. In *Jāgrti ke baṛhte kadam*, 'The forward march of awakening',³⁹⁸ for example, the sympathy of the narrator lies with the servant who defends himself against the hectoring manner of his master. The servant's Bhojpuri diction and colloquial pronunciation is echoed in his defensive speech before his employer:

[...] 'ठाकुर साहब ! जमाना बदल गईल ! हर आदमी के काम अलग-अलग हो सकेला । बाकिर इज्जत तो सबके बराबर ह । जमींदारी तो कब के चल गईल । बस ! हम तो अपने के प्यार के खातिर कबहीं छोट-मोट काम से परहेज ना कइनी । पर, अब हमरा से ई सब ना होई ।'

³⁹⁷ L69 by Vedprakāś Amitābh.

³⁹⁸ L1866 by Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā.

The two last examples stand out from the average *laghukathā* in so far as they do not simply intersperse individual colloquial words or expressions but lend an authentic voice to protagonists who do not speak 'High Hindi'.

However, there are, very rarely, texts to be found which consist of colloquial speech throughout.³⁹⁹ For such texts Hansen's characterisation of the colloquial register in Renu's oeuvre is especially valid: 'spelling according to sound forces the reader to mouth the words [...], leave the security of the printed page and enter an oral universe'.⁴⁰⁰ *Laghukathās* of this kind do not offer the reader a linguistic 'resting place' like other texts whose interpolations of colloquialisms are only part of a familiar literary language; they demand the reader's full attention from beginning to end. Characteristically, these texts tend to be entirely dialogic, thus corroborating both the argument that colloquial diction is used predominantly in the direct speech of the protagonists and the supposition that the dialogic text possesses more immediacy and authenticity.⁴⁰¹ The writers' demand for a 'language of the people' in order to reflect the ordinary man's reality is therefore met more fully in such texts. Although it seems surprising at first sight that they are rarely to be found, the competitive position of the *laghukathā* in the newspaper environment and the fact that reading a text consisting of unconventional grammar and phonetically spelled language demands some effort on the part of the reader, explains the exceptional status of excessively colloquialised *laghukathās*.

Summary

The analysis has shown that the *laghukathā* does not restrict the usage and mixing of different register. In accordance with the writers' claims that the *laghukathā* should aim at an easily intelligible language which reflects the reality of the common man, the large majority of the texts relies on a plain and clear Hindi and makes standard use of Sanskritic and Perso-Arabic vocabulary as demonstrated in the examples

³⁹⁹ E.g. *Garīb kī mām*, 'Mother of the poor', by Citrā Mudgal, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK2*, pp. 182-183.

⁴⁰⁰ Kathryn Hansen, 'Renu's Regionalism: Language and Form', in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XL, No. 2, February 1981, p. 278.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. section 4.4.1 'Outer form', pp. 133 f.

Ādmī, Dṛṣṭi and *Niśān*. This goes hand in hand with a clear syntactical style. Explicitly artistic rhetorical embellishments are seldom found.

Two basic types of deviations from this pattern of ‘normal’ Hindi can be found.

Firstly, a formalisation of syntax and especially diction may occur: corresponding to the theme (politics, administration) or setting of a text (e.g. a courtly environment), a more strongly Sanskritised language may be employed, e.g. for the sake of ironising the respective protagonists or situations, creating an emotional distance between the reader and a protagonist who either uses or is described by a (pseudo-) ‘intellectual’ vocabulary, or producing an atmosphere of authenticity, e.g. in an administrative environment. The second possible type of deviation is the incorporation of colloquial diction or English vocabulary into a text. Both registers serve to characterise the protagonists rather than formalise or de-formalise the diction; they are therefore rarely found leaving an imprint on the text’s general style. While the employment of English often ironises the protagonist and his or her situation, colloquial diction is primarily a characteristic of the protagonists’ direct speech and is used either ‘for’ or ‘against’ the speakers, optionally unmasking them as crude or lending an authentic voice to the ordinary man.

Finally, it has to be emphasised that the employment and mixing of the various codes depends on whether they are used in direct or indirect speech. The narrators of the *laghukathā* tend to use a slightly more formal language than the protagonists; the narrators’ usage of colloquial sentence structures like inversions and ellipses is often counterbalanced by the employment of longer sentences, a more complex syntax or a more elaborate diction. A predominantly informal language is used by only approximately a third of the narrators. The protagonists’ voices, on the other hand, are clearly dominated by informal language: 90% of the speakers use an informal or colloquial Hindi as opposed to only around 10% with a formal diction. This underlines once more the *laghukathā* writers’ striving for authenticity and for a lively and easily communicable diction. A marked style of language is used to draw the reader into the action and to emphasise the conflict between the protagonist - the common man - and the antagonist, the world around him. Thus, by mixing different codes, the concept of

the dualistic world view which characterises the laghukathā is reflected on the linguistic level.⁴⁰²

4.5.2 Stylistic modes and tones

Next to ‘language’ the second stylistic field of major significance is what can be called the ‘narrative modes’. In Western criticism four different modes of narration are usually distinguished: description, report, speech and comment, ‘the staple diet of the short story and the novel’, as Bonheim says.⁴⁰³ In laghukathā criticism a theory of modes does not exist as such, yet, the theoretical importance attached to at least two of these modes becomes clear in the frequent mentioning of the ‘descriptive style’ (varṇātmak / varṇanātmak śailī, vivaraṇātmak śailī) and the ‘speech style’ or ‘dialogic style’ (bhāṣaṇ / bhāṣaṇātmak śailī, kathopakathan śailī, saṁvād / saṁvādanātmak śailī). The remaining two modes, report and comment, are also mentioned in the critical debate but are held significantly less important. How far they play a role for the laghukathā will be seen later.

Another ‘modal’ or ‘tonal’ style frequently mentioned is the ‘narrative style’ (kathātmak śailī). The importance of the narrative aspect for the laghukathā has been mentioned earlier and is stressed throughout the critical debate.⁴⁰⁴ Narrativity, however, is not a category easily established as there are no general characteristics that have been agreed upon as touchstones. This tone will therefore be described later with reference to the modal analysis of the laghukathā.

A question which arises when discussing ‘modal’ or ‘tonal’ styles is how far a single mode or tone can be seen as determinative of a text’s style. Generally it can be said that the four aforementioned modes appear ‘in concert’: ‘Even the shortest of story forms ... tends to use all of the chief modes of narrative’ declares Bonheim in a statement which is also valid for the laghukathā.⁴⁰⁵ Modes which can be identified

⁴⁰² Cf. section 4.4.2 ‘Protagonists’, p. 123.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Helmut Bonheim, *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story*, Cambridge 1982, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, p. 138.

⁴⁰⁵ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, pp. 1 and 37 ff.

not as characteristic of whole paragraphs but only on the word- or phrase-level may therefore be called 'imbedded forms'.⁴⁰⁶ In the following, a text has to show a clear dominance of the respective mode in order to be called stylistically 'descriptive' or 'dialogic'.

Another interesting aspect of the modal analysis is that the combination and extent of mutual inclusion of modes may change, not least according to the literary taste of the period. According to Bonheim, in contemporary, i.e. 20th century Western literature, speech has gained popularity over description, moralistic comment is taboo and report, too, 'is preferred in the dress of ... speech'.⁴⁰⁷ It will be seen to what extent the laghukathā complies with these yardsticks of 'modernity'. In the following, first of all the manner of employment of the individual modes and then their combination in the laghukathā will be analysed.

Speech

Of the four modes established in Western criticism, speech is the most significant for the laghukathā. Not only do around 90% of the texts contain direct or indirect speech, but the dialogic or speech style is also considered exceptionally important by the majority of the laghukathā writers and critics. Bhagīrath, for example, calls the dialogic style (*samvād śailī*) the most powerful (*sabse saśakt*) style of the laghukathā, and Agravāl and Sonī emphasise that the dialogue arouses curiosity and interest (*utsuktā, jijñāsā, rocaktā*) in the reader.⁴⁰⁸

The reason for the critical concern with especially *direct* speech lies in the fact that the employment of this submode has significant influence on various areas considered important for the laghukathā. Three of these areas have been discussed earlier: the writer's choice of speech as the dominating mode has a strong impact, firstly, on the presentation of the text to the reader in such a way that his interest is awakened (through the outer form), secondly, on the kind of involvement the text demands

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śilp aur śailī...', p. 132; Agravāl, 'Laghukathā: āmne-sāmne', p. 83 and Sonī, 'Laghukathā: paribhāṣā...', p. 83.

from the reader, namely a rational rather than an emotional participation (through the narrative perspective) and, thirdly, on the presentation of the protagonists in an immediate and authentic way (through the employment of particular registers). Bonheim draws attention to two further aspects - the authorial presence in and the dynamism of the text - when he notices a shift of techniques in modern literature 'away from an at-arm's-length authorial depiction (description) and authorial discussion (comment) to a use of the more dynamic modes, especially the submodes of speech'.⁴⁰⁹ Sonī, too, points out the dynamic qualities of speech when he says that a good dialogue helps to push the action forward ([sahī saṁvād] kathā ko gati dene merī sahāyak hot[ā hai]).⁴¹⁰ Speech in direct connection with authorial involvement, however, is not mentioned in the laghukathā debate.

According to Bonheim, speech, unlike other modes, is an easily identifiable textual element, clearly marked by elements like *verba dicendi*, quotation marks, the present or continuous tense, the use of the first or second person, incidental mode-switching indicators (e.g. new paragraphs, the use of capital letters, italics etc.) and the shift of perspective, tone or style register.⁴¹¹ As demonstrated earlier, indirect speech forms like interior monologue or free indirect discourse are of minor significance in the laghukathā context whereas direct speech plays an important role for the genre.⁴¹² Laghukathās written in the dialogic style, i.e. texts consisting of pure or nearly pure dialogue, have been shown to make a somewhat fragmentary but at the same time immediate and authentic impression as far as the representation of the protagonists is concerned. Furthermore we have seen that they force the reader to concentrate on the message because diversions like description or comment are lacking. Imbedded speech, on the other hand, does share the characteristics of immediacy and authenticity, but being a part of a text largely consisting of other modes, it also serves to quicken the pace of parts of the action and add a sense of vivaciousness to the text.

⁴⁰⁹ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 20.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Sonī, 'Laghukathā: paribhāṣā...', p. 83; other aspects, like the role of direct speech for the indirect characterisation of protagonists and for the identification of place and time of the action have been discussed earlier in the sections 4.3.2 'Protagonists', p. 112, and 4.3.3 'Space', p. 124.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 21.

⁴¹² Cf. section 4.4.4 'Points of view', pp. 173 f.

An example which illustrates the dynamic and quickening effect of imbedded speech in a text is the *laghukathā Lāin*, 'Queue':

Queues for rations, queues for kerosene, queues for buying gas, queues for buying things from the shops, queues for buying tickets at the bus stand, the station, the airport. Everywhere queues and more queues.....

In the blazing sunlight a long queue had formed in front of the gas store and everybody was waiting for their turn. At a snail's pace the queue was becoming shorter from the front, but from the back it was getting longer twice as fast.

Suddenly a police inspector came with five soldiers, and they left with five cylinders of gas, and in the same way came now a motorist, now a civil servant, and having used their influence on the gas seller, they all left with cylinders of gas.

Mahesh had been standing in the queue for about six hours, and getting bored he said to his friend Ramesh: 'Friend! We won't get any gas like this. Several times I have had to return disappointed and empty-handed.'

Ramesh: 'So?'

Mahesh: 'We have to do something.'

And suddenly Mahesh sneaked away, pretending to have to go for a pee; out of sight he let a fire-cracker off on the ground. As soon as the people heard the noise panic broke out, 'a bomb... run.... run... run...!'

Then, some moments later, Mahesh and his friend Ramesh were first in the queue.⁴¹³

The story starts with pure comment or 'stopped' pace and then moves along fairly slowly through several stages of description until the pace slightly begins to accelerate with a paragraph of report ('suddenly...'); yet, a 'fast' pace of action is achieved only when Mahesh addresses his friend for the first time in the story in direct speech. Interrupted only by a short element of report ('and suddenly Mahesh sneaked away...'), the action then quickly comes to a close; the earlier presented fairly static situation is exchanged for highly dynamic action.⁴¹⁴ The text closes with a static description ('then...') which corresponds to the dénouement on the level of the plot. The example shows that imbedded direct speech not only accelerates but also invigorates particular parts of the action in correspondence with the storyline.

As to the question of whether the frequent use of speech elements indicates the modernity of the *laghukathā*, it has to be said that in the context of Indian literature a fair amount of imbedded speech seems to be regularly used in traditional story-telling as well as in the oral presentation of stories. It therefore appears to be primarily the

⁴¹³ L410 by Īśvar Candra.

⁴¹⁴ Bonheim calls description and comment the 'static modes' and report and speech the 'dynamic' modes; cf. e.g. *Narrative Modes*, p. 38.

choice of a distinctively dialogic style which indicates a modern appearance of a text as does the rare use of indirect speech forms like interior monologue or stream of consciousness. As far as imbedded speech is concerned, only a presentation of speech elements without the usual marks as e.g. reportorial *verba dicendi* or quotation marks seem to be definitely 'modern'.⁴¹⁵ We have seen examples of this purely dialogic style in the *laghukathās* *Cayan*, 'Election' and *Dṛṣṭi*, 'Viewpoint'.⁴¹⁶

Description

While the significance of direct speech and dialogue is unanimously acknowledged for the *laghukathā*, opinions about the descriptive elements in the genre differ widely, with writers and critics disagreeing about the very question of whether description in the *laghukathā* is permitted at all. Thus, Kiraṇ or Jain, for example, advocate the usage of descriptive elements in the *laghukathā* under the condition that they should not dilute or inflate the text and its message, and Bhagīrath and Copṛā caution against 'unnecessary description' (*anāvaśyak varṇan*) or 'an inflation of descriptions' (*varṇātma sphīti*)⁴¹⁷; Sonī, on the other hand, flatly rules out these approaches, reminding his readers of the justified connection between a text's formal brevity and the amount of descriptive elements: 'The *laghukathā* does not have the capacity for descriptions...'.⁴¹⁸ Śrīvāstav makes a similar statement but argues that the level of descriptivity is connected not to the length but to the generic nature of the text: 'A *laghukathā* may be six or even ten pages long but it must not be of descriptive inclination. ... [it is] today's modern *kaḥānī* which has very much adopted descriptive inclinations, whereas the *laghukathā* is far removed from this feature.'⁴¹⁹

Bonheim, when defining 'description', first of all proceeds from a very basic level: 'Description presents something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted, weighed or measured'.⁴²⁰ He then argues that in order to provide relevant touch-

⁴¹⁵ In order to make a final decision in this matter a more detailed analysis of the usage of modes in Hindi literature since the beginning of modern Hindi prose writing would be necessary.

⁴¹⁶ L5 and L637 (translations in sections 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 76, and 4.3.3 'Space', p. 126).

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Kiraṇ, 'Kathā-lekhan...', pp. 12-13, Jain, 'Hindī *laghukathā*...', p. 15, Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā: śilp aur śailī...', p. 131, and Copṛā, 'Laghukathā: racnātmak viśiṣṭāem', p. 75.

⁴¹⁸ Sonī, 'Laghukathā: paribhāṣā...', p. 84.

⁴¹⁹ Śrīvāstav, 'Laghukathā: ek avalokan', pp. 97 & 99.

⁴²⁰ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 24.

stones for the literary critic several types of description need to be determined, classified according to the form, object or function of the descriptive element.

As to the form, i.e. the length of the descriptive passage, Bonheim states that one can distinguish between 'expository' description which characterises whole paragraphs or even entire texts and 'fused' description which is 'worked into passages of other modes at the word or phrase level'⁴²¹. In the *laghukathā* context this distinction is highly significant, on the one hand, because it forms the basis for most critics' and writers' acceptance of only a limited amount of description in the *laghukathā*, and on the other hand because the question of whether the *style* of a text may be called descriptive is closely related to the quantity of descriptive elements. Corresponding to the critical opinion, the majority of *laghukathās* contain descriptive elements only in the 'fused' manner as for example in sentences like 'A soldier approached me and having shone *the sharp light of a torch* over my face he grabbed my wrist *forcefully* and shouted *loudly*...' or 'As soon as I had set foot into his house to teach I smelled the *sweet smell* of rice-pudding' (my emphases). Imbedded descriptive elements like these can be found in around 70% of *laghukathās*, whereas expository descriptions - or, in Copṛā's words, 'an inflation of descriptions' - remain the exception. It can be said that the 'descriptive style' is not usually an option for the *laghukathā* writer: there are hardly any texts which are visibly dominated by this mode.

In order to understand the *laghukathā* writers' manner of employing the descriptive mode the two other types - object- and function-orientated description - have to be considered as well. As to the object, Bonheim lists place, person, time and thing as possible items of description. These may be depicted or named in terms of their looks or attributes, their position in 'space' or their mutual relationship. As far as the *laghukathā* is concerned, in the majority of texts descriptive elements refer to persons and things (in around 65% and 50% respectively), whereas places are described in only approximately 45% of the texts and time in around 30%. This underlines the fact that the *laghukathā*'s interest is focused on man's condition in society rather than in time and space. Even where things are delineated, the depiction mostly serves to further describe the protagonists and their circumstances, as for example in the

⁴²¹ Ibid.

above-quoted laghukathā *Apamān*, ‘Insult’, which reveals the sari of a poverty-stricken girl as ‘dirty’, thus emphasising her situation of need. Attributes of this kind have earlier been classified as ‘secondary typifying aspects’ which are consciously and artfully employed to characterise or typify a protagonist.⁴²² Descriptive elements which are used in such an allusive way furthermore serve to convey necessary ‘facts’ to the reader with a minimum of words.

As to function as a third possible criterion for the investigation of descriptions, Bonheim cautions against using functional categories like the decorative and explicative or symbolic description, because they rely on the ‘subjective evaluation’ of the critic and are therefore not easily applicable.⁴²³ Yet, in the laghukathā context a rough determination of the function of descriptive elements seems nevertheless useful because the laghukathā writers and critics themselves refer to the question of the ‘necessity’ (āvaśyaktā) of description. The provision of a ‘scenic composition’ (dṛśya-samyojan), for example, is considered superfluous by Kiraṇ, as is ‘a heavy burdensomeness’ (atirikt bojhiltā) of description which would weaken the impression of the message on the reader.⁴²⁴ Descriptive elements seem to be allowed as long as they support the direct conveyance of the message. Description for the sole sake of ‘decoration’, is not acceptable, just as ‘language for the sake of language’ is generally rejected. This corresponds largely with the use of descriptive elements in the texts: in almost 90% of the laghukathās, descriptions seem to be employed in their explicative or symbolic function. In the laghukathā *Loktantra*, ‘Democracy’, for example, a villager’s hands are described as ‘bones covered with skin’, thus identifying him as a poor and starving man. Decorative descriptions, on the other hand, are to be found in only around 30% of texts, mainly as solitary imbedded forms.⁴²⁵ Most of these decorative elements take the form of figurative descriptions like ‘the canes were dancing [on his back]’ or the elliptic delineation of a riot about to unfold ‘like a storm rising at sea’. In most cases their aim is to enforce the effect on the reader by emphasising a certain mood on which a text may rely in order to produce a shocking effect. Another

⁴²² Cf. section 4.3.2 ‘Protagonists’, p. 112.

⁴²³ Cf. Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 25.

⁴²⁴ Cf. Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Kathā-lekhan...’, p. 13.

⁴²⁵ The sum of the percentages of texts with descriptions exceeds 100% because a text may contain both decorative *and* explicative or symbolic descriptive.

means which is employed to that effect is irony. Both, figurative descriptions and irony, will be addressed in more detail in the chapter on rhetorical figures.

Comment

As to the mode of comment, the critics and writers seem to be rather unconcerned. The only definite statement about the usage of comment is made by Kiraṇ who says: ‘...the laghukathā writer does not provide any judgement of his own about any protagonist’s behaviour ... he simply grasps [the protagonist’s] state of mind and presents it to the readers straightforwardly.’⁴²⁶ This corresponds with the earlier-described attitude of writers and critics that the laghukathā author does not provide solutions or remedies to problems, but simply presents them in the texts which then impress the reader’s mind with the shocking effect of the message. We have seen, however, that the title may be used as a commentary but since it is not part of a stylistic analysis of the body of the text it does not play a role for an analysis of the modes. Whether the employment of an ironical or satirical tone may provide a means of commentary is not discussed in the critical debate but will be seen later in this analysis.

According to Bonheim the characteristics of comment are ‘evaluative modifiers, generalizations not imputed to one of the fictional characters or judgments using a fairly high level of abstraction’.⁴²⁷ Modern fictional literature, Bonheim argues, tends to avoid comment, especially at sentence or paragraph level; if employed at all, comment is nowadays mostly used in its easily identifiable imbedded form, i.e. at the word or phrase level.⁴²⁸ This complies with the usage of comment in the laghukathā: only around 40% of texts contain comments and the average amount of commentary passages per text lies at approximately 1.5%. The mode of comment does not appear to be considered an appropriate and necessary means of expression by the laghukathā writers. This corresponds furthermore with the general critical opinion that one of the distinctive features of the laghukathā is that it has left behind the didactic and commenting nature of its antecedents. While the creator of didactic tales, according to

⁴²⁶ Ś. Kiraṇ, ‘Kathā-lekhan...’, p. 13.

⁴²⁷ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 30.

⁴²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30 & 31.

R.K. Śarmā, aims at instructing his readers or propagating his own opinion, the laghukathā writer simply wants to *reflect* and *present* (bimbātmak vidhi se prastut karnā) some viewpoints of life.⁴²⁹

Comments in the laghukathā are therefore not just employed sparsely but are usually also concerned only with the protagonists, objects or actions of the plot. Remarks on the general state of affairs and the provision of a moral are avoided unless they are used as deliberate and playful allusions to didactic genres.⁴³⁰ Next to the ironisation of passages which will be discussed later, the laghukathā writers present the reader with comments in various ways. One possibility, for example, is the use of inverted commas in order to qualify a word as in *Rogī zamīn*, ‘Sick earth’⁴³¹: the apostrophised presentation of the ‘house’ (ghar) indicates the gross understatement of this term which - as it becomes clear later - describes a huge mansion; at the same time the apostrophes adds a notion of disapproving acknowledgement of this fact by the narrator. In other texts comments are provided indirectly, e.g. by using condescending metaphors: in *Apamān*, ‘Insult’⁴³², for example, the civil servant - explaining the reason for her visit - is said to ‘start rattling off her tape’ (raṭā raṭāyā ṭep śuru kar diyā), the phrase clearly implying criticism from the narrator. Finally, comments may occur undisguised. In *Āmne-sāmne*, ‘Opposite’⁴³³, for instance, the narrator begins his explanation of the episode he has just related with the words ‘The irony is that...’ (viḍambaṇā yah hai ki...), thus openly uttering his personal evaluation of the scene and at the same time distancing himself from the action by taking the outward viewpoint of an onlooker; in *Niṣṭhurtā*, ‘Cruelty’⁴³⁴, the narrator takes up the commentary title in the last line when he remarks ‘Only the soundless, cruel, black night remained’ (ab šeṣ thī sunsān, niṣṭhur, kālī rāt), thereby again providing the reader with a scathing interpretation of the incident. The latter example has an especially strong effect because it offers itself to be read as a reflection of the inner condition of the parent and the narrator’s comment at the same time.

⁴²⁹ Cf. R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī laghukathā*, p. 28; also section 2.2.1 ‘Ancient and mediaeval antecedents’, p. 18.

⁴³⁰ Cf. for example L2596 *Ek laghukathā*, ‘A laghukathā’ by Ravīndranāth Tyāgī.

⁴³¹ L2386 (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84 -85).

⁴³² L141 by Sumati Ayyar.

⁴³³ L812 (translation in section 4.4.3 ‘Title’, p. 170).

⁴³⁴ L1676 (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84).

Report

The reportorial mode as understood in Western criticism is explicitly addressed only by two writers, Ś. Śarmā and R.K. Śarmā, who acknowledge and reject it respectively. Ś. Śarmā paraphrases report as ‘normal descriptive method’ (sādhāraṇ varṇan paddhati) and explains: ‘...some incident or protagonist is described in such a way that only the basic sense is conveyed. ... In this method the writer confines himself to giving a rough account of the outline form of the content which is to be presented.’⁴³⁵ R.K. Śarmā, on the other hand, opposes this attitude: ‘The laghukathā is not only an account of an incident, it also contains a fair amount of feelings and symbols.’⁴³⁶ Other references interpret report or ‘reporting’ as related to or imitative of the journalistic ‘reportage’ which is seen as too momentary (tātkālik) or lifeless (nirjīv) to be appropriate for the laghukathā.⁴³⁷ Although a connection between ‘report’ and ‘reportage’ suggests itself because both focus on what is or was ‘happening’, the emphasis of the journalistic genre lies more on a seemingly reliable and matter-of-fact transmission of information, unlike the characteristics of report as outlined in the following.

Bonheim determines report as ‘marked by its use of action verbs, usually by the past tense and by the introduction of time-markers’.⁴³⁸ Unlike description, which deals with the objects in their relation to *space*, report relates actions *in time*. Thus, ‘Martha stood in the doorway’ is classified as description, whereas ‘Martha got up and stood in the doorway’ may be seen as report.⁴³⁹ The line between description and report, however, can be difficult to draw. Often report is intertwined with embedded descriptive elements, as in the following sentence from the laghukathā *Bagnakhe*, ‘Claws’⁴⁴⁰, in which the descriptive mode is indicated through italicisation: ‘When I came into *the air-conditioned room No. 1* today, a *bald hairless* man was sitting in a *biggish* swivel-chair, rocking back and forth.’ (Āj jab maiṁ air condition room number ek meṁ ghusā to ek gañjā khalvāt ādmī baṛī sī ghūmnevālī kursī par

⁴³⁵ Ś. Śarmā, ‘Laghukathā śilp...’, pp. 117-118.

⁴³⁶ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindī Laghukathā*, p. 30.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Ś. Śarmā, ‘Laghukathā...’, p. 117 and Bhagīrath, ‘Laghukathā: śilp aur śailī...’, p. 133.

⁴³⁸ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 22.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁴⁰ L246 (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 78-79).

baithā jhūl rahā thā.) Although the time-marker ‘when’ clearly prepares the reader for an action to follow, the sentence is dominated by descriptive elements. Furthermore, the bald man’s activities, namely ‘sitting’ and ‘rocking back and forth’, could for their lack of real ‘action’ equally be seen as a descriptive passage. Bonheim’s declaration that, regardless of the definition of the terms, there will always exist phenomena which cannot be clearly assigned to one or the other mode thus has to be borne in mind when dealing with the reportorial mode.

Next to speech, report is the most important mode in the laghukathā, accounting for an average of 35-40% words per text (similar to speech). The seeming lack of critical interest in report despite its significance is nevertheless comprehensible given the fact that report is the least obtrusive of modes. While texts governed by speech, description or comment stand out stylistically from the average text, report as a mode does not catch the reader’s attention. Yet, a dominance of the reportorial mode has a strong impact on the text: it increases the level and speed of the action - more things are happening which also makes it easier for the text to be re-narrated. In terms of style, however, one would refer to expressions like ‘dynamic’, ‘quick’ or even ‘narrative’ rather than ‘reportorial’ or ‘reporting’. Often, style characterised by report tends to be graphic and concrete and is characteristic of emotionally expressive literature. A strong reportorial element, thus, may lend a laghukathā a more dynamic and personal tone.

A good example for the change of tone going hand in hand with the change of mode is the earlier-quoted laghukathā *Vijñāpan*, ‘Announcement’⁴⁴¹. It has been pointed out that the text consists of two main parts which differ in terms of content, structure and style. An expository and as we can now say largely descriptive passage - introducing the reader to the governmental announcement - is followed by a short part which contains the only action of the plot: a reportorial paragraph informs the reader of a man’s putting up posters and dying. The two imbedded descriptive elements in this paragraph - ‘poor’ (*garīb*) and ‘a winter’s shivering night’ (*sardī kī thīthurtī rāt*) - can be said to have a mainly explanatory function although the hypallage of the participle ‘shivering’ assumes a rhetorical and thus decorative character. This case ex-

⁴⁴¹ L2691 (translation in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, p. 160).

emphasies how laghukathā writers - although they do not deal with the topic theoretically - employ the mode of report, be it consciously or unconsciously, to communicate the message: the usage of report may emphasise particular points by enlivening them or quicken the pace in order to raise suspense.

On the other hand report may consist of simple and short statements like 'he said' or 'I answered', thereby often stating the obvious unless further amendments are made, e.g. in the form of adverbial phrases like 'laughingly' or 'with a sigh'. Interestingly, the laghukathā does not make much use of these kind of 'paddings' except when they are consciously used as a stylistic means. In the laghukathā *Śer*, 'The lion', for example, the constant recurrence of the phrases 'I said', 'he said' etc. (*mairṇne kahā, usne kahā*) serves to emphasise the repetitive character of the actions - again and again animals appear and deliberately make their way into the lion's mouth, again and again the first-person narrator, unable to understand, asks them for their reasons. In the majority of text, however, only such activities are reported to the reader which are not obvious from the direct or indirect speech in the text and thus need pointing out. In correspondence with the writers' claims superfluous wording is avoided not only with respect to description but also in the reportorial mode.

*'The modes in concert'*⁴⁴²

The examination of the usage of the different modes has shown how they are evaluated and used by laghukathā writers. It will now be interesting to see how these modes are combined and what this means for the writers' main target, the laghukathās's effect on the reader. As indicated earlier, laghukathā writers tend to use all narrative modes: more than a third of the texts employ all four modes, and around a further quarter employ all except comment. As to the average number of texts in which particular modes occur, comment is the least represented mode with an average of around 40% of laghukathās which contain commentary elements; report, on the other hand, is found in around 90% of the texts as is speech. With an average 80%, descriptive elements are included in almost as many texts as report and speech, although their percentage per text is considerably lower: most laghukathās are domi-

⁴⁴² Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 37.

nated by report and speech, each accounting for an average of 35-45% of the text, compared to around 25% and an almost negligible percentage of 1-2% of description and comment respectively. Although these results may vary from text to text, they show clearly that laghukathā writers give report and speech preference over description and comment, a tendency which has also been claimed by Bonheim for modern Western prose literature.⁴⁴³ In the laghukathā context these preferences can be interpreted in three ways.

First of all, the choice of report and speech as the dominating modes must be seen as a choice for a dynamic rather than a static style. It has been demonstrated above how speech as well as report serve to quicken the pace and emphasise the element of action; direct speech in particular makes the impact on the reader more immediate. A laghukathā dominated by report and speech is more interesting for the reader than a text characterised by ‘boringly’ slow expository description and moralising comment. This effect is of considerable value given the competitive newspaper and magazine environment. The laghukathā is contrived as an easily and quickly perceivable text.

The second interpretation of the writers’ preference for report and speech has been mentioned in the discussion of ‘comment’: they intend to demarcate the laghukathā clearly from its early didactic antecedents. By relying on the reportorial and speech modes, the laghukathā writer withdraws to the background of the text and opts for a lower level of mediation than that found in older prose texts: prose examples from Sanskrit bodhkathās to Premchand’s idealist realism show that these texts used to depend more strongly on descriptive and commenting elements. Bonheim identifies comment and description as modes of high mediatory value, as opposed to report and speech which ‘convey about as weak a sense of mediation as can be achieved this side of the theatre performance’.⁴⁴⁴ However, description can also be seen ‘in a middle position’, as Bonheim argues, ‘showing more or less mediation according to how it is

⁴⁴³ Cf. above, p. 202.

⁴⁴⁴ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 40; Immediacy - gained by means of employing direct speech without reportorial elements, direct speech as the opening of a text, or speech forms like free indirect discourse - has been shown earlier as an aid for enforcing the effect of the text on the reader. Cf. section 4.4.1 ‘Outer form’ on the discussion of the dialogic laghukathā, p. 132 ff., section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’ on the ‘beginning and end’ of the laghukathā, p. 159, and section 4.4.4 ‘Points-of-view’, pp. 173 f.

handled'.⁴⁴⁵ Generally it can be said that description indicates the presence of a writer more strongly the more it relies on elaborate rhetorical figures like metaphors or similes, such as 'the flower of love and affection' (pyār-dulār kā phūl); simple descriptive phrases like 'with the head bent' (sir jhukāye) do not suggest the writer's artistic involvement as openly. Less mediation and evaluation require the reader to undertake these steps himself; instead of ready-made morals the reader is presented with thought-provoking - since unexplained - fictional situations.

Finally, the laghukathā's inclination towards report and speech provides a useful indicator for a demarcation of the genre from lyrical texts or 'prose poems' which are difficult to distinguish on other textual levels. The sample contains several short laghukathās which offer themselves to be read as lyric rather than narrative prose texts. The reason for this may be seen on the basis of a modal analysis. An example is the laghukathā *Aisā ākās*, 'Such a sky', which falls into the content category of 'contemplations':

I am standing in the park. The park is transparent. The sky, showering a reddish blueness, is bent down like a benediction.

Such a sky, is a perception, is a poem.⁴⁴⁶

Although the outward form of the laghukathā prepares the reader for a prose text, the contemplative content, the embellished language and last but not least the dominance of description (line 1-2) and comment (line 3) suggest a poetic reading. The fact that speech and report are altogether missing furthermore accounts for the total lack of narrativity - 'nothing is happening' - the text does not present itself as a 'kathā' in the strict sense of the word. A similar impression is gained by reading the earlier quoted laghukathā *Asaphaltā*, 'Failure'⁴⁴⁷, which is governed by description (the first line could be interpreted as report but must be seen as a borderline case). Both, *Aisā ākās* and *Asaphaltā*, are characterised by a high level of explicit subjectivity and a static rather than dynamic appearance. Mediatory elements - embellishing description and personal commentary - have a firm hold on each text, and although the respective writers present their evaluations and descriptions through a first-person

⁴⁴⁵ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 40.

⁴⁴⁶ L616 by Kṛṣṇakānt Dube.

⁴⁴⁷ L1174 (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 101).

narrator the element of artistry is strongly felt when reading the texts. Furthermore, both texts display a distinct lack of action or incident, a fact which leads to the last aspect to be discussed in the context of modes, narrativity.

The 'narrative' tone

Although a narrative 'style' (*kathātmak śailī*) is only promoted by two critics, Bhagīrath and R.K. Śarmā, narrativity is seen as an inherent feature of the genre, not least because of the name *laghukathā*. Śrīvāstav, for example, states: 'Kathā derives from the stem 'kath', which means that it is the principle of narration which gives the *laghukathā* its literary significance' and Bhagīrath, too, says that 'the principle of narration' (*kathā tatva*) rules the *laghukathā*.⁴⁴⁸ The principle of narrativity, thus emphasised by a large number of writers and critics, is a recurring topic within the *laghukathā* debate. Furthermore, different aspects of narrativity have proved significant in the earlier analyses of shape (presentation of a straightforward narrative discourse as opposed to the dialogic, verse or letter form), plot (narrativity as the basis for a plot, identification of different narrative phases or strands), and time (narrative vs. narrated time).⁴⁴⁹

The investigation of modes, finally, allows a closer look at the nature of the narrative aspect as such. We have seen earlier that part and parcel of the *laghukathā* as a narrative genre is the fact that it tells the reader a story with a temporally structured plot. The *laghukathā* relies on incidents either happening or being revealed *in stages* - the basic formula for all narration, in Günther Müller's words, being an 'and then'.⁴⁵⁰ Considering Bonheim's aforementioned definition of report, Müller's formula provides us with the connecting link between the nature of report and narrativity: for both principles time markers like 'then', 'when', 'soon now' etc. are indispensable features, even if not openly expressed. Both, a narrative text and a text employing the reportorial modes, rely on a *sequence* of events which can be re-narrated one after the other; the two features can therefore be seen as inseparably related.

⁴⁴⁸ Śrīvāstav, 'Laghukathā: ek avalokan', p. 96; for 'kathā tatva' cf. Bhagīrath, 'Laghukathā kā śilp...', p. 108.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. pp. 131 ff., 138 & 147 ff., and 143.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Lämmert, *Bauformen*, p. 21.

From this it follows that report, although not explicitly discussed in the *laghukathā* debate, plays a highly significant role for the genre in two respects. Not only is it used according to its modal nature to enliven or quicken a plot or to lower the level of mediation, it furthermore ensures that the *laghukathā* is first and foremost a narrative genre. A similar ‘narrative’ effect may be brought about by the employment of speech, especially in its direct form: this, too, guarantees a sequential order of the plot, presenting one speech act after the other. Correspondingly, the few texts published under the heading ‘*laghukathā*’ which contain no or significantly few reportorial or speech elements often remind us of lyric genres: their impact on the reader is of a subtler and more emotive kind than the awakening effect intended by most *laghukathā* writers. The determination of such lyric texts as *laghukathās* is therefore questionable, but because they are published as belonging to the genre they cannot be ruled out as *laghukathās* but must be considered as atypical examples.

Summary

The analysis of the modes has shown that the large majority of *laghukathās* is based, above all, on the employment of report and speech. In correspondence with the general critical opinion the *laghukathā* may thus be identified as a genre firmly relying on the principle of narrativity. However, it has also been established that descriptive elements as well as comment are acceptable parts of the *laghukathā* as long as they are presented in small doses. Accordingly, texts dominated by the latter modes tend to take a rather lyric appearance. In general, the *laghukathā* writer restricts himself to the least mediatory style so as not to present the reader with an easily digestible (and forgettable) story. Withdrawing to the background, the writer complies with modern taste for ‘seemingly unmediated fiction’⁴⁵¹ and, at the same time, fits his texts into the often matter-of-fact environment of the newspaper.

4.5.3 Rhetorical figures and tropes

The examination of diction and syntax has already demonstrated that writers and critics theoretically and practically reject an ornamental and embellishing style, and

⁴⁵¹ Bonheim, *Narrative Modes*, p. 40.

demand a plain and straightforward ‘functional’ diction rather than an ‘ostentatious’ or ‘intellectual’ ‘language for the sake of language’. Nevertheless, some rhetorical devices are explicitly recommended in the critical debate and can also be found in the texts. Several writers - Kaśyap, Chaudharī ‘Abz’ and Bhagīrath amongst others - advocate for example a ‘symbolic style’ (pratīk śailī, saṅketik śailī), either in order to ‘direct the reader’s attention towards a generalisation [of the problem]’⁴⁵² or to allow a greater terseness in the texts. Ś. Śarmā states in this context: ‘Instead of turning to unnecessary expansion the laghukathā writer should [focus on] concentration and the symbol (ekāgratā evaṁ saṅket)’⁴⁵³, and R.K. Śarmā says that since there is no room for ‘ornamentality’ (ālaṅkāriktā) in the laghukathā’s language, the symbol (pratīk) gains more importance than imagery (bimb)⁴⁵⁴. Niśāntketu, too, refers to the laghukathā’s lack of capacity for expansion (vistār) and embellishment (alaṅkaraṇ) when he points out its ‘metaphoric’ or ‘allegoric manner’ (rūpak-vidhān).

The most important and at the same time most disagreed upon figure of speech mentioned in the debate is the ‘ironic’ or ‘satirical style’ (vyaṅgya śailī, vyaṅgyātmak śailī). While some critics and writers - e.g. Muṅgerī - see irony or satire as a regular component of the laghukathā, others consider them merely as one possible choice amongst many styles. Niśāntar sums this opinion up, saying ‘Irony [or satire] may be used as a helping device in order to generate a needle-like piercing pungency [...] but [it] is not an indispensable part [of the laghukathā]’.⁴⁵⁵

In the following the rhetorical devices in the laghukathā will be investigated against the background of the explicit rejection of embellishing language. Next to the rhetorical figures which affect language without substantially altering the intended actual meaning and wording (e.g. anaphoras, comparisons, ellipses or onomatopoeia), the most important tropes - words or phrases which are not used in their actual meaning but in their figurative sense - will be examined in some detail; because of their significance in the critical debate the focus will be on metaphors, symbols and irony.

⁴⁵² Aśok, ‘Laghukathā lekhan...’, p. 93.

⁴⁵³ Ś. Śarmā, ‘Laghukathā...’, p. 120.

⁴⁵⁴ R.K. Śarmā, *Hindi laghukathā*, p. 41.

⁴⁵⁵ Niśāntar, ‘Laghukathā: racnā-vidhān...’, p. 242.

Rhetorical figures

The rhetorical analysis of the *laghukathā* will deal with two kinds of rhetorical figures, namely word figures (e.g. anaphoras or pleonasms) and figures of meaning (e.g. comparisons or parentheses).⁴⁵⁶ Interestingly none of the rhetorical devices is mentioned in the *laghukathā* debate, although several are employed on a regular basis. We have seen that ornamentality on the level of diction and syntax is generally avoided. Similarly, the majority of word figures in the *laghukathā* are used in a manner that allows the emphatic and invigorating effect to be brought about without revealing its artistry. The most common figure to be found is the repetition of words or expressions. Firstly, central phrases may be repeated in a leitmotif-like manner throughout the text as, for example, the term ‘netāji’ (leader) in *Agnimukh*, ‘Spitfire’, or ‘nakhūn’ (bloodless, fingernail) in *Bagnakhe*, ‘Claws’.⁴⁵⁷ The latter example also involves a play on words when the narrator says that ‘Blood was glistening on his (bloodless) nails.’ (Nākhūnom par khūn camak rahā thā.). A certain self-reflexiveness of the text is to be discerned here, the reader is made aware that he is *presented* with someone’s perception, expressed in such a way as to impress. This awareness is not only due to the above-mentioned pun but also to the initial sentences which address the reader directly with the phrases ‘didn’t you say...’ and ‘will you listen....’. However, the writer himself retreats to the background because these artistically obvious features are put into the first-person narrator’s mouth. This method of presenting rhetorical devices as part of the protagonists’ or narrators’ speech in order to distract the reader from the artistic involvement of the author will be met with more often. Only when no narrator is present does decorative language point back at a clear literariness of the text.

⁴⁵⁶ Two more rhetorical figures are generally distinguished: grammatical figures (e.g. elisions, inversions or ellipses) and phonetic figures (e.g. alliterations or rhymes), but they are very rarely to be found in the *laghukathā*. It has been said earlier that inversions and ellipses are employed frequently either to de-formalise the language or to emphasise particular aspects. In the *laghukathā* context, however, neither of the two figures assumes a particularly ‘literary’ form - both are mainly employed as markers of colloquial speech and therefore go rather unnoticed as they do not strike the reader as rhetorical devices. Because of the exceptional status of ornate grammatical and phonetic figures in the *laghukathā* they will not be addressed in this analysis.

⁴⁵⁷ L2348 by R.K. Sonī and L246 (translation of the latter text in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 78-79).

A second kind of repetitive word figure found regularly in the *laghukathā* is the *conduplicatio*, i.e. the literal repetition of phrases or sentences. In texts like *Āmne-sāmne*, ‘Right opposite’, or *Niṣṭhurtā*, ‘Cruelty’⁴⁵⁸ the echoing of the sentences ‘Rikshaw! Can you take me...’ and ‘Give me ten paisa...’ respectively emphasises the repetitiveness of the situations presented. The fact that these sentences are voiced in the direct speech of the protagonists has again the effect of presenting this rhetorical device as natural wording rather than embellishment. The fact that the use of repetitive word figures by an absent third-person narrator is more likely to result in self-reflexiveness and obvious artistry is illustrated in the following text *Tīn kāl*, ‘Three tenses’:

There was a poor man.
There was a rich man.
There is a poor man.
There is a rich man.
There will be a poor man.
There will be a rich man.
This was a story, this is a story, and this will be a story.⁴⁵⁹

In this story repetition is central to the message, it can even be seen as being *part* of the message, namely that the divide between rich and poor is a never-ending story. The monotonous rhythm of this *laghukathā* - brought about by the echoing of almost identical phrases - stresses the hopelessness of the situation. Especially in combination with the poem-like presentation of the text the repetitions convey a strong element of literariness to the reader. Likewise the initial sentence of *Lāin*: ‘Queues for rations, queues for kerosene, queues for buying gas, queues for buying things from the shops [...]’⁴⁶⁰; it presents itself as a commentary rather than a part of the plot itself and thus points to the writer behind the text and his *intention* of conveying the hopelessness of the situation.

As far as figures of meaning are concerned, most forms used in the *laghukathā* fit into a text without producing the impression of explicit craftsmanship. Interjections and exclamations are used regularly, mostly to enliven direct speech and make it more authentic, as are the three dots ‘...’, a very popular - sometimes excessively em-

⁴⁵⁸ L812 and L1676 (translations in section 4.4.3 ‘Title’, p. 170, and 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84).

⁴⁵⁹ L2690 by S. Varmā.

⁴⁶⁰ L410 by Īśvar Candra (translation in section 4.5.2 ‘Stylistic modes’, p. 204).

ployed - means in modern Hindi literature of indicating an adjournment of thinking or speaking. The latter are used on the one hand to imitate a protagonist's or narrator's hesitation, e.g. for reasons of shock or thoughtfulness. An example is *Naṅgī duniyā*, 'Naked world', where the indication of the pauses in the interior monologue of the agitated first-person narrator lends his speech authenticity and liveliness: '...No ...no... I too have made a mistake in what I said. He certainly is mad. Don't you see... how he rips the clothes off his body... how he stands there without clothes... absolutely naked!'. On the other hand the three dots, when employed at the end of a clause - especially at the end of a story - may leave the rest of a sentence hanging in the air, thereby encouraging the reader to complete it in his mind and feel an after-effect even when the story is finished.⁴⁶¹ The *laghukathā Aslī rūp*, 'True form', gives a good example: the inability of the individual in a modern urban society to communicate is neatly echoed in the last sentence of the text 'Inwardly he launched into a vulgar barrage of abuse, but because of the artificial tongue in his mouth he could not speak. It seemed to him as if this tongue...'⁴⁶². The three dots represent and emphasise the speechlessness.

A more complex figure of meaning is the comparison. Especially against the background of the *laghukathā* writers' and critics' call for unembellished language the usage of conventionalised comparisons has to be distinguished from unconventional or poetic forms. Conventionalised usages - e.g. for memories to come 'like a flash of lighting' (*bijlī sī*), to leave the house 'like an arrow' (*tīr kī tarah*), or to stand still 'as if frozen' (*[māno] jaṛ ho jānā*) - are unlikely to leave the reader with the impression of a technically refined literary phrase. Even comparisons which are not necessarily part of everyday usage - such as 'The teacher is standing there like a conqueror, his chest straight.' (*adhyāpak vijetā kī tarah sīnā tāne kharā hai*) - may fit into an informal and unpretentious diction as long as the comparison is a familiar one.

A totally different impression, on the other hand, is conveyed by comparisons which relate unusual objects or aspects to each other, thereby adopting a rather poetic and literary tone. Expressions like 'He began to let his character to rot like manure'

⁴⁶¹ Cf. section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 163.

⁴⁶² LI 145 by Śarāfat Alī Khān (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 88).

(apne caritr ko khād kī tarah saṛānā śūrū kar diyā) or ‘Stones and bricks were hovering in the air - like black kites and crows...’ (Havā mem̄ iṅṅem̄-patthar - cīl aur kauvor̄m̄ kī tarah maṅḍarāne lage...) clearly point to the artistic nature of a text, especially if the wording lends the phrase a poetic tone, as in the latter example. However, in the laghukathā artistic comparisons like these are seldom employed for their own sake or for the sake of adornment, they usually serve to create a particular atmosphere as in the latter example or to express aspects graphically rather than theoretically, thereby aiding comprehensibility. In the context of comparisons, therefore, literary refinement does not necessarily equal embellishment.

In general it can be said that the rhetorical figures used in the laghukathā are not employed in order to embellish the diction or lend it a literary quality. Usually they serve to emphasise aspects of the plot - thereby helping to clarify the message - and thus fit into the non-formal plain diction of the laghukathā. Unlike several of the tropes which are to be discussed in the following, rhetorical figures as used in the laghukathā seldom require an intellectual effort on the part of the reader but disclose their meaning straightforwardly. Their usage complies with the writers’ and critics’ demand for a non-intellectual style.

Tropes

Tropes are characterised by an incongruence between wording and meaning: therefore their figurative sense has to be intellectually deciphered by the reader or listener. Of the figurative tropes discussed in the laghukathā context, metaphors and allegories are the ones most prone to an artistic and thus difficult usage. Therefore, corresponding to the examination of comparisons, a distinction has to be made between conventionalised, idiomatic and unconventional, artistic tropes. While the former tend to illustrate, enliven and explain circumstances, the latter - when brought to the extreme - may result in a hermetic and manneristic style. The fact that writers and critics strongly reject an intellectual diction which might obscure the lucidity and straightforwardness of the message suggests the usage of conventional or at least easily decipherable tropes. The following analysis will show to what extent these demands are met.

Metaphors

Metaphors are basically easily intelligible tropes because the relation between the actual word and the substituted term or image is naturally evident. However, depending on the degree of alienation, the figurative potency may be raised to a level of distinct artistry which can make the process of deciphering more demanding. Therefore a distinction has to be made not only between habitual and unconventional metaphors but also between different degrees of metaphorical alienation.

The most commonly used habitual metaphors are those which are naturalised to the extent that their figurative quality is no longer noticed in everyday speech ('dead metaphors').⁴⁶³ In the *laghukathā* context around 50% of all metaphors are of such a habitual nature; examples are 'mīṭhī bāteṃ' (sweet words) or 'āṅkhorṃ ke sāmne dṛśya ghūmnā' (for a scene to wander before the eyes). Metaphors like these are part and parcel of a language and do not lend a *laghukathā* a stylistically marked appearance.

The second type of habitual metaphor is figuratively more marked but still easily decipherable: unfamiliar images are consciously employed but because of their closeness to the actual meaning of the replaced word or phrase they do not demand a special effort on the part of the recipient when it comes to 'reading' the metaphor. Thus phrases like 'deh dhūp meṃ cur jānā' (for a body to boil in the sun), 'ātmaviśvās kī lālī' (the glow of self-confidence) or 'aurat ko cākleṭ samajhnā' (to consider a woman a [piece of] chocolate) readily convey their meaning although they are not standard idioms. Besides, the non-familiarity of these metaphors makes the reader more aware of their figurative nature, they stimulate his or her graphic imagination. Thus non-familiarity combined with a certain degree of alienation or deviation from the replaced phrase has the effect of conveying nuances and connotations not usually associated with the original word - the metaphorical image gains an additional dimension.

⁴⁶³ 'Dead metaphors' are not necessarily clichéd. Only when a writer tries to use them as embellishing features do they become trite and banal, as is common in trivial literature. The *laghukathā*, however, employs 'dead metaphor' sparingly, taking advantage of their illustrative but 'discreet' nature.

This is also valid for the third type of habitual metaphor: again figuratively marked imagery is used, but the idiomatic alienation effect is so high that a reader not familiar with the respective expression can only guess its actual meaning. However, most of these images will be well known to the common Hindi speaker. Examples from the *laghukathās* are ‘akal par patthar paṛnā’ (‘for a stone to fall on the mind’, to be out of one’s head), ‘dekhnā ki ūrñt kis karvaṭ baiṭhtā hai’ (‘to wait and see on which side the camel lies down’, to wait and see how things turn out) or ‘hāth pīle karnā’ (‘to make the hands yellow’, to stain [a girl’s] hands with turmeric, i.e. to get her married). Because the idiomatic nature of such phrases belongs to everyday speech, they are unlikely to be considered as poetic or intellectually artistic. On the contrary, habitual metaphors help to make the respective aspects of a text more graphic and thus easier to comprehend.⁴⁶⁴ Another, recurring metaphor of this kind is the dancing of a ‘frenzied dance’ which refers to the popular myth of Shiva as Naṭarāja whose wild dance represents the destruction and recreation of the universe. As used in the *laghukathās*, the image is not only likely to evoke a concrete picture of the ‘Cosmic Dancer’ before the eyes of a reader familiar with the iconography of the myth but also it also lends the respective contexts a denser meaning. Hence, in the *laghukathā Naṅgī duniyā*, ‘Naked world’⁴⁶⁵, the turmoil caused by a ‘mad’ sadhu - described as ‘dancing in the streets... a frenzied dance’ - carries a notion of violence and madness into the scene but also puts it into a wider metaphysical context which points beyond the literal understanding of the text; this metaphysical nature is later in the text alluded to in the protagonist’s statement that ‘the whole world seems to be naked’. In *Akālgrast rište*, ‘Famine-stricken relationships’⁴⁶⁶, the Mirage’s ‘frenzied dance’ indicates death and destruction. Both texts use the phrase ‘tāṇḍav nṛtya’.

All in all, around a third of the texts of the sample make use of these last two kinds of metaphors which are figuratively more striking than ‘dead metaphors’, but because of either their familiarity or their perspicuity are still easily comprehensible. They are

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. the above-quoted *laghukathā Nīti*, ‘Policy’ (L69): in order to explain particular circumstances to a rather dull village headman, an MLA resorts to clarifying the situation metaphorically (translation in section 4.5.1 ‘Diction and syntax’, pp. 197-198). Cf. also L2394 *Hāthī aur savār*, ‘Elephant and rider’, by Śrī Tilak, where the metaphor of the human rider controlling the much bigger and more powerful elephant is used to illustrate the principle of tyranny for the reader.

⁴⁶⁵ L2238 by Siddheśvar (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 102).

⁴⁶⁶ L1967 by Vibhā Raśmi (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 96-97).

generally used to illustrate certain aspects of the text and to lend them additional deeper dimensions of meaning.

However, especially the latter type of metaphor also provides laghukathā writers with an opportunity for a particular play on words, namely the literal interpretation of the metaphor. This may, on the one hand, result in absurd or disturbing imagery, as for example in the metaphor ‘khūn pīnā’, ‘to drink blood’. In its figurative sense the phrase means ‘to bring about death’, ‘to cause dire suffering’ or simply ‘to cause non-stop harassment’, but in the laghukathā *Bheriye*, ‘Wolves’, for example, it is used in its literal meaning, thus resulting in a grisly image of cannibalism: a man resigns from his government job because he ‘can on no account drink the fresh blood of living people’ - the simple phrase ‘khūn pīnā’ is taken beyond its metaphorical meaning by adding the word ‘tāzā’, ‘fresh’. The image is then graphically amplified by the man’s observations that ‘everywhere outside one can see people... distorting their mouths... sticking their tongues out in order to drink blood...’, and becomes even more explicit when he asks the person who is going to replace him: ‘Tell me... would you like to drink human blood?’. Again the metaphor surpasses its own figurativeness, this time because of the supplemented adjectival phrase ‘ādmī kā’, ‘human’. The metaphorical harassment of the people by governmental bureaucrats thus becomes a realistic act of murderous destruction, emphasising the extent of the harm done.⁴⁶⁷

On the other hand the literal interpretation of metaphors can produce an ironic effect, as in the two texts *Avasarvādī*, ‘Opportunists’ and *Ek ām nagar kī sahityik gatividhiyam*, ‘The literary activities of an ordinary town’⁴⁶⁸. Bhagīrath, in *Avasarvādī*, exploits the aforementioned metaphor ‘to wait and see on which side the camel lies down’: ‘One couldn’t tell on which side the camel would lie down. What reliance [can be placed] on the camel of politics?’ (Ūmṅ patā nahīm kis karvaṅ baiṭhegā. Rājñiti ke ūmṅ kā kyā bharosā.) The author ironicises the metaphor by using part of the ‘raw material’ of the well-known idiom for a new figurative phrase which now has ‘the camel of politics’ as an agent, thus producing a catachresis. An even more

⁴⁶⁷ The laghukathā *Bagnakhe*, ‘Claws’ (L246), produces a similar image, even though the term ‘khūn pīnā’ itself does not appear. Cf. above, section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁶⁸ L245 by Bhagīrath and L2477 by Sūryabālā.

elaborate and thus more powerful example is given by Suryabālā in the satirical *laghukathā Ek ām nagar...* by exploiting the metaphor ‘āstīn kā sām̐p’ (‘a snake in the sleeve’, an enemy in the guise of a friend): ‘Governmental and non-governmental, permanent and temporary writers rolled up their sleeves and gave proof of their respective commitment. From some sleeves snakes emerged, which the opportunists crushed and then collected in order to make use of in times of crisis.’ The ironisation is on the one hand due to the fact that the metaphorical snakes are made into independent agents, they actively creep out of the sleeves which have been ‘rolled up’; on the other hand an ironic effect is achieved by the transfer of the components of the metaphor into a foreign context - the snakes can be killed and even ‘recycled’ by opportunists, supposedly to put them back into their own sleeves in order to appear as ‘friends’ although they are ‘enemies’. The phrase is no longer used as an image but as an actual incident, and so the metaphorical substance disintegrates.⁴⁶⁹ It is important to notice that irony of this kind only reveals its full potential to a reader who knows the underlying metaphor. It will be seen in the section on irony and satire to what extent writers make use of these and other means of ironising the *laghukathā*.

Next to these three types of habitual metaphors the *laghukathā* also occasionally makes use of a fourth type: the poetic metaphor which combines unconventionality and a high degree of alienation. Complex images like ‘to sacrifice every flower of love and affection’ (*pyār-dulār kā har phūl nyauchāvar karnā*), ‘to drain the fire of the heart from the mouth’ (*muñh se hṛday kī āg ulīcnā*) or ‘for blackness [i.e. shame] to be smeared on the slipped face of age’ (*umr ke sarakte cehre par kālīmā putnā*) are of a highly poetic nature, not least because they often use rhetorical figures within the figurative image, e.g. the onomatopoeic repetition ‘love and affection’ (*pyār-dulār*) or the hypallage ‘the slipped face of age’. Unlike the habitual metaphors, they lend a text or passage a lyric and emotional tone and tend to raise the reader’s awareness of the creative fantasy of the writer which stands behind the text. In compliance with the call for a straightforward and unembellished language, poetic metaphors are only employed in around a tenth of the *laghukathās*. Bearing in mind

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. also *Āstīn kā sām̐p*, ‘A serpent in the sleeve’, by Caraṅsirñh Amī, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK1*, p. 293.

the strong emotive potential of these metaphors it is not surprising that they can be found especially in categories which are either prone to an emotional content ('men and women', 'contemplations') or deal with abstract themes best illustrated in a figurative way ('philosophical questions'). In other content categories, poetic metaphors are rare exceptions.

All in all, around three-quarters of the *laghukathās* employ one or the other kind of metaphor. Of the different metaphorical categories, a majority of 90% can be seen as habitual metaphors while only around 10% are of a poetic and thus embellishing nature.

Allegories

The borderline between allegory and metaphor is often blurred. The main difference between the two tropes lies in the fact that the metaphor is based on the likeness between idea and image and thus reveals its meaning readily whereas in an allegory the relationship between image and meaning is arbitrary and therefore needs to be rationally deciphered by the recipient. Because the allegory replaces the 'general' with the 'particular' the reader has to re-translate the graphic image onto an abstract level in order to understand the message in its depth. Unlike the metaphor, the allegory addresses the reader's intellect rather than his emotions. If, therefore, the transposition of an idea into an allegorical image is exceptionally complex and demanding, the straightforward communication of the message which is so important in the *laghukathā* context may become difficult. Consequently, allegories are only to be found in around 15% of the *laghukathās*, be it as individual images of particular ideas (e.g. *Justitia* for justice) or in the form of allegorical stories, i.e. sequences of events or images illustrating an abstract complex of ideas.

Against the background of the allegory's potential for illustrating abstract ideas, it is not surprising that around 40% of all allegories in the *laghukathā* are employed in the content categories of 'state machinery' and 'philosophical questions', both of which focus on the communication of abstract concepts. Texts dealing with the state employ mostly allegorical stories, often representing the government and the princi-

ples on which it works through animal characters (cats, a lion, a scorpion, a monkey, dogs). Philosophical texts, on the other hand, make more use of individual allegorical images. Thus, in *Sabse barā sac*, for example, 'bread' (roṭī) eaten in times of hunger represents 'the ultimate truth' referred to in the title, in *Mukti*, 'Liberation', 'many little steps' stand for the relentless and unerring quest for spiritual as well physical liberation, and in *Khel khel merī*, 'Effortless', two children's 'effortless' game reflects life as it is for the common man - revolving around the daily routine of working, eating, rearing children - or, on a second level, a child's wise but at the same time naive approach to life as something 'effortlessly' manageable as if in a 'children's game'.⁴⁷⁰

Given the fact that writers and critics of the laghukathā insist on a high level of perspicuity and intelligibility, the significance some writers ascribe to the usefulness of an allegorical style - i.e. the employment of allegorical stories rather than individual images - is surprising. Yet, a closer look at allegorical laghukathās reveals that the writers sometimes - consciously or unconsciously - resort to explaining their allegories. An example from the sample is the earlier-quoted text *Bhraṣṭācār ke prati putr-moh*, 'The love for a son against corruption'⁴⁷¹: the allegorical equation of the relationship between government and corruption with a mother-son relationship is explained in the course of the text with the sentence 'Don't you see? The "government" has resolved on stopping the corruption *although it's her own son.*' (my emphasis). Other laghukathās offer interpretations of their allegorical content even more openly, as in the following text *Ākramaṇ*, 'Attack' by Śyāmbihārī Sirih 'Śyāmal', which is not part of the sample:

On the bank of the Ganges a huge peepul tree! Prosperous, flourishing! One day a vulture came flying from the west and sat down on the peepul tree. It liked the place and so it settled down there. From this moment the peepul tree suddenly became unhealthy.

Its leaves became pale and lifeless and began to fall. All of a sudden the flourishing peepul tree became languishing and tears began to drip down.

Later it became known that the 'peepul tree' was our 'Indian culture' and the 'vulture' the 'Englishness'.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ L547 by Harikṛṣṇa Datta, L2407 by Śrīnāth, and L2371 by Vikram Sonī.

⁴⁷¹ L1553 by I.K. Nāth (translation in section 4.3.3 'Space', p. 124 f).

⁴⁷² In: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK1*, p. 224.

Although this way of explaining allegorical stories to the reader seems to be somewhat clumsy, it nevertheless corresponds to the all-important demand for a straightforward communication of the message. Instead of intellectually challenging the reader, these allegories take an illustrative and rather metaphorical role. A situation, idea or concept is represented graphically and is thereby likely to produce a longer-lasting impact on the reader's mind. The riddle-like structure of many such *laghu-kathās* - the 'solution' of the allegorical 'riddle' being presented at the end of a text - further enforces the impression the image makes on the reader.

A second recurrent method of facilitating the understanding of allegorical texts is to formulate the allegorical image in such a way that the text and its message can be understood on an intuitive level without being intellectually re-translated. An example is the earlier-quoted text *Niṣṭurthā*, 'Cruelty'⁴⁷³. The last sentence 'only the soundless, cruel, black night remained' closes a story relating how a man's son dies because nobody is ready to give the few paise the man is asking for. Although the sentence can be understood on a literal level as the 'night' following the morning-afternoon-evening structure of the plot, two factors suggest an allegorical reading, namely the list of adjectives and the change of mode from neutral report and speech to rather subjective description and commentary ('cruel'). Apart from just being a 'black night' following a day, this night also represents the father's emotional condition, his desperation as well as the general darkness of such cruel human behaviour. By allowing such a double or even triple reading, the writer ensures that the fundamental message is communicated in any case, even if the allegorical level is not deciphered. Several such allegorical images are to be found in the sample.

Finally we find the writers using well-known allegorical material, i.e. mostly stories which are likely to belong to the common reader's general knowledge. By presenting the reader with these allegories - often as part of a wider plot - the writer relies on the connotations carried by the familiar stories which are part of an oral rather than written 'literary' tradition. Examples include the story of Gautama showing compassion for fish caught by a fisherman, the fable of a monkey cheating two cats out of a piece

⁴⁷³ L1676 (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 84).

of bread and the fox trying to get the crow's cheese.⁴⁷⁴ The last text plays a special role because, by using a familiar story in an unfamiliar way, the writer plays with the reader's knowledge and expectations.⁴⁷⁵ Another laghukathā that exploits the just-mentioned encounter between a monkey and two cats is the following text *Billiyām*, 'The cats':

Two cap-wearing cats received from somewhere the bread of freedom. Once again a quarrel ensued between the two about the distribution of the bread. After a fearful conflict it was decided that this time too a monkey should be made the mediator. By chance they met a monkey called 'Religion' in the street.

The rest of the story you all know.⁴⁷⁶

In this text the writer's playfulness extends to both levels of the story, the literal and the allegorical one, because the last sentence refers on the one hand to the allegory of the two cats and the monkey whose raw-material structures the text, and on the other hand to the abstract idea represented by this story, namely the partition of Indian and the religious fights overshadowing it. The reader is encouraged to complete the story on both levels.

All in all it can be said that allegories, in spite of their rather demanding intellectual structure, are used in ways that enforce the straightforward communications of the message. Images with a high degree of alienation are either often explained or are based on well-known allegorical material, thereby exploiting the allegory's proximity to the myth and its parabolic comprehensibility.

Personification

Several laghukathās make use of personification, both in its allegorical and non-allegorical form. Allegorical personifications are employed only very occasionally, a well-known image being the blindfold Justitia representing justice in the laghukathā *Talās khatm huī*, 'The search had ended'⁴⁷⁷. A less conventional and therefore more

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. L115 *Dayā*, 'Pity', by Pṛthvīrāj Aroṇā, L575 *Maim majbūr hūm*, 'I am helpless', by Rājendra Dhavan and *Alag rājya* (*Panir kā ṭukṛā*), 'A different rule (A piece of cheese)', by Jasbīr Cāvlā (translation of the latter text in section 4.4.1 'Outer form', p. 133).

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. sections 4.3.1 'Themes', pp. 89 f., and 4.3.2 'Protagonists', pp. 122 f.

⁴⁷⁶ By Amṛik Simgh Dīp, in: *Hams*, April 1995, p. 27.

⁴⁷⁷ L596 by Santosḥ Dīkṣit.

artistic and decorative allegorical personification is used in *Akālgrast rište*, ‘Famine-stricken relationships’: ‘The Mirage was dancing a frenzied dance before his eyes.’ (Mṛg-marīcikā netrom ke samakṣ tāṇḍav nṛtya kar rahī thī.) The image of the personified mirage dancing the metaphorical ‘frenzied’ and destructive dance can, on an abstract level, be read as the illusions created by society to blind and weaken the individuals and thus make them compliant with current norms. Presenting the mirage and its implications as an acting protagonist lends the idea a more threatening appearance than a theoretical treatment of the subject could have done.

Non-allegorical personifications, on the other hand, are mostly epitomised abstract ideas or emotional conditions. By being empowered to act as protagonists, the ideas gain in force, independence and liveliness and communicate the respective message much more directly. The laghukathā *Samjhautā*, ‘Agreement’, for example closes with the sentence ‘And Humanity began to sob.’ (Aur insāniyat subak uṭhī.), thereby first of all interpreting the events of the text as a crime against humanity and secondly raising the message on an emotional and personal level by creating in the reader’s mind the image of a disillusioned *person* ‘sobbing’ - a stronger image than a direct commentary could have produced.⁴⁷⁸ Several such examples can be found in the laghukathā, sometimes with the personified ideas as the only acting protagonists.⁴⁷⁹ All in all personifications are used in less than 10% of the sample.

Symbols

A symbol is an object, action or sign which ‘stands for’ something else, the relationship between the two - the symbol and the symbolised - being naturally evident as in the metaphor. Unlike allegories, symbols do not address the intellect of a recipient but affect his or her emotions, often aiming at deeper levels of consciousness: in the symbol the ‘general’ can be intuitively sensed in the ‘particular’, but it cannot and need not be rationally deciphered. This capacity of the symbol to carry a meaning

⁴⁷⁸ L2303 by Harinārāyaṇ Siṃh ‘Hari’.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. e.g. L1815 *Pālkī*, ‘Sedan’, by Someś Puri, L2396 *Kāmyābī*, ‘Success’, by Śrī Tilak (translation in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, pp. 150-151), or L2471 *Gatibhaṅg*, ‘Out of rhythm’, by Rośanlāl Surīrvālā, and also the laghukathās by Ś. Siṃh ‘Śyāmal’ in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKKI*, pp. 221-225.

which points beyond itself makes it especially important to the *laghukathā* writers and critics: the symbolic style is favoured because it can communicate a deep meaning and additional dimension but at the same time allows the writer to keep the text terse because the implicit symbolic value of objects and actions spares him superfluous descriptions. In the *laghukathā* a preference for a range of symbols of both traditional and modern appearance can be detected, but because of the large number of writers contributing to the genre a lot of individual usages of symbols are also to be found. In the following only the most important recurring symbols of the *laghukathā* will be introduced and interpreted.

Symbolic places

The *laghukathā* makes extensive use of various symbolic places. The symbolic meaning of the queue signifying the state's failure to provide for her people has been mentioned earlier.⁴⁸⁰ Other places which are more heavily laden with symbolism are interpreted in the following. Next to the house and its doors and windows, it is the train and the town in comparison with the jungle, which are of particular significance in the *laghukathā*.

The house is a space fraught with symbolic meaning in many cultures and cultural contexts. The house, first of all, offers shelter as a physical and mental resting-place, but it also secures and protects its residents or temporary visitors: 'Without it', says Gaston Bachelard, 'man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world.'⁴⁸¹

This notion of the house as a place of refuge is conveyed in several *laghukathās*, for example in *Ādhunik chātra*, 'Modern pupil'⁴⁸², where a desperate boy 'runs off home' (*ghar bhāgnā*); however, the larger portion of texts make use of the reverse situation, namely the desperation of people who have been deprived of

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. section 4.4.3 'Title', p. 170.

⁴⁸¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston 1994 (1st edition 1954), p. 7.

⁴⁸² L405 by Īśvar Candra.

their house and shelter. The *laghukathās Ādmī*, ‘Man’ and *Aisā bhī*, ‘Just so’⁴⁸³, for example, present situations in which young people are thrown out of their parental house, their banishment signifying not only deprivation of shelter but also deprivation of home.⁴⁸⁴ Expulsion, in such texts, is shown as the ultimate punishment, not least because it implies the loss of family ties: in Indian society especially, the house or home is not so much the individual’s as the family’s space. Often the house literally *is* the family, as some texts show in which ‘the house’ is metaphorically used for ‘the family’: a child is born ‘into a house’, a daughter is to be married ‘into a rich house’ etc. Thus, considering that in the Indian context it is primarily the family who ‘provides each person with his main link to the wider society’⁴⁸⁵, the loss of house and home symbolises deprivation of social and societal ties. This notion becomes clear in *Ājkal*, ‘Nowadays’⁴⁸⁶, which illustrates how the loss of house and home eventually means loss of honour and social status; the protagonist whose house and land have been unlawfully expropriated and who has thus become ‘homeless’ is no longer respected, he becomes a ‘beggar’, an out-cast.⁴⁸⁷ The house, therefore, is not only a space of private belonging, it is also a space of social and societal belonging - in the *laghukathā* context as well as in general.⁴⁸⁸ An image closely connected to the loss of house, home and social status is therefore somebody’s going ‘from door to door’ (*dar-dar*)⁴⁸⁹, usually associated with *sadhus* who wander around begging for alms. But while their renunciation of home is a deliberate choice, for the common man it means loss of his place in society.

Sometimes, however, the fact that the family is so closely identified with the house can also lead to a reversion of the positive and stabilising notion of the term: several *laghukathās* depict protagonists who dread their coming home because of the domestic situation awaiting them. The place of refuge may become a

⁴⁸³ L167 by Balrām and L1316 by Mālatī Mahāvar.

⁴⁸⁴ It is important to note that the Hindi term ‘ghar’ means both ‘house’ and ‘home’.

⁴⁸⁵ David G. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, vol. 1, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1970, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁶ L1747 by Devī Prakāś.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. also the *laghukathā* L637 *Dṛṣṭi*, ‘Viewpoint’ (translation in section 4.3.3 ‘Space’, p. 126).

⁴⁸⁸ As a place of *societal* belonging - identified as such by the outside world - the house is also a symbol of high status; The hut (*jhoprī*, *jhompṛī*, *jhoprā*), on the other hand, is usually a symbol of poverty and low status.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. e.g. L1747 *Ājkal*, ‘Nowadays’ by Devī Prakāś or L2471 *Ghatibhang*, ‘Out of rhythm’, by Rośānlāl Surīrvālā.

place of apprehension, with the protagonists anxiously ‘sneaking into the house’ (ghar meṃ ghusnā).⁴⁹⁰

Unlike the house, the ‘palaces’ (mahal) - or their modern versions, the mansion (havelī) or bungalow (koṭhī) - of the laghukathā often fail to provide its residents with a home. ‘In a palace’, Bachelard says, quoting Beaudelaire, “there is no place for intimacy”.⁴⁹¹ Thus, *Sabhya-asabhya*, ‘Cultivated-uncultivated’⁴⁹², contrasts a man residing in a bungalow with a sweeper living in a hut opposite. Both men are feeling unwell, but while the rich man longs in his heart for intimacy and care which are not available to him - instead hordes of incapable doctors are bestowed on him - the poor sweeper is being lovingly cared for by his wife. The estates or mansions of the laghukathā accommodate, above all, emotional coldness. But, being the places of the rich, they are also places of falseness and immorality. The contrast between the ‘good poor’ man and the ‘bad rich’ man finds its symbolic expression in the contrast between ‘palace’ and the ‘hut’: in the laghukathā *Gatibhaṅg*, ‘Out of rhythm’, Respect and Merit live in ‘a nice little house’ (choṭā sā ghar) whereas Power and Pride, with their children Arrogance and Terror, move into ‘the huge bungalow next door’ (paṛos kī viśāl koṭhī).⁴⁹³

Next to inhabitants leaving or returning to the house, the laghukathā presents us with various other good and bad things which enter and exit through doors and windows that are being opened and closed. As far as windows are concerned, it is sensations rather than physical objects that come in - e.g. a piercing stench or the light of a street lamp - and go out, as stolen glances at the outside world during a curfew or curious glances at some outside commotion. The manifold implications of opening and closing doors can be illustrated through a comparison of two laghukathās, *Avasar*, ‘Opportunity’, and *Mānavtā ke āge sab jhūṭhā*, ‘Before humanity everybody is a liar’. In both texts people stand outside houses and demand the doors to be opened, but while in *Avasar* the closed door is a means of protection for the protagonist inside the house, in *Mānavtā*... it is an instrument

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. L1097 *Pūt-kapūt*, ‘Son, bad son’, by Jagdīs Kaśyap, or L2387 *Rozī roṭī*, ‘Daily bread’, by Vikram Sonī.

⁴⁹¹ Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 29.

⁴⁹² L2214 by Śyāmnandan Śāstrī.

⁴⁹³ L2471 by Rośanlāl Surīrvālā.

of refusing protection to the person standing outside. *Avasar* goes even further: once the protective door has been opened, the malevolent persons from outside come in and the door closes behind them - the door has now become a prison-gate, it keeps the protagonist from escaping and the outside world from witnessing: ‘She heard a knock on the door and opened. She was facing a stranger, but when she tried to close the door, some young men pushed her inside. The door closed.’ Opening the door of one’s sheltering house can have dire consequences. Not so in *Mānavtā*..., where the situation is reversed: ‘...suddenly there was a knock on the doors of their houses. Again and again. Someone was panting, screaming, trembling with fear [...]. When they, by chance, opened the doors, they saw someone of another religion standing there. Their eyes met, they hesitated for a moment and then they hugged each other.’ Opening the door, in this text, means offering up one’s own space and its protectiveness to an ‘outsider’.

Another ‘place’ of symbolic meaning is the train - a hybrid object since it represents physical confinement and movement at the same time. People of very different provenance, of different gender, status and religion come together in the train compartment which - with its limited space - provokes social interaction between individuals who normally would not necessarily communicate with each other. What is more, travellers know that the encounter in such a situation must be temporary, which again might lead them to untypically harsh or simply provocative actions or reactions. Several *laghukathās* display indifference or disrespect between fellow travellers, presumably of varying status: in *Apnī-parāyī*, ‘Own and other’, for example, an urban protagonist speaks in an unjustifiably rude way to a rural traveller, and in *Asahyog*, ‘Non-cooperation’, some well-to-do travellers refuse to give their reserved but unoccupied seats to an old couple and thereby indirectly cause the old woman’s death as a result of her sitting in the draughty corridor of the train all night.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ L1589 by Rāj Kumār Nijāt and L791 by Devīprakāś Hemant; cf. also L2235 *Kāyar*, ‘Coward’, by Siddheśvar and L2302 *Sahānubhūti*, ‘Sympathy’ by Harinārāyaṇ Siṁh ‘Hari’, where similar reactions of indifference are to be found at a train station, also a place of coming and going and coincidental encounter. Cf. also Premchand’s short story *Naśā*, ‘Intoxication’.

In the *laghukathā Cītkār*, 'Scream'⁴⁹⁵, the train compartment plays a special role as a place of encounter between travellers of different religion at a time of communal unrest. The atmosphere in the compartment is tense, people are afraid and their feelings and reactions are marred by their respective experiences in the 'war', about which they speak in abrupt and disconnected sentences. The context of communal unrest and especially the aftermath of partition provide a background not only for *laghukathās* but also for short stories whose place of action is the train compartment. As stated above, the train is a place of undeliberate encounter and is, furthermore, in constant movement: it can therefore symbolically and literally bridge gaps or cross borders, but it can also travel through territories which are sensed as hostile or dangerous by the travellers.⁴⁹⁶ Fear, confined to a small compartment, is often shown as leading to crude excesses.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, the train's movement symbolises the uprootedness of the travellers. They are on the move because their homeland has been taken from them.

Finally, the moving train signals change, in the concrete as well as in an abstract sense: on a train journey back home from the nearby town an old man is told that his house has been burned down by rioters - for him this is a journey into homelessness - and for the above-mentioned old woman the train journey means a journey to death.⁴⁹⁸ But just as movement means progress - in a negative or a positive way - the hindrance of movement may symbolise the hindrance of progress: in *Jošīle javān*, 'Enthusiastic youths', some over-enthusiastic young men who derail a train are depicted as irresponsible and as indirectly impeding the progress of their village.⁴⁹⁹

The last spatial arrangement of importance for the *laghukathā* to be discussed here is the contrast between the town and the 'jungle', or 'culture' and 'nature': an artificial, man-made and 'cultivated' place is set against a natural and 'wild'

⁴⁹⁵ L79 by Añjanā Anil.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. the *laghukathā Āisbarg*, 'Iceberg', by S. Sāhnī, in: S. Sāhnī, *Daṛe hue log. Carcit laghukathākār Sukeś Sāhnī ki 51 laghukathāem*, New Delhi 1991, p. 95.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. for example Bhiṣma Sāhnī's short story *Amṛtsar ā gayā hai*, 'We have reached Amritsar', in: Bhiṣma Sāhnī, *Merī priya kahāniyān*, Delhi 1993, pp. 53-65.

⁴⁹⁸ L1191 *Khāmoṣī*, 'Silence', by K. Khurśid, and L1589 *Asahyog*, 'Non-cooperation', by R.K. Nijāt; cf. also L2771 *Maraṇ kāmānā*, 'Death-wish', by R. Yādav.

⁴⁹⁹ L288 by Citarañjan Bhārati.

place.⁵⁰⁰ This is done in two different ways: the town may, on the one hand, be depicted as being as 'wild' as the jungle, thereby bluntly questioning the concept of culture and society's social structures; on the other hand, the dialectics of *culture* and *nature* - *sanskṛti* and *prakṛti* - may be reversed: the uncultivated jungle is revealed as being more 'civilised' and especially safer than the 'cultured' town or city.

An example of the equation of town and jungle is the *laghukathā Nirjan van*, 'Lonely forest'⁵⁰¹, the title of the story giving the only clue to this identification. In the text the associations connected to jungle - wilderness and loneliness as it is uninhabited space - are transferred to the town. A woman is being robbed in her house and screaming for help, but her neighbours all find excuses for not helping her. Although surrounded by fellow-beings, she lives, as the title states, in a lonely jungle devoid of any kind of social responsibility and 'togetherness'. Another *laghukathā* draws the connection from the perspective of an especially fierce jungle resident, a vulture, associated with death and putrefaction. But not only is the vulture in this text revealed as a social being - the story features a curious vulture-son and a caring vulture-father - he is also deeply shocked by town-life. Having witnessed a riot, the young vulture asks his father: 'What, then, is the difference between the jungle and the town? There, the animals kill each other, here, the people have slaughtered each other.' The text is appropriately titled *Dūsrā jaṅgal*, 'Another jungle'⁵⁰².

The second way of dealing with the relation of town and jungle is the comparison in favour of the jungle or a 'natural' place in general: a protagonist who is afraid of the town and its inhabitants flees 'into the jungle'; a man manages to escape from the 'robbers' territory' into the 'town' only to be murdered and robbed there in the middle of the street in broad daylight; a leader starts thinking responsibly only after he has left behind his advisors and security forces and wanders off

⁵⁰⁰ It has to be noted that 'jungle' in the Indian context simply means an uncultivated and uninhabited woodland area, whereas in the Western cultural context the term is associated with land densely overgrown with tropical vegetation.

⁵⁰¹ L518 by Kamal Coprā (translation in section 4.4.2 'Inner form', p. 157).

⁵⁰² L555 by Yogendra Dave.

‘towards the park’.⁵⁰³ In *Lakṣmaṇ rekhā*, ‘Uncrossable line’⁵⁰⁴, the jungle is even endowed with almost classic idyllic features: Rama, Sita and Lakshman, in their exile in the woods, enjoy a secluded and tranquil happiness, residing in a hut made of leaves, living on roots and fruits and drinking the cool water of the rivulets. Nature, in these laghukathās, symbolises a condition not yet spoiled by the human race.

The town, on the other hand, stands for inhumanity and moral decline. Several laghukathās, even though they do not directly contrast town and nature, exhibit the town’s poor condition as a place and space for living: it is a place of riots and curfews, burning with the ‘fire of communalism’ on a seemingly regular basis; it is a place of crimes, attracting criminals and provoking criminal behaviour likewise - an astrologer comes ‘into a big city’ to cheat the people and a villager is warned ‘Be careful, there are petty-thieves in the town’⁵⁰⁵; it is finally a place of immorality - urban men are shown as lecherous and a young woman, when she comes into the city, betrays her sister.⁵⁰⁶ However, the city is also a place where one can get work: ‘When it was time, Gokharu went into the town to look for a job’.⁵⁰⁷ But, as the laghukathā *Pardesī pañkhī*, ‘Bird from abroad’⁵⁰⁸, shows, newcomers remain strangers in the town and eventually pay their tribute to it: ‘The tarmac of the big city had spread layer upon layer on Dhanesar’s body. He began to look like a black ḍhuss [?]. His hair turned white.’⁵⁰⁹

Symbolic objects

The list of inanimate symbolic objects used in the laghukathā is extensive. First of all, different items of food or drink are used to signify, for example, luxury (pomegranate juice) or well-being (milk and ghi); in many texts water is employed as a symbol of

⁵⁰³ L2659 *Śer*, ‘Lion’, by Asghar Vajāhat, L473 *Andhviśvās*, ‘Blind trust’, by Jasbīr Cāvla, and L577 *Ātmānubhūti*, ‘Self-perception’, by Santoṣ Dikṣit.

⁵⁰⁴ L1581 by Hariś Naval.

⁵⁰⁵ L1834 *Apnī karnī-bharnī*, ‘As you make your bed, so you must lie on it’, by Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, and L533 *Śahar-bāzār*, ‘Urban market’, by Maheś Darpaṇ.

⁵⁰⁶ L791 *Apnī-parāyī*, ‘Own and other’, by D. Hemant, L2298 *Bāhar se bhītar se*, ‘Outside, inside’, by Harinārāyaṇ Siṃh ‘Hari’.

⁵⁰⁷ L12 *Aur Jaik mar gayā*, ‘And Jack was dead’, by Balrām Agravāl.

⁵⁰⁸ L316 by K. Bhāratīya.

⁵⁰⁹ L2354 *Aslī gālī*, ‘Real abuse’, by Vikram Sonī.

life or human togetherness, for example when man's thirst bridges the gap between members of different religious groups. Other objects of high symbolic value are clothes: a torn sleeve identifies the wearer of a shirt as poor, a kurta-pyjama in contrast to a safari suit signifies a traditional attitude as opposed to a modern or Westernised one. A rather philosophical symbolic object which is repeatedly used is the mirror, standing for vanity - often in connection with indecency - or for introspection: several texts present protagonists in an argument with their reflection representing their bad conscience and self-reflexiveness. More easily decipherable symbols are the bridge as a connecting link between opposite parties, the wall or scar as symbols for partition, the mask symbolising deceit and hypocrisy, or different times of the day representing particular internal states of protagonists, e.g. morning for hopefulness and night for despair. All these and other symbolic objects are used in such a way that superfluous description or explanation is avoided. As with the places of symbolic value, some objects which are regularly employed are of particular importance within the laghukathā context and will therefore be outlined in more detail in the following.

One of the central symbols in the laghukathā is blood. The usage of the phrase 'to drink someone's blood' has been discussed in the section on metaphors.⁵¹⁰ In other laghukathās blood is used as a symbol of life and, in close connection with it, of death and destruction - the result of the loss or shedding of blood. In association with death, blood therefore often stands for violence, as in the earlier-mentioned text *Dūsra jāngal*⁵¹¹ which refers to a scene of urban riots ('Everywhere was blood') or in *Naksalī*, 'Naxalite'⁵¹², in which the first-person narrator hears a boy talking about a man having hunted and shot five Naxalites. The boy assumes the 'Naksalī' to be a big and dangerous animal but the narrator sees before his inner eye 'the faces of five poor landless farmers drenched with blood'. The destructiveness and inhumanity of scenes like these are emphasised by the image of the blood.

A more interesting notion is conveyed in texts where the writers play with the symbolic value of blood. Just as the literal interpretation of the metaphor of 'drinking blood' has resulted in the absurd image of on-going cannibalism in the administrative

⁵¹⁰ Cf. above (this section) p. 224.

⁵¹¹ L555 by Yogendra Dave, cf. above, p. 236.

⁵¹² By Anil Janvijay, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK1*, p. 260.

sector, the symbolic value of blood as life is exploited in several laghukathās in the image of people who are forced to sell their blood in order to survive. In the text *Roṭī banām khūn*, 'Bread alias blood', the symbolic meaning of blood is deepened by the equation of blood and bread, the latter standing for food or livelihood in general:

- Mummy, give me bread...
- Drink my blood...
- Blood?

Suddenly the mother took her son tightly in her arms. Tears came to her eyes.

- Yes, my son... blood... there is no difference between bread and blood. Ten days ago your father sold his blood and brought some bread home. Yesterday in the factory during the strike for his right to bread he shed his blood.⁵¹³

The interplay of the symbolic forces behind the story results in a powerful image: to the poor man bread and blood - the very essences of life - are not available at the same time, one is only to be had at the expense of the other, making survival impossible. A similar situation is presented in *Sac*, 'Truth', where a young girl is forced to sell her blood to buy medicine for her father who has become ill because he had to sell *his* blood.⁵¹⁴ Poor people are shown to be caught in a vicious circle. The latter text also introduces medicine as an object of symbolic value in the laghukathā context. Generally symbolising health and recovery, in the laghukathā medicine also always carries a notion of need and desperation. It is turned into a distinctly contemporary symbol, being associated with the condition of man in modern industrial society - a society which is supposed to provide a good health and educational system but in the laghukathā fails to do so. The laghukathā's protagonists cannot afford to buy much-needed medicine, they are shown to be driven into debts which have to be paid off over generations, as, for example, in *Mukti*, 'Liberation', where a young boy has to work as a bonded labourer to repay the money his father had borrowed to buy medicine⁵¹⁵. In other texts people - especially children, the future of the country - die because their relatives or parents cannot buy the necessary drugs, and several laghukathās depict medicine as a crucial part of the problems of families who are financially struggling. Medicine, i.e. health, in the laghukathā, is only for the rich; for the poor, health is an inaccessible luxury.

⁵¹³ By Surendra Sukumār, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKKI*, p. 104.

⁵¹⁴ By Devārṇśu Pāl, in: *Haṃs*, April 1995, p. 38.

⁵¹⁵ L2407 by Śrīnāth.

Several texts go even further in denouncing the condition of the poverty-stricken: not only are they too poor to live, they can also not afford to die, a situation illustrated through the symbol of the shroud (*kafan*). The shroud, first of all, symbolises death and grief, but it also stands for respect for the dead whose body is covered and prepared for the ‘last journey’. As a ritualistic item in the *rites de passage* the shroud not only plays a vital role for the family of the deceased, it also establishes a connection between the family and society to whom the dead body has to be presented. However, the poor people as depicted in the *laghukathā* do not have the means to even give a shroud to their dead: the earlier-quoted text *Niṣṭhurtā*, ‘Cruelty’, has already shown how a father can neither provide for his child in life nor in death⁵¹⁶ and in *Bhaṇḍārā*, ‘A meal for the holy man’⁵¹⁷, a father who does not have enough money to buy the medicine for his son has, after the son’s death, to decide between either buying a shroud or cremating his son at the ghat - a complete and proper funeral is beyond his means. Like medicine the shroud, bizzarely, becomes a symbol of luxury for those who are unable to afford it. Poverty denies the poor not only a decent life but also a decent death.

Rich people, on the other hand, are concerned with goods symbolising ‘real’ luxury which goes hand in hand with monetary wealth. Two symbols used in this context are the car and the mansion, both also demonstrating the connection between wealth and power.⁵¹⁸ However, where wealth is associated especially with a Westernised, new-rich style of living, a different catalogue of symbolic objects is introduced which forms also the background for many modern Hindi short stories.⁵¹⁹ Next to items like sofas, colour TVs or maxi skirts, the *laghukathā* employs two symbols in particular, namely alcohol - mostly whisky or wine - and Western style make-up, such as ‘imported powder’ or lipstick, to reveal the respective protagonists as new-rich. Both objects symbolise immorality and dissolution, they have the power to transform a person - through intoxication or in terms of appearance - into somebody who no

⁵¹⁶ L1676 (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 84).

⁵¹⁷ L989 by Jaypāl.

⁵¹⁸ For the mansion cf. above, p. 233; the effect the ownership of a car has on people is, for example, shown in the earlier-quoted *laghukathā Lāin*, ‘Queue’ (L410 by Īśvar Candra), p. 204; cf. also L917 *Parājit*, ‘Defeated’, by Mukeś Kumār Jain ‘Pāras’.

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Ram Darash Mishra, ‘The New Hindi Story’, in: Mahendra Kulasrestha et. al. (eds.), *Modern Hindi Short Story*, Delhi 1974, p. 258.

longer cares about the traditional ideas of wrong and right in the Indian cultural context. Thus, women who use Western style make-up or wear modern clothes are presented in the *laghukathā* as going to ‘discos’, ‘clubs’ or the ‘horse-races’ - they cease to be ‘beautiful, skilful and successful housewives’ (*sundar, sughar aur saphal grhiṇiyām*), are unmarried or even adulterous.⁵²⁰ The ‘powder’ furthermore indicates the striving for a fair complexion, symbolising a noble and rich birth and lifestyle. Men, on the other hand, who drink alcohol are explicitly or implicitly seen as villains, committing crimes and not living up to their social and societal responsibilities.⁵²¹ Although alcohol is available to and misused by not only the Westernised urban middle classes, in most *laghukathās* it is a symbol of new-rich immorality because it usually appears alongside other indicators - either one or several of the above-mentioned symbolic items or the usage of English vocabulary.⁵²²

Protagonists of symbolic value

The *laghukathā* makes use of several protagonists who carry distinct symbolic values, as for example the king, a fatherly and wise figure, traditionally representing just and responsible rule, or the child, standing for future, hope or innocence. The most striking symbolic protagonist of the *laghukathā*, though, is the madman, employed as a messenger of humanity and unconcealed truth. The opposition ‘sane-insane’ is an often-used device of the *laghukathā*, revealing the real everyday world as insane and deranged by showing a madman’s actions as the ‘normal’ or reasonable behaviour. This method again plays with the reader’s anticipation, confronting him with a paradoxical situation similar to texts reminiscent of the fable, which show ‘civilised’ beasts as morally superior to the ‘fierce’ humans.⁵²³

⁵²⁰ Cf. L2214 *Sabhya-asabhya*, ‘Cultivated-uncultivated’, by Śyāmnandan Śāstrī, L2781 *Antar prem, prem kā*, ‘The difference between love and love’, by Rāmyatan Prasād Yādav, and L2615 *Ādhār*, ‘Foundation’, by Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy.

⁵²¹ Cf. e.g. L5 *Cayan*, ‘Election’ (translation in section 4.3.1 ‘Themes’, p. 76), L456 *Padcihn*, ‘Footprints’, by Amarnāth Caudharī ‘Abz’ or *Ādmī-3*, ‘Man - 3’ (translation in section 4.3.2 ‘Protagonists’, p. 113).

⁵²² Cf. section 4.4.1 ‘Diction and syntax’, pp. 183 and 193 ff.

⁵²³ Cf. section 4.3.2 ‘Protagonists’, p. 107 f.; also the paragraphs on the ‘town versus jungle’ in the current section, p. 235 ff.

The madman, in the *laghukathā*, exhibits - or dares to exhibit - all those kinds of attitudes the 'normal' human being is shown to be no longer capable of: he is charitable and cares for his fellow-beings, he refuses to take part in communalist fights, does not indulge in corruption and questions authoritative and religious regulations and contemporary moral values.⁵²⁴ In addition, the madman serves as a means of presenting the world as it really is; often he makes the other protagonists or the reader see a truth which they usually cannot or do not want to see as, for example in the aforementioned *laghukathā Naṅgī duniyā*, 'Naked world',⁵²⁵. Another example is the text *Do pāgal*, 'Two madmen' which is not part of the sample:

Two madmen met and started to laugh loudly. Then they went towards a temple. When they saw the temple they again started to laugh.

Then they went towards a mosque. They looked at the mosque, then at each other... and they laughed once more.

Then they went to a gurdvara. There they pondered for some minutes... then they started to cry.

Then they came to stand in front of the parliament and started to beat each other up. Then one of the two madmen said, 'Why friend, what are you looking for?'

The other one said, 'I'm looking for God'.

The first madman [sic] said to the second, 'Okay, and you?'

The second madman said, 'Come closer so that no C.I.D.-wallah can hear us'. He moved very close. He whispered into his ear, 'Friend, I am looking for a human being!'

Then the two burst out laughing.⁵²⁶

The two madmen see what their 'normal' fellow-beings fail to see, namely that no God resides in religious structures like a temple, mosque or gurdvara and that no human can be found in everyday life and especially not in the governmental system which fosters only groundless aggression in a person. Significantly, it is only the mad person who looks for God instead of relying on empty religious symbols and for a human instead of clinging to meaningless social and societal categories.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Cf. e.g. *Paglā*, 'Mad', by Candrabhūṣaṇ Sirmh 'Candra', in: Puṣkaraṇā (ed.), *Kathādeś*, p. 151; *Pāgal*, 'Mad', by Hasan Jamāl, in: Balrām (ed.), *Thār kī dhār: sindhī, gujarātī aur rājasthānī laghukathāem*, Delhi 1994, p. 123, *Taklīf*, 'Trouble', by Avadheś Kumār, in *Hams*, June 1992, p. 32, and *Pāgalpan*, 'Madness', by Kamal Copṛā, in: Copṛā, *Phaṅgas: Kamal Copṛā kī laghukathāom kā dūsrā saṅgrah*, New Delhi 1996, p. 81.

⁵²⁵ L2238 by Siddheśvar (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', p. 102 f.).

⁵²⁶ By Śrīrām Minā, in: Balrām & Manīṣrāy (eds.), *Kathānāmā 1*, Delhi 1984, p. 152.

⁵²⁷ With regard to the content, this text reminds of Kabīr. Cf. for example Śabda 97, in: Hess, *Bijak*, pp. 73-74. Another protagonist who looks for a human regardless of his or her social or societal status is the 'man from heaven' in *Ādmī*, 'Human' (L167 by Balrām). Here again it is an unusual, not 'normal' figure who is free of prejudice. Cf. also L379 *Sirfirā*, 'The madman' (translation in section 4.3.1 'Themes', pp. 86-87).

All in all it can be said that the different carriers of symbolic value are used in two main respects, namely, either to lend additional or deeper meaning to a certain aspect without explaining or describing the situation in too much detail, or to stress the central idea of the *laghukathā*: the opposition between two sides, the common man and society, the exploited and his exploiter, the 'good' and the 'bad'.

Irony and satire

In an analysis of ironic and satiric elements in the *laghukathā* a problem arises from the fact that a discussion of the topic in the context of Hindi literature has to deal with the imprecise usage of the term 'vyaṅgya' which is employed for both 'satire' and 'irony'. In Western literary criticism, by contrast, it is important to distinguish between irony and satire (as a style as well as a genre): while satire ridicules - using irony as a possible tool - irony may or may not deride its victims, but must always express the opposite of what is meant.⁵²⁸ Since no clear interpretation of 'vyaṅgya' is given by any critic or writer of *laghukathās*, it has to be assumed that the term is used as potentially denoting both concepts. This is corroborated by the fact that the principles of both irony and satire are to be found independently in the *laghukathā*.

As far as the relationship between a satirical text and the *laghukathā* is concerned, the common denominator seems to lie, first of all, in the fact that they both aim at the denunciation of inappropriateness and incongruity, censuring the 'follies and vices of society', and thereby bringing about 'social change or institutional reform'.⁵²⁹ Satire, like the *laghukathā*, is 'born of the instinct to protest'⁵³⁰ and seeks to awaken its object's victims. However, in spite of their similar aims the two forms do not rely on the same principle: satire's formula - ridicule - is not the basis of the *laghukathā*. Although it can be found in several examples, it is far from being a *conditio sine qua non* - less than 6% of the texts deal with the tension between what should be and what really is in such a way as to deride their protagonists and only two *laghukathās*

⁵²⁸ In a colloquial sense irony is often understood simply as mockery or derision. To avoid confusion the following analysis will take 'irony' in the strict sense of discrepancy between words and their meaning.

⁵²⁹ Cuddon, *Dictionary*, p. 828, headword 'satire', and Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters*, pp. 32 ff. & 66.

⁵³⁰ Ian Jack, cit. in Cuddon, *Dictionary*, p. 828 (headword 'satire').

of the sample use the satirical principle on all textual levels (theme, structure, language and style) throughout the text and can thus be called ‘real’ satires. A *laghukathā* which may be seen as satirical without being a ‘satire’ is the earlier-quoted *Surakṣā*, ‘Security’⁵³¹. In this example satirical principles are applied to all textual levels - the theme (the highly decorated but useless bureaucrat), structure (the security officer who cannot guarantee security), language (e.g. the employment of mockingly exaggerated descriptive adjectives like ‘spick and span’) and style (e.g. describing the officer ironically as ‘big’ and qualified) - and thus produce the ridiculing effect. Yet, the text also shows significant passages of ‘normal’ appearance in the middle (One day ... fire brigade) and the end (The chairman... brother-in-law) and does therefore not present itself as a satire.

A true satire, on the other hand, is the *laghukathā Ek ām nagar kī sāhityik gatividhiyām*, ‘The literary activities of an ordinary town’. The last paragraphs of the text will illustrate the difference between the styles of the two stories:

[...]

A gathering of poets, too, took place, where the lack of space caused much inconvenience. As a consequence the listeners had to sit on the stage, and the poets in the pavilion. In order to increase the number of listeners every poet who was booed joined the boosers on the stage and helped to boo the poets of the opposition. Some old-established poets, too, were removed from the stage. Seeing them being booed, the non-poets’ eyes overflowed with tears - tears of joy.

As well as this the smoke of enmity and terror was rising quite unceremoniously in the coffee houses, people were doing their best to dispatch creative tragedies and discussed the refined culture of Connaught Place, Hazrat Ganj and Flora Fountain. In this context everybody tried to prove that he was more cultivated than everybody else...

Yes, the literary activities were moving on as always...⁵³²

Here, the satirical principle not only governs all levels of the text but is also upheld throughout the story in the same manner. The reader is continuously presented with irony, exaggeration, the construction of absurd and incongruous situations and - even more than with *Surakṣā* - is inclined to grin at the ludicrousness of the actions. The fact that this kind of ‘amusement’ is a likely outcome of satirical ridicule might be a reason for the relative lack of satirical elements in the *laghukathā*, for laughter is an effect distinctively rejected in the critical debate: ‘The ending of the *laghukathā* does

⁵³¹ L1402 by Maniṣrāy (translation in section 4.4.2 ‘Inner form’, p. 140).

⁵³² L2477 by Sūryabālā.

not [produce] laugh[ter], it is a jolt or shock [like the one] that comes when touching a bare wire.⁵³³ The fact that many laghukathā writers and critics see the principles of ‘vyaṅgya’ and laughter as closely connected becomes clear in the recurring usage of terms like ‘vyaṅgya-vinod’ (‘satire-amusement’); this corroborates the assumption that satire and irony are avoided for their possibly ‘amusing’ qualities.

However, a closer look reveals that the laghukathā’s laughter is seldom the amused laughter about a joke or the laughter of relief but rather the nervous laughter of despair.⁵³⁴ Next to satirical elements, the laghukathā makes use of irony which may not only be employed in a humorously derisive way but can also serve to sarcastically unmask protagonists and their behaviour. In order to achieve this, the laghukathā very often relies on the ‘structural irony’ also found in *Surakṣā*: instead of semantically expressing the opposite of what is meant, the laghukathā often presents its protagonists in situations of an inherent ironic absurdity. Examples are *Pyās*, ‘Thirst’⁵³⁵, which presents an Officer for Food Supply who denies a thirsty boy a sip of water from his pump, or *Lāl phītāsāhī*, ‘Red tape’, showing a man who - entangled in bureaucracy - gets the money to support his family only after his mother and son have died.⁵³⁶ This structural irony reminds one strongly of anecdotal forms which function on a similar principle, namely producing an unexpected point by revealing a protagonist or incident in a ridiculously incongruous situation. Yet, remembering Maṅṭo’s committed anecdotes, we see that this kind of structural irony, when not employed in satirical texts, is in many cases far from eliciting a smile - even of despair - from the reader, not least because of the lack of humorously ironic elements on other textual levels. The irony used in *Pyās* is especially bitter and piercing: it emphasises the outrageousness of the situation to shock the reader. This principle of the ‘committed anecdote’ is highly significant for the laghukathā, since it shows once more how the genre manages to utilise a traditional generic form in such a way that it appears thoroughly modern and may even support the writers’ committed attitude.

⁵³³ Muṅgerī, ‘Laghukathā...’, p. 78.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Siegel, *Laughing Matters*, p. 400.

⁵³⁵ L745 by Rameś Candra Goyal.

⁵³⁶ By Kṛṣṇa Kamleś, in: Balrām (ed.), *BLKK2*, p. 292.

A second aspect to be considered in the context of the possible humour conveyed by satirical features is that most texts employ satirical elements very sparingly and therefore do not produce an overall satirically 'amusing' effect. An example is the *laghukathā Akāraṇ*, 'Groundless', in which the narrator in the course of the action comments on the police inspector who is about to arrest him: 'His moustache tightened.'⁵³⁷ The derisive tone, in this phrase, is based on the inherent impossibility of the image. Yet, unlike in *Surakṣā*, the satirical principle in this text is limited to one phrase only, it does not carry its tone into the rest of the story which retains a rather serious nature. The interpolated individual satirical or ironic phrase gives the writer an opportunity to indirectly comment on an action or protagonist.

An example of semantic irony which satirically ridicules the protagonist of a text but still makes the reader choke with laughter is the text *Manorañjan*, 'Amusement' which begins:

When Mr. Village Headman went to his farm he took his 2 ¼ year old son, Mr. Bittu, with him. Having reached the farm Mr. Village Headman had a chair put next to the flower-bed and began to breathe the cool air... but God knows why the honourable Bittu started to cry.⁵³⁸

The narrator's ironic presentation of the village headman and his son is amusing in the beginning of the story. Yet, as the text progresses and reveals the increasingly violent and arbitrary behaviour of the headman who beats a little boy to death to cheer up his son, even the laughter of despair appears inappropriate. Irony, in such texts, serves to emphasise the outrageousness of the injustice done, thereby achieving the *laghukathā* writers' general intention of shocking and awakening the reader.⁵³⁹

Interestingly, all together only around 10% of the *laghukathās* use ironical or satirical elements. This result is indirectly echoed in the critical debate which draws a close connection between the employment of irony or satire and the historical development of the genre: the 'vyaṅgya-ras', as Puṣkaraṇā calls it, dominated the *laghukathā*

⁵³⁷ L2083 by Anvar Śamīm.

⁵³⁸ L517 by Kamal Copṛā.

⁵³⁹ Other ways of producing an ironic or satirical effect are the literal interpretation of metaphors and the employment of English or neo-Sanskritic vocabulary. Cf. above p. 224 f., and section 4.5.1 'Diction and syntax', pp. 183 and 193 ff.

mainly during the sixties and was to be found especially in texts which were published in the literary magazine *Sārikā*.⁵⁴⁰ Since the current analysis restricts itself to texts published and written after 1970 the relative lack of satire and also of irony is not surprising. Another reason for the underrepresentation of irony and satire may be seen in the fact that this rhetorical figure always carries a notion of comment. Unless it is a present narrator who mocks a protagonist or situation, the writer reminds the readers of his or her existence when using irony; since the *laghukathā* writers consciously avoid using the didactic and commenting tone of the antecedents of their genre, irony and satire in their explicit forms are not given such a prominent role.

Summary

The *laghukathā*'s use of rhetorical figures and tropes generally complies with the demand of critics and writers that the text and especially its message should not demand intellectual effort from the reader. Even when rather complex comparisons and metaphoric or allegorical images are used, the devices are not usually employed for their own sake but serve to underline the message and thus facilitate its communication to the reader. Metaphoric or allegorical 'styles' seem not to be options for the *laghukathā*: hardly any texts are dominated by these tropes.

A significant part of the *laghukathā*'s rhetorical repertoire is the symbol. A large number of symbols is employed, lending a short, linguistically and grammatically straightforward story an additional dimension. Although the *laghukathā* has not developed its own symbolic canon - unsurprisingly given the large number of contributors to the genre - some recurring symbols take a rather prominent role in emphasizing the topic which lies at the heart of the *laghukathā*, namely the opposition between the common man and his environment, i.e. between good and bad.

Finally, irony and satire have been shown to play a less important role within the *laghukathā* context than that assigned to them by some of the critics and writers.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Puškaraṇā, 'Hindī *laghukathā* kī gauravśālī paramparā', p. 14, and Dube, 'Choṭī *kathāom...*', p. 164. In order to verify these statements a diachronic investigation of the *laghukathā* would be necessary, a problematic enterprise because primary source material of the earlier times is difficult to obtain and often impossible to date.

They are stylistically dominant only in a negligible minority of *laghukathās*, a result which corresponds to the fact that the *laghukathā*, unlike the satire, does not want to allow the reader to laugh the ‘laughter of relief’ after finishing the text. However, satire’s principle of denunciation and criticism through the revelation of incongruities forms the basis for a larger number of plots - an unsurprising fact, given that both the *laghukathā* and the satire aim at the unmasking of the disruptions in society. Likewise, structural irony typical for anecdotal literature is used in the *laghukathā* in order to unmask individual or social misconduct. But while the recipient of satire or the anecdote may laugh out loud, the reader of the *laghukathā* is likely to have his laughter stick in his throat.

5 Conclusion

The historical and literary analysis of the sampled texts against the background of the writers' critical opinions has shown us that the *laghukathā*, in the first instance, is a short prose genre whose central concern is the effectual communication of a socio-politically committed message to the reader.⁵⁴¹ The *laghukathā* writer's commitment, as we have seen, is reflected most clearly in the texts' themes. *Laghukathās* deal, above all, with disruptions on all societal levels, painting a gruesome picture of a corruption-ridden, amoral and inhumane modern Indian society: we find the human being in the *laghukathā* struggling against the system, society, various social groups and their respective representatives. The distinctive dialectic worldview of the *laghukathā* which is thus indicated in the themes is also reflected in the preferred twofold constellation of the protagonists: the texts revolve around the opposition of good and bad, high and low, rich and poor, ruling and ruled etc. But the expression of authorial commitment is not confined to the themes alone. As we have seen, the writers are not satisfied with only *showing* their readers the pitiful condition of modern Indian society, they want to shock and provoke, making the readers painfully aware of contemporary disruptions of the common man's world and motivate them to think about possible ways of change. In order to achieve this, writers make use of a variety of measures which are interdependent with the genres short form. The strong reader orientation of the *laghukathā* suggests a concluding presentation of these measures in two ways: we will, firstly, follow the devices of the *laghukathā* through the story as a reader would encounter them, thus showing how they complement each other in order to achieve the intended effect; secondly, we will delineate an ideal typical *laghukathā*, showing the respective significance of various literary features for the genre. Naturally, only the most prominent characteristics of the *laghukathā* can feature in such conclusive delineations.

Given the importance the writers assign to the communication of the *laghukathā*'s message to an audience, the first task of the text must be to interest the reader in the story. In this context a highly significant but generally underestimated factor is the

⁵⁴¹ We have to remember that the appearance of the *laghukathā* is described with regard to the *majority* of texts. Naturally - as has become clear in the analysis - texts which deviate from this average type must still not be excluded from the genre.

competitive environment of the genre's publication: *laghukathās* are primarily published in journalistic print media and therefore have to constantly compete with the surrounding texts for the reader's attention. Yet, the *laghukathā*'s brevity is ideal for this kind of task: the concise form promises a quick and easy read and also means that the entire text can be taken in and preliminarily assessed by the reader at a single glance. Surprisingly, the *laghukathā*'s 'headline' is of minimal importance in this context: seldom does a *laghukathā* try to attract the reader by means of catchy titles, instead it relies on a promising first sentence which tends to be structurally open in order to draw the reader into the story.

Once the reader has become interested in the text, we have found the *laghukathā* to make refined use of different literary devices to ensure that the interest is sustained till the end, where the message is conveyed. The most important means to do so is the single-stranded, stringently progressing plot which leads the reader undeviatingly towards the climax. As we have seen, this is preferably done at a quick pace, so as not to distract or bore the reader: the most important narrative modes of the *laghukathā* are the dynamic modes of report and speech. Where the static modes of description and commentary are dominant, a *laghukathā* normally assumes a slow pace and a rather poetic appearance; often, such texts belong to the minority of non-committed *laghukathās*. The quick progression of the action towards a target emphasises the pointed structure of the genre: the *laghukathā* is normally constructed throughout with regard to the eye-opening climax. Importantly, the linguistic background for all features is an easily intelligible language - a simple diction and uncomplicated syntax - which refrains from overly artistic embellishments and therefore does not demand a particular intellectual effort which might discourage the reader.

However, the mere fact that the reader reads the text right through to the end cannot yet guarantee the effective communication of the message. We have to remember that the majority of writers want to shake the reader and awaken him or her - they need their *laghukathās* to produce a particularly powerful effect. This is achieved mainly in two ways, namely by upholding the various possible unities of the text (of time, place, action, theme) in order to bring about the overall important unity of impression and message, and, secondly, by creating an unexpected or at least provocative out-

come. As we have seen, the area of the *laghukathā*'s unities plays a far more significant role than is suggested by the handling of the topic in the critical debate. An effectual *laghukathā* relies fully on the unity of impression to communicate its single message. But while - under the condition that the unity of impression is upheld - one of the three unities of time, place or action may be given up, the unity of theme is a *conditio sine qua non* for the *laghukathā* since it lies at the heart of the message: a text with two themes, and thus two messages, loses its power. An equally important means for the creation of a powerful effect on the reader is the *laghukathā*'s provocative outcome which also stands at the centre of interest of many *laghukathā* writers and critics. The large majority of texts show a pointed plot based either on a shocking surprise-ending or on the structural irony also typical of genres like the anecdote or the fable: a situation or a protagonist's behaviour or fate are revealed as inherently absurd and incongruous. However, for want of ironical or satirical elements on the textual level, structural irony in most *laghukathās* is more likely to provoke dismay or, at the most, a shocked and nervous smile rather than laughter. In order to make this shocking effect longer-lasting, an open ending is generally preferred over a closed one. Naturally, on the way through the story the reader is prepared for the climax in different ways: various means ensure a rational rather than an emotional involvement of the reader, strengthen the message by creating manners of validation, or simply emphasise the climax through structural or linguistic features.

We have thus seen that the reader is attracted to the story, lead through it straightforwardly and then presented with an impressive and effectual ending. In order to finally delineate the features of the ideal typical *laghukathā* according to their respective significance for the genre, it is useful to distinguish the groups of compulsory, desirable and optional features. Our analyses have shown that the ideal type of *laghukathā* *must* have a committed attitude, a unity of theme and a pointed structure - all contained in a brief narrative text. These features are supplemented by elements which are desirable because they strengthen one or the other of the compulsory features; they include a simple language which refrains from self-reflexiveness, the dynamic modes of report and speech, a dialectic inner structure and the openness of beginning and end; a *laghukathā* furthermore profits immensely from the employment of symbols, which may lend it a deeper meaning while avoiding description -

yet, symbolism remains on the border with the last group of optional devices. Such optional devices again further the overall intended effect of the *laghukathā*, but are found rather less often. They include the usage of different registers for different kind of protagonists, the employment of animal protagonists, the setting of the story in a time- and spaceless vacuum, a commentatorial title and easily decipherable metaphors and allegories. The *laghukathā* may also use the device of intentionally misleading its readers as to the probable development of the plot, a highly significant feature which will be addressed shortly.

All in all, the *laghukathā* therefore presents itself as an entirely modern text, employing all kinds of contemporary formal and stylistic devices and displaying a thoroughly modern socio-politically committed standpoint. Yet, a closer look reveals that the *laghukathā* - unlike the *kahānī* or the novel - is firmly rooted in traditional Indian literature, a fact that becomes obvious on two levels.

From a historical viewpoint, the development of the genre shows us clearly that the *laghukathā* has emanated from a combination of long-established oral and literary forms with a modern socio-politically committed content and, later, newly introduced literary devices. We have seen that the *laghukathā* has developed in different stages: traditional brief and pointed oral and literary forms have over the last 200 years - in accordance with the general development of Hindi literature - been written down in *Kharī bolī* prose and have been increasingly politicised; writers turned more and more to socio-politically committed contents, and via the advent of the modern short story and the novel - genres which were modelled on Western examples - a wide range of modern literary devices such as the open beginning and ending, or the free indirect discourse were introduced.

On a second, textual, level, the combination of old and new is revealed by the fact that these new literary devices are not only complemented by frequent deliberate allusions to genres like folk tales, fables or fairy tales, but, more importantly, that they conceal significant structural borrowings from fable- and anecdotal literature, a fact that is normally strongly rejected by *laghukathā* writers and critics.

As far as allusions to traditional genres are concerned, we have seen that laghukathā writers repeatedly employ the protagonists of tales and fables. However, it is in the particular presentation of such protagonists, that the laghukathā defies convention: the respective protagonists are mostly shown outside their traditional contexts and behaving in unconventional ways, thus startling the reader who expects a certain kind of story when a text begins with ‘once upon a time’ or ‘a dog and a donkey had a discussion...’. In this context we also have to remember the recurring use of popular heroes who are unmasked by the laghukathā as not living up to the expectations according to the traditional story-line. All these means of preparing the reader for a traditional narrative form or content without following up the leads laid out in the beginning show how the writers often consciously break their ‘contract with the reader’⁵⁴². Misleading its readers is one of the preferred mechanisms of the laghukathā to produce the shocking and provocative climax.⁵⁴³

Far more important, however, is the principle of structural irony used in the laghukathā. In the critical debate the laghukathā is usually linked to the short story rather than to the indigenous short and pointed genres like the anecdote, fable or folk tale - unsurprisingly, since laghukathās assume an utterly modern appearance through their employment of modern literary devices and a lack of the didactic or humorous tone characteristic for the indigenous forms. However, the structural irony of such indigenous genres - the denunciation or surprising revelation of incongruities at the end of a text - is the basic principle of most laghukathās; it is vital for the effective communication of the message, the central concern of the writers. The emergence of the laghukathā is therefore utterly different from that of the Hindi short story or the novel which were imported as complete genres and then appropriated according to the Indian needs: the kahānī and the novel are Western genres that have been *Indianised*. Not so the laghukathā, which is based on traditional indigenous brief and

⁵⁴² This term has been introduced by Lewis Queary in his investigation of Shakespearean plays. Queary suggests: ‘The opening of any play makes a contract with its audience. The contract may be held to throughout and provide a straightforward guide to the audience... or it may be incomplete or misleading in varying degrees.’ L.B. Queary, *Contracts and Structure in Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley 1973, pp. 3-4, cit. in K.E. Bryant, *Poems*, p. 44.

⁵⁴³ The misinformation of an informed audience - or an audience who can be expected to anticipate certain developments because they are familiar with the story or the ‘type’ of text - is by no means a modern development, as K.E. Bryant has shown for Surdas’s narratives which heavily rely on the audience’s ‘active remembering’ of the Kṛṣṇa story. Cf. Bryant, *Poems*, p. 48

pointed texts that were appropriated to meet contemporary needs by introducing a socio-political range of themes and making use of new literary traits introduced by the 'new' genres: the *laghukathā* is based on indigenous genres which have been *modernised*. Against this background, it is easier to understand why the genre encompasses such a wide range of different texts: each *laghukathā* may change the mixture of the three ingredients of a traditional principle, a committed attitude and modern literary devices at any time, thereby shifting the appearance of the text towards one particular side. The preferred mixture, however, is the predominance of commitment and modernity, making the *laghukathā* into a contemporary agent provocateur.

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7 Appendix: List of the sampled texts

The sample has been drawn from the following collections and anthologies (for full details see bibliography):

- Āthverṁ daśak kī laghukathāem*, ed. Satīś Dube, 1979
Āpkī kṛpā hai, Viṣṇu Prabhākar, 1982
Ātaṅk, ed. Nandal Hitaiṣi, 1983
Bhārātīya laghukathā koś, vols. 1 & 2, ed. Balrām, 1990 (BLKK1+2)
Choṭī baṛī bātem, eds. Mahāvīr Prasād Jain & Jagdīś Kaśyap, 1978 (CCB)
Dare hue log, Sukeś Sāhni, 1991
Hariyāṇā kī laghukathā-saṁsār, eds. Rūp Devguṇ & Rāj Kumār Nijāt, 1988
Hastākṣar, ed. Śamīm Śarmā, 1983
Hindī laghukathā koś, ed. Balrām, 1988 (HLKK)
Kathā bhārati, eds. Balrām & Gambhīrsiṁh Pālnī, 1993
Kathādes̄h, ed. Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, 1990
Kathānāmā 1,2 &3, eds. Balrām & Manīṣrāy, 1984, 1985 & 1990 (KN1, 2 & 3)
Prasaṅgvaś, Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, 1987
Pratidhvani, Jai Śaṅkar Prasād, 1959 [?]
Rukī huī haṁsinī, Balrām, 1995
Samāntar laghukathāem, eds. Narendra Maurya & Narmadāprasād Upādhyāy, 1977
Tatpāścāt, ed. Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā, 1983
Thār kī dhār, ed. Balrām, 1994

Number	Laghukathā	Source
L5	Aśok Agravāl: <i>Cayan</i> , 'Election'	Hastākṣar, p. 68
L12	Balrām Agravāl: <i>Aur Jaik mar gayā</i> , 'And Jack was dead'	Āthverṁ daśak, p. 104
L18	Balrām Agravāl: <i>Gulmohar</i> , 'The Gulmohar tree'	KN2, p. 80
L49	Śahaṁśāh Ālam: <i>Saṅkalp</i> , 'Resolution'	BLKK1, p. 193
L69	Vedprakāś Amitābh: <i>Nīti</i> , 'Policy'	HLKK, p. 360
L79	Añjanā Anil: <i>Cītkār</i> , 'Scream'	Thār kī dhār, p. 130
L81	Añjanā Anil: <i>Chuṭṭī kī mañjurī</i> , 'Grant of leave'	KN2, p. 129
L89	Añjanā Anil: <i>Jan-sevā</i> , 'Civil servant'	KN2, p. 133
L98	Añjanā Anil: <i>Parde ke pīche</i> , 'Behind curtains'	KN2, p. 136

L111	Pṛthvīrāj Aroṇā: <i>Apnī-apnī kaid</i> , 'Each to his own imprisonment'	Hariyānā, p. 185
L115	Pṛthvīrāj Aroṇā: <i>Dayā</i> , 'Sympathy'	KN1, p. 15
L130	Pṛthvīrāj Aroṇā: <i>Yahī sac hai</i> , 'That's the truth'	HLKK, p. 191
L132	Pṛthvīrāj Aroṇā: <i>Zarūraten</i> , 'Necessities'	HLKK, p. 188
L134	Narendra Asāṭī: <i>Bhāvī netā kī parīkṣā</i> , 'Test of a future leader'	Hastākṣar, p. 109
L136	Añjan Aśok: <i>Caritra kī hatyā</i> , 'Murder of character'	Ātañk, p. 145
L141	Sumati Ayyar: <i>Apamān</i> , 'Insult'	HLKK, p. 393
L142	Sumati Ayyar: <i>Dāyitva bodh</i> , 'A sense of responsibility'	HLKK, p. 395
L159	Gulśan Bālānī: <i>Kariyām</i> , 'Links'	KN1, p. 128
L164	Gulśan Bālānī: <i>Samāj-sevikā</i> , 'Social servant'	KN1, p. 129
L167	Balrām: <i>Ādmī</i> , 'Human being'	KN1, p. 22
L185	Balrām: <i>Khālī peṭ</i> , 'Empty stomach'	BLKK1, p. 215
L200	Balrām: <i>Rafā dafā</i> , 'Settled'	HLKK, p. 218
L204	Balrām: <i>Yathāsthiti</i> , 'Status quo'	Rukī hui haṃsinī, p. 27
L227	Rameś Battarā: <i>Laṛāī</i> , 'War'	KN1, p. 86
L228	Rameś Battarā: <i>Nāgarik</i> , 'Citizen'	KN1, p. 84
L241	Kuṃar Becain: <i>Īṇṭem</i> , 'Bricks'	CBB, p. 234
L245	Bhagīrath: <i>Avasarvādī</i> , 'Opportunists'	BLKK2, p. 83
L246	Bhagīrath: <i>Bagnakhe</i> [sic], 'Claws'	Āṭhvern daśak, p. 59
L257	Bhagīrath: <i>Niṣkṛti</i> , 'Freedom'	Āṭhvern daśak, p. 58
L264	Bhagīrath: <i>Śīkṣā</i> , 'Education'	KN1, p. 43
L288	Citarāñjan Bhāratī: <i>Jośile javān</i> , 'Enthusiastic youths'	Kathādeś, p. 288
L291	Citarāñjan Bhāratī: <i>Man ke jīte jīt</i> , 'Victory is the victory of the mind'	Kathādeś, p. 173
L312	Kamleś Bhāratīya: <i>Mukti mārg</i> , 'Path to salvation'	HLKK, p. 62
L313	Kamleś Bhāratīya: <i>Niśān</i> , 'Scar'	HLKK, p. 66
L316	Kamleś Bhāratīya: <i>Pardesī pañkhī</i> , 'Bird from abroad'	HLKK, p. 63
L350	Kṛṣṇaśaṅkar Bhaṭṇāgar: <i>Jism par ugā kafan</i> , 'A shroud on the body'	HLKK, p. 73

L354	Kṛṣṇaśaṅkar Bhaṭṭnāgar: <i>Lobh kī parākāṣṭhā</i> , 'Ultimate greed'	Kathādeś, p. 102
L363	Kṛṣṇaśaṅkar Bhaṭṭnāgar: <i>Riṣṭedār</i> , 'Relation'	HLKK, p. 77
L379	Kamleś Bhaṭṭ: <i>Sirfirā</i> , 'The madman'	Kathā bhāratī, p. 136
L405	Īśvar Candra: <i>Ādhunik chātra</i> , 'Modern pupil'	Tatpāścāt, p. 114
L407	Īśvar Candra: <i>Biznes</i> , 'Business'	Tatpāścāt, p. 115
L410	Īśvar Candra: <i>Lāin</i> , 'Queue'	Tatpāścāt, p. 113
L429	Aparṇā Caturvedī 'Pṛitā': <i>Riṣṭā</i> , 'Relationship'	Kathādeś, p. 39
L456	Amarnāth Caudharī 'Abz': <i>Padcihn</i> , 'Footprints'	Kathādeś, p. 57
L463	Amarnāth Caudharī 'Abz': <i>Upāy</i> , 'Measures'	Kathādeś, p. 62
L472	Gopāl Caurasiyā: <i>Śikṣak aur saṁskār</i> , 'Teacher and refinement'	Hastākṣar, p. 93
L473	Jasbīr Cāvalā: <i>Andhviśvās</i> , 'Superstition'	BLKK1, p. 69
L479	Jasbīr Cāvalā: <i>Nīcevālī ciṭkhanī</i> , 'The lower door bolt'	Hastākṣar, p. 102
L486	Citreś: <i>Sahī arth</i> . 'Real meaning'	Ātaṅk, p. 169
L493	Kamal Copṛā: <i>Ataḥ: Śrī Lābh</i> , 'Consequently, Mr. Profit'	KN1, p. 117
L517	Kamal Copṛā: <i>Manorañjan</i> , 'Amusement'	Kathādeś, p. 78
L518	Kamal Copṛā: <i>Nirjan van</i> , 'Lonely forest'	Kathādeś, p. 71
L532	Lakṣmendra Copṛā: <i>Pahcān</i> , 'Characteristic'	Āṭhveṁ daśak, p. 108
L533	Maheś Darpaṇ: <i>Śahar-bāzār</i> , 'Urban market'	BLKK2, p. 324
L547	Harikṛṣṇa Datta: <i>Sabse baṛā sac</i> , 'The ultimate truth'	Samāntar, p. 97
L551	Yogendra Dave: <i>Apne log</i> , 'One's own people'	Thār kī dhār, p. 115
L555	Yogendra Dave: <i>Dūsrā jaṅgal</i> , 'Another jungle'	Thār kī dhār, p. 117
L557	Yogendra Dave: <i>Jhagaṛā</i> , 'Fight'	Thār kī dhār, p. 114
L558	Yogendra Dave: <i>Mānyatā</i> , 'Belief'	Thār kī dhār, p. 118
L562	Rūp Devguṇ: <i>Bhāgya vidhātā</i> , 'Ordainer of fate'	Hariyāṇā, p. 207
L565	S.R. Dharnīdhar: <i>Anukaran</i> , 'Following the example'	BLKK2, p. 98
L567	S.R. Dharnīdhar: <i>Calit nyāyālay</i> , 'Mobile court of justice'	BLKK2, p. 100
L575	Rājendra Dhavan: <i>Maim majbūr hūm</i> , 'I am helpless'	Hariyāṇā, p. 203
L577	Santoṣ Dikṣit: <i>Ātmānubhūti</i> , 'Self-perception'	Kathādeś, p. 427

L582	Santoṣ Dikṣit: <i>Cīnherñ safar kā anjān rāhī</i> , 'May they recognise the journey's unknown traveller'	Kathādeś, p. 420
L584	Santoṣ Dikṣit: <i>Ek anuttarit praśn</i> , 'An unanswered question'	Kathādeś, p. 429
L596	Santoṣ Dikṣit: <i>Talās khatm huī</i> , 'The search had ended'	Kathādeś, p. 434
L604	Suvās Dīpak: <i>Āvāzom ke bīc</i> , 'Amidst voices'	BLKK2, p. 332
L613	Dineścandra Dube: <i>Kalāprem</i> , 'Art-lover'	Pratinidhi, p. 81
L615	Dineścandra Dube: <i>Sevā</i> , 'Service'	CBB, p. 129
L616	Kṛṣṇakānt Dube: <i>Aisā ākās</i> , 'Such a sky'	HLKK, p. 69
L618	Kṛṣṇakānt Dube: <i>Ekākī svar</i> , 'Lonely voice'	HLKK, p. 68
L630	Satīś Dube: <i>Alassubah</i> , 'Day-break'	Hastākṣar, p. 186
L637	Satīś Dube: <i>Dṛṣṭi</i> , 'Viewpoint'	HLKK, p. 374
L640	Satīś Dube: <i>Marīcikā</i> , 'Mirage'	HLKK, p. 374
L662	Saroj Dvivedī: <i>Śaitān aur buddhimān</i> , 'The devil and the wise man'	KN2, p. 161
L700	Rāj Kumār Gautam: <i>Yātrā</i> , 'Journey'	KN1, p. 96
L705	Prabodhkumār Gobil: <i>Gamak</i> , 'Low tone'	BLKK1, p. 273
L721	Parameśvar Goyal: <i>Bāl-baccedār</i> , 'Having children'	Kathādeś, p. 198
L729	Parameśvar Goyal: <i>Honā hī thā</i> , 'Inevitable'	Kathādeś, p. 187
L740	Parameśvar Goyal: <i>Sattādhārī</i> , 'Administrator'	Kathādeś, p. 197
L743	Parameśvar Goyal: <i>Sunvāī</i> , 'Hearing'	Kathādeś, p. 193
L745	Rāmeś Candra Goyal: <i>Pyās</i> , 'Thirst'	Hariyānā, p. 198
L762	Bindeśvar Prasād Guptā: <i>Khīr</i> , 'Rice-pudding'	Hastākṣar, p. 125
L777	Kamal Gupta: <i>Tasvīr</i> , 'Picture'	HLKK, p. 46
L791	Devīprakāś Hemant: <i>Apnī-parāyī</i> , 'Own and other'	KN2, p. 144
L798	Devīprakāś Hemant: <i>Kavi aur thānedār</i> , 'The poet and the sergeant'	KN2, p. 138
L811	Ved 'Himāmsu': <i>Vikalp</i> , 'Alternative'	Pratinidhi, p. 16
L812	Nandal Hitaiṣī: <i>Āmne-sāmne</i> , 'Right opposite'	Ātaṅk, p. 180
L820	Nandal Hitaiṣī: <i>Matdān</i> , 'Voting'	Hastākṣar, p. 105
L848	Kuldīp Jain: <i>Kalcaral laig</i> , 'Cultural lag'	HLKK, p. 94
L857	Kuldīp Jain: <i>Jab himmat sāth hotī hai</i> , 'When courage is your friend'	HLKK, p. 87
L865	Kuldīp Jain: <i>Rakṣā kavac</i> , 'Protective armour'	BLKK2, p. 235
L872	Kuldīp Jain: <i>Vidrohī man</i> , 'Rebellious mind'	HLKK, p. 90

L906	Mukeś Kumār Jain 'Pāras': <i>Asurakṣit</i> , 'Unprotected'	Kathādeś, p. 206
L908	Mukeś Kumār Jain 'Pāras': <i>Beraham</i> , 'Merciless'	Kathādeś, p. 218
L917	Mukeś Kumār Jain 'Pāras': <i>Parājit</i> , 'Defeated'	Kathādeś, p. 205
L930	Hasan Jamāl: <i>Ektā kā pāṭh</i> , 'Path of unity'	Thār kī dhār, p. 119
L931	Hasan Jamāl: <i>Ghāt kī bāt</i> , 'The proper time'	Thār kī dhār, p. 120
L952	Sureś Jāngīr 'Uday': <i>Mānasiktā</i> , 'Mentality'	Kathādeś, p. 546
L974	Prem Janmejy: <i>Pāp-puṇya</i> , 'Sin or virtue'	HLKK, p. 195
L989	Jaypāl: <i>Bhaṇḍārā</i> , 'A meal for the holy man'	Hariyāṇā, p. 179
L1012	Śrīnivās Jośī: <i>Kamīśan</i> , 'Commission'	BLKK1, p. 195
L1018	Śrīnivās Jośī: <i>Nirdhantā-nirvāraṇ</i> , 'Removal of poverty'	KN1, p. 141
L1039	Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāṃṣu': <i>Cakravyūh</i> , 'Maze'	Kathādeś, p. 338
L1040	Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāṃṣu': <i>Cor</i> , 'Thief'	Kathādeś, p. 333
L1051	Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāṃṣu': <i>Mukhautā</i> , 'Mask'	Kathādeś, p. 329
L1058	Rāmeśvar Kāmboj 'Himāṃṣu': <i>Sīṛhiyom se nīce</i> , 'Downstairs'	Kathā bhāratī, p. 141
L1069	Kṛṣṇa Kamleś: <i>Evaz</i> , 'Substitute'	KN2, p. 27
L1070	Kṛṣṇa Kamleś: <i>Holī / sampreṣaṇ</i> , 'Holi / Communi- cation'	KN2, p. 29
L1086	Jagdiś Kaśyap: <i>Blaik hārs</i> , 'Black horse'	HLKK, p. 113
L1090	Jagdiś Kaśyap: <i>Dhuerṃ kā Tājmahal</i> , 'Taj Mahal of smoke'	HLKK, p. 112
L1093	Jagdiś Kaśyap: <i>Kahānī kā plāṭ</i> , 'Plot of a story'	Kathā Bhāratī, p. 108
L1097	Jagdiś Kaśyap: <i>Pūt-kapūt</i> , 'Son, bad son'	Āṭhvern daśak, p. 62
L1113	Jagdiś Kaśyap: <i>Tār vṛkṣ kī chāyā</i> , 'Shade of a palm tree'	HLKK, p. 111
L1132	Sunīl Kauśīś: <i>Jātivād</i> , 'Nationalism'	HLKK, p. 400
L1145	Śārāphat Alī Khān: <i>Aslī rūp</i> , 'True form'	Kathādeś, p. 388
L1147	Śārāphat Alī Khān: <i>Choṭī machlī</i> , 'Little fish'	Kathādeś, p. 387
L1163	Śārāphat Alī Khān: <i>Sambandh</i> , 'Connection'	Kathādeś, p. 381
L1165	Śārāphat Alī Khān: <i>Vikalp</i> , 'Alternative'	Kathādeś, p. 390
L1174	Dāmodar Khaṛṣe: <i>Asaphaltā</i> , 'Failure'	BLKK1, p. 246
L1183	Dāmodar Khaṛṣe: <i>Yukti</i> , 'Strategy'	BLKK1, p. 244
L1191	Kāsim Khurśīd: <i>Khāmośī</i> , 'Silence'	Tātpaścāt, p. 104

L1205	Śakuntalā Kiraṇ: <i>Suhāg vrat</i> , 'A vow for auspicious wifehood'	Āṭhveṃ daśak, p. 97
L1221	Svarṇ Kiraṇ: <i>Hamdardī aur puraskār</i> , 'Sympathy and reward'	Kathādeś, p. 617
L1226	Svarṇ Kiraṇ: <i>Jit</i> , 'Victory'	HLKK, p. 368
L1247	Narendra Kohli: <i>Tark</i> , 'Argument'	BLKK2, p. 159
L1253	Nilam Kulśreṣṭh: <i>Man kī aurat</i> , 'Woman of mind'	Āṭhveṃ daśak, p. 114
L1283	Madhudīp: <i>Apnī-apnī maut</i> , 'Everybody's own death'	HLKK, p. 248
L1292	Madhudīp: <i>Navīn bodh</i> , 'New understanding'	HLKK, p. 253
L1307	Madhukānt: <i>Loktantra</i> , 'Democracy'	HLKK, p. 244
L1316	Mālatī Mahāvar: <i>Aisā bhī</i> , 'Just so'	Āṭhveṃ daśak, p. 100
L1337	Rājeś Maheśvarī: <i>Grejueṭ</i> , 'Graduate'	Hariyānā, p. 204
L1363	Śaṅkar Mālavīya: <i>Vardān</i> , 'Granting of a boon'	Pratinidhi, p. 70
L1368	Phūlcand Mānav: <i>Sakhtī</i> , 'Calamity'	CBB, p. 128
L1402	Manīṣrāy: <i>Surakṣā</i> , 'Security'	BLKK1, p. 167
L1433	Śrīrām Mīnā: <i>Bhāgya aur caritra</i> , 'Fate and character'	BLKK2, p. 272
L1437	Śrīrām Mīnā: <i>Caritra acchā hai</i> , 'The character is good'	Hastākṣar, p. 183
L1441	Śrīrām Mīnā: <i>Gadhe kā kāṭā</i> , 'Donkey-bite'	KN1, p. 150
L1450	Śrīrām Mīnā: <i>Krāntikāriyom kī śādī</i> , 'The revolutionaries' wedding'	HLKK, p. 446
L1469	Kanhaiyālāl Mīśra 'Prabhākar': <i>Satī</i> , 'Sati'	Kathā bhāratī, p. 47
L1492	Pūran Mudgal: <i>Svāgat</i> , 'Welcome'	Hastākṣar, p. 116
L1533	Sūryakānt Nāgar: <i>Saujanya</i> , 'Kindness'	BLKK1, p. 116
L1553	I. Kedār Nāth: <i>Bhraṣṭācār ke prati putr-moh</i> , 'The love for a son against corruption'	Kathādeś, p. 133
L1560	I. Kedār Nāth: <i>Mānavtā ke āge sab jhūṭhā</i> , 'Before humanity everybody is a liar'	Kathādeś, p. 131
L1570	I. Kedār Nāth: <i>Tark kī kasautī par</i> , 'Testing the argument'	Kathādeś, p. 130
L1576	Harīś Naval: <i>Billī rānī baṛī sayānī</i> , 'Aunty cat, you are so smart'	BLKK2, p. 167
L1581	Harīś Naval: <i>Lakṣmaṇ rekhā</i> , 'Uncrossable line'	BLKK2, p. 169

L1582	Hariś Naval: <i>Nirvighn</i> , 'Undisturbed'	BLKK2, p. 171
L1583	Hariś Naval: <i>Śart</i> , 'Condition'	BLKK2, p. 166
L1589	Rāj Kumār Nijāt: <i>Asahyog</i> , 'Non-cooperation'	Kathādeś, p. 239
L1614	Nīlam: <i>Paribhāṣā</i> , 'Definition'	Hariyānā, p. 184
L1628	Subhāṣ Nīrav: <i>Satyameva jayate</i> , 'Only the truth will prevail'	HLKK, p. 417
L1629	Subhāṣ Nīrav: <i>Vākar</i> , 'Walker'	HLKK, p. 410
L1635	Vasant Nirguṇ: <i>Sahānubhūti</i> , 'Sympathy'	Pratinidhi, p. 34
L1638	Viśva Raman Nirmal: <i>Saudāgar</i> , 'Dealer'	Hastākṣar, p. 173
L1639	Narendra Nirmohī: <i>Bicchū</i> , 'Scorpion'	CBB, p. 129
L1655	Gambhīrsiṃh Pālṇī: <i>Is varṣ Nainītāl meṃ abhī tak barf nahīm giri</i> , 'This year so far no snow has fallen in Nainital'	HLKK, p.100
L1665	Gambhīrsiṃh Pālṇī: <i>Svantantratā divas</i> , 'Independence Day'	HLKK, p. 103
L1672	Rājendra Pāṇḍey 'Unmukt': <i>Lāl kālīn</i> , 'Red carpet'	BLKK1, p. 302
L1676	Rājendra Pāṇḍey 'Unmukt': <i>Niṣṭhurtā</i> , 'Cruelty'	BLKK1, p. 301
L1683	Hariśaṅkar Parsāi: <i>Apnā parāyā</i> , 'Own and other'	BLKK2, p. 26
L1698	Viṣṇu Prabhākar: <i>Īśvar kā cehrā</i> , 'The countenance of God'	Āpkī kṛpā hai, p. 20
L1699	Viṣṇu Prabhākar: <i>Śaiśav</i> , 'Childhood'	Āpkī kṛpā hai, p. 20
L1707	Viṣṇu Prabhākar: <i>Atirikt lābh aur udārtā</i> , 'Additional gain and generosity'	Āpkī kṛpā hai, p. 35
L1711	Prabhākar: <i>Bindh gayā so motī</i> , 'It is a pearl that is set'	Āpkī kṛpā hai, p. 65
L1734	Viṣṇu Prabhākar: <i>Phark</i> , 'Difference'	Āpkī kṛpā hai, p. 13
L1746	Devī Prakāś: <i>Ādmī</i> , 'Man'	HLKK, p. 155
L1747	Devī Prakāś: <i>Ājkal</i> , 'Nowadays'	HLKK, p. 153
L1771	Narendra Prasād 'Navīn': <i>Praveś-niṣedh</i> , 'Denial of entry'	Tatpāścāt, p. 6
L1772	Narendra Prasād 'Navīn': <i>Samrājyavād</i> , 'Imperialism'	Tatpāścāt, p. 4
L1788	Śaṅkar Puṇatāmbekar: <i>Golī bilakh pari</i> , 'The bullet burst into tears'	Ātāṅk, p. 222
L1809	Someś Purī: <i>Kośīś</i> , 'Attempt'	Kathādeś, p. 587
L1815	Someś Purī: <i>Pālkī</i> , 'Sedan'	Kathādeś, p. 590

L1819	Someś Purī: <i>Tīn pīrhiyām</i> , 'Three generations'	Kathādeś, p. 593
L1824	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Śarīform kī gintī</i> , 'Counting the noble men'	Prasaṅgvaś, p. 92
L1834	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Apnī karnī-bharnī</i> , 'As you make your bed, so you must lie on it'	Prasaṅgvaś, p. 80
L1855	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Dikhāvā</i> , 'Show'	HLKK, p. 387
L1866	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Jāgrti ke barhte kadam</i> , 'The forward march of awakening'	Prasaṅgvaś, p. 117
L1871	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Kasauṭī</i> , 'Criterion'	Kathādeś, p. 457
L1877	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Manovṛtti</i> , 'State of mind'	KN2, p. 165
L1881	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Naukarī</i> , 'Profession'	BLKK2, p. 319
L1890	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Praśāsan</i> , 'Administration'	Prasaṅgvaś, p. 108
L1900	Satīśrāj Puṣkaraṇā: <i>Sahī nyāy</i> , 'True justice'	Prasaṅgvaś, p. 79
L1920	Rameś Rāj: <i>Sālā</i> , 'Bastard'	Hastākṣar, p. 157
L1965	Rājśrī Rañjitā: <i>Avasar</i> , 'Opportunity'	Hastākṣar, p. 162
L1966	Rājśrī Rañjitā: <i>Vijay</i> , 'Victory'	Ātaṅk, p. 210
L1967	Vibhā Raśmi: <i>Akālgrast rište</i> , 'Famine-stricken relationships'	Thār kī dhār, p. 144
L1968	Dineś Rastogī: <i>Baccā</i> , 'Child'	Hastākṣar, p. 106
L1973	Satīś Rāthī: <i>Jismom kā tilism</i> , 'Body magic'	HLKK, p. 381
L1972	Satīś Rāthī: <i>Dāyem bāyem</i> , 'Right and left'	HLKK, p. 379
L1976	Satīś Rāthī: <i>Samay ke sāth-sāth</i> , 'In the course of time'	HLKK, p. 381
L1993	Rāvī: <i>Nayā bal</i> , 'New power'	Kathā bhārati, p. 55
L2010	Simar Sadoṣ: <i>Jebkatarā</i> , 'Pick-pocket'	Hastākṣar, p. 191
L2018	Sukeś Sāhni: <i>Śāsak aur śāsit</i> , 'Ruler and ruled'	Dare hue log, p. 29 - Iceberg, p. 64
L2027	Sukeś Sāhni: <i>Bherīye</i> , 'Wolves'	Dare hue log, p. 86 - Iceberg, p. 116
L2046	Sukeś Sāhni: <i>Mṛtyubodh</i> , 'Presentiment of death'	Dare hue log, p. 98 - Iceberg, p. 100
L2052	Sukeś Sāhni: <i>Niti-nirdhārak</i> , 'Policy-maker'	Dare hue log, p. 65 - Iceberg, p. 109
L2083	Anvar Śamīm: <i>Akāraṅ</i> , 'Groundless'	Ātaṅk, p. 138
L2094	Sanjiv: <i>Surakṣā kā paintarā</i> , 'Protective behaviour'	KN2, p. 101
L2097	Sneh Śarad: <i>Darpaṅ</i> , 'Mirror'	Pratinidhi, p. 87
L2105	Santoṣ Saras: <i>Saṅkalp</i> , 'Resolution'	Ātaṅk, p. 227

L2112	Dhīrendra Śarmā: <i>Śīt yuddh</i> , 'Cold war'	Ātañk, p. 175
L2128	Mañjulā Śarmā: <i>Sannyās</i> , 'Renunciation'	Hastākṣ ar, p. 133
L2139	Nāsirā Śarmā: <i>Lū kā jhomkā</i> , 'Hot gust'	HLKK, p. 171
L2165	Rājendrakumār Śarmā: <i>Vacan-pūr̥ti</i> , 'Keeping a promise'	Hastākṣar, p. 163
L2166	Rājeś Śarmā: <i>Mahīne bhar kī pratibaddhatā</i> , 'A whole month's commitment'	Samānatar, p. 73
L2170	Sureś Śarmā: <i>Apnā-apnā dharm</i> , 'Each his own dharma'	HLKK, p. 419
L2177	Sureś Śarmā: <i>Rājā khuś</i> , 'The king is happy'	HLKK, p. 421
L2189	Yādavendra Śarmā 'Candra': <i>Rūṛhī</i> , 'Tradition'	BLKK2, p. 137
L2213	Śyāmnandan Śāstrī: <i>Samsthā nāyak</i> , 'Head of the institution'	BLKK2, p. 65
L2214	Śyāmnandan Śāstrī: <i>Sabhya-asabhya</i> , 'Cultivated-uncultivated'	BLKK2, p. 66
L2228	Siddheśvar: <i>Dahej kī taiyārī</i> , 'Preparation of dowry'	Kathādeś, p. 479
L2235	Siddheśvar: <i>Kāyar</i> , 'Coward'	Kathādeś, p. 487
L2238	Siddheśvar: <i>Naṅgī duniyā</i> , 'Naked world'	Hastākṣar, p. 189
L2249	Akhilendrapāl Siṃh: <i>Ātmahatyā</i> , 'Suicide'	Tatpāścāt, p. 94
L2255	Akhilendrapāl Siṃh: <i>Vikalp ke bāvjūd</i> , 'In spite of an alternative'	Tatpāścāt, p. 96
L2273	Candrabhūṣaṅ Siṃh 'Candra': <i>Dard</i> , 'Pain'	Kathādeś, p. 158
L2298	Harinārāyaṅ Siṃh 'Hari': <i>Bāhar se bhītar se</i> , 'Outside, inside'	Tatpāścāt, p. 121
L2302	Harinārāyaṅ Siṃh 'Hari': <i>Sahānubhūti</i> , 'Sympathy'	Tatpāścāt, p. 121
L2303	Harinārāyaṅ Siṃh 'Hari': <i>Samjhautā</i> , 'Agreement'	Tatpāścāt, p. 120
L2319	Indrapāl Siṃh Tomar: <i>Kṛtaghna</i> , 'Ungrateful'	Hastākṣar, p. 71
L2323	Suśilā Sitāriyā: <i>Abhāv ka dānav</i> , 'Demon of poverty'	Kathādeś, p. 575
L2333	Suśilā Sitāriyā: <i>Lajjit</i> , 'Ashamed'	Kathādeś, p. 571
L2335	Suśilā Sitāriyā: <i>Lene ke dene</i> , 'Exchange'	Kathādeś, p. 571
L2341	Suśilā Sitāriyā: <i>San̄kalp</i> , 'Resolution'	Kathādeś, p. 570
L2342	Suśilā Sitāriyā: <i>Samāj</i> , 'Society'	Kathādeś, p. 566
L2348	Rameś Kumār Sonī: <i>Agnimukh</i> , 'Spitfire'	Hastākṣar, p. 152

L2354	Vikram Sonī: <i>Aslī gālī</i> , 'Real abuse'	Tatpāścāt, p. 12
L2364	Vikram Sonī: <i>Dāg</i> , 'Stigma'	KN1, p. 134
L2371	Vikram Sonī: <i>Khel-khel merī</i> , 'Effortless'	Kathādeś, p. 369
L2386	Vikram Sonī: <i>Rogī zamīn</i> , 'Sick earth'	Kathādeś, p. 370
L2387	Vikram Sonī: <i>Rozī-roṭī</i> , 'Daily bread'	Kathādeś, p. 362
L2394	Śrī Tilak: <i>Hāthī aur savār</i> , 'Elephant and rider'	BLKK2, p. 36
L2396	Śrī Tilak: <i>Kāmyābī</i> , 'Success'	BLKK2, p. 40
L2407	Śrīnāth: <i>Mukti</i> , 'Liberation'	Samāntar, p. 19
L2417	Pratimā Śrīvāstav: <i>Kaṅgan</i> , 'Bangle'	BLKK2, p. 331
L2419	Pratimā Śrīvāstav: <i>Parāyā dard</i> , 'Another's pain'	BLKK2, p. 330
L2422	Rameś Śrīvāstav: <i>Kīmat</i> , 'Price'	Ātaṅk, p. 203
L2423	Svapnīl Śrīvāstav: <i>Asliyat</i> , 'Reality'	Āṭhvern daśak, p. 92
L2424	Svapnīl Śrīvāstav: <i>Kot</i> , 'Coat'	Āṭhvern daśak, p. 94
L2438	Surendra Sukumār: <i>Satī</i> , 'Sati'	BLKK1, p. 105
L2455	Śyām Sundar 'Dīpti': <i>Kīsmat</i> , 'Fate'	Kathādeś, p. 399
L2456	Śyām Sundar 'Dīpti': <i>Lāisens</i> , 'Licence'	Kathādeś, p. 407
L2471	Rośānlāl Surīrvālā: <i>Gatibhaṅg</i> , 'Out of rhythm'	BLKK1, p. 164
L2477	Sūryabālā: <i>Ek ām nagar kī sahityik gatividhiyām</i> , 'The literary activities of an ordinary town'	Samāntar, p. 92
L2485	Tārik Asalam 'Tasnīm': <i>Aslī cor</i> , 'Real thief'	Tatpāścāt, p. 148
L2505	Kāntilāl Ṭhākare 'Nalinīś': <i>Sthānāntar</i> , 'Another position'	Pratinidhi, p. 100
L2531	Rajendramohan Trivedī 'Bandhu': <i>Āj kī rājnīti</i> , 'Modern politics'	Kathādeś, p. 268
L2537	Rajendramohan Trivedī 'Bandhu': <i>Bhūtar kā sac</i> , 'The truth inside'	Kathādeś, p. 260
L2555	Rajendramohan Trivedī 'Bandhu': <i>Sthānāntaran</i> , 'Transfer'	BLKK2, p. 336
L2559	Rajendramohan Trivedī 'Bandhu': <i>Ye bagulā bhagat</i> , 'These hypocrites'	Kathādeś, p. 271
L2577	Bhṛṅgu Tupkarī: <i>Peṛ aur tinakā</i> , 'The tree and the straw'	HLKK, p. 228
L2585	Dineś Tyāgī: <i>Sikh</i> , 'Advice'	BLKK1, p. 233
L2589	Dineś Tyāgī: <i>Ṭaim badal gaya</i> , 'Times have changed'	HLKK, p. 151
L2590	Dineś Tyāgī: <i>Tumhārī auratēm bhī</i> , 'Your women too'	BLKK1, p. 234

L2591	Dineś Tyāgī: <i>Bhūmihīn</i> , 'Landless'	HLKK, p. 145
L2596	Ravīndranāth Tyāgī: <i>Ek laghukathā</i> , 'A laghukathā'	Samāntar, p. 53
L2597	Sureś Jāngīr 'Uday': <i>Vah veśyā</i> , 'That whore'	Hariyāṇā, p. 222
L2609	Mati Mukhopādhyāy: <i>Sattar bhāg sāt</i> , 'Seventy divided by seven'	Hastākṣar, p. 134
L2615	Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy: <i>Ādhār</i> , 'Foundation'	Kathādeś, p. 287
L2618	Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy: <i>Adhikār</i> , 'Power'	Ātaṅk, p. 208
L2636	Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy: <i>Pharj</i> , 'Duty'	Kathādeś, p. 295
L2648	Rāmnārāyaṇ Upādhyāy: <i>Vādom ke ghare meri</i> , 'In the debates' clutches'	Kathādeś, p. 282
L2659	Asghar Vajāhat: <i>Śer</i> , 'The lion'	Kathā bhāratī, p. 93
L2661	Asghar Vajāhat: <i>Cār hāth</i> , 'Four hands'	KN3, p. 15
L2678	Jagvīrsimh Varmā: <i>Pradarśanī aur pradarśanī</i> , 'Exhibition and exhibition'	HLKK, p. 121
L2683	Māṅik Varmā: <i>Kuch sārthak laghu prasāṅg</i> , 'Some useful little subjects'	Samāntar, p. 70
L2690	Surendra Varmā: <i>Tin kāl</i> , 'Three tenses'	Hastākṣar, p. 197
L2691	Surendra Varmā: <i>Vijñāpan</i> , 'Announcement'	Hastākṣar, p. 198
L2695	Rākeś Vatsa: <i>Sthitiyām</i> , 'Places'	Samāntar, p. 75
L2712	Sinhā Virendrā: <i>Maśāl</i> , 'Torch'	Kathādeś, p. 504
L2720	Sinhā Virendrā: <i>Pratikṣā</i> , 'Waiting'	Kathādeś, p. 494
L2724	Sinhā Virendrā: <i>Vah musāfir</i> , 'The traveller'	Kathādeś, p. 496
L2727	Jñānprakāś Vivek: <i>Dharm kī rakṣā</i> , 'Protection of religion'	BLKK2, p. 211
L2733	Jñānprakāś Vivek: <i>Phark</i> , 'Difference'	BLKK2, p. 214
L2740	Nīśā Vyās: <i>Strī-puruṣ</i> , 'Woman and man'	Hastākṣar, p. 112
L2741	Nīśā Vyās: <i>Upayogitā</i> , 'Usefulness'	Āthverṇ daśak, p. 148
L2771	Rājendra Yādav: <i>Maraṇ kāmṇā</i> , 'Death-wish'	Kathā bhāratī, p. 73
L2781	Rāmyatan Prasād Yādav: <i>Antar prem, prem kā</i> , 'The difference between love and love'	Kathādeś, p. 311
L2812	Bhārat Yāyāvar: <i>Bīsvīrṇ sadī kā ādmī</i> , 'Man of the twentieth century'	KN2, p. 148