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Email : umkhanol@wiirj.com

skulabharan@wiirj.com

Mob : +91 9623979067



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in Indian Literature in English"**

Edited by

Asst. Prof. Atish Akade

Address for Correspondence

Mrs. Patsavi Laxman Shete

Editor in Charge, Worldwide International Inter Disciplinary Research Journal (A Peer Reviewed Ref
Phdope, Santosh Public School, Nanded (MH, India) Email: ahshprakashan2009@gmail.com

Dr. Rajesh C. Umbarkar

House No. 624, Bellanagar, Near Marol Temple, Taroda (KH) Nanded, - 431605 (India) - Maharashtra
Email: umbarkar.raajesh@yahoo.com, shrinivakashaan2009@gmail.com Mob. No. 9623979067

Director : Mr. Tejas Ramprakar (For International Conferences only) + 91-0557894082

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Mahatma Phule Mahavidyalaya, Ahmedpur.

Address for Correspondence

Mrs. Pallavi Laxman Shete

Principal, Sanskriti Public School, Nanded.(MH. India)

Website: www.wiidrj.com

House No.624 - Belanagar, Near Maruti Temple, Taroda (KH), Nanded – 431605 (India -
Maharashtra) **Email:** Shrishprakashan2009@gmil.com umbarkar.rajesh@yahoo.com

Dr. Rajesh G. Umbarkar Mob. No: +91-9623979067

REFLECTION OF SOCIETY IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *THE BARBER'S TRADE UNION AND OTHER STORIES*

Mrs. Seema Mahesh Mali

Assistant Professor (CHB), Department of English, Matoshri Bayabai Shripatrao Kadam Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Kadegaon, Dist.-Sangli. State- Maharashtra

ABSTRACT:

Short story as a form of literature has been popular in India since the classical literary age to the present day and India is a treasure house of stories. The tales told in the Buddhist *Jatakas*, *The Kathasaritasagar*, *The Panchtantra* and the tales from the *Mahabharat and Ramayana* reveals that the story telling was an old form in India. There is an essential difference between the story as handled by the writers of the earlier times and that cultivated by modern exponents of this form. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2005) is one of the foremost of Indian writers. He is versatile and is well known as a novelist, short story writer and art critic. His writing reveals his deep understanding of our social problems and his subtle sense of humor. His volume of short stories entitled *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* bring out his involvement in the many social problems of India. This Short story collection pictures rural India of yesterday in her struggle to free herself from the shackles of the old order. The present paper tries to study the contemporary society reflected in the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand's *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories*.

RESEARCH PAPER:

A various types of stories and tales were written from ancient time to the modern in Sanskrit and many Indian regional languages. But the short story proper is adopted by Indian only after the Introduction of English Education in India. At the outset short stories were written by Indians in English as a result of the colonial effect, but the Indian short story is very good blend of traditional Indian tale and western short story proper since its inception. The modern Indian short story tradition is nearly a century old gives the variety of theme mood and tone to the short story. The short story has a splendid vogue in modern times. It is growing more and more popular both with the readers and writers. It is especially suited to modern taste and to the hurry and bustle of modern life.

During Gandhian age the Indian short story reached its maturity. The theme of the clash between tradition and modernity social reform discrimination between illusion and reality can trust between India and west were the dominant themes during this period. The three major novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao have contributed a lot to the Indian short story in English. Among them Mulk Raj Anand is prominent short story writer who has written seven short story collection-*Lajwanti and Other Stories*, *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories*, *The Barber's Trade Union and Other stories*, *Between Tears and Laughter*, *The Lost Child and Other Stories*, *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories*, *Reflection on the Golden Bed*.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the foremost of Indian writers. He is considered as one of the pioneers of modern short story writers in Indian English of 1940s. He is versatile and is well known as a novelist, short story writer and art critic. His writing reveals his deep understanding of our social problems and his subtle sense of humor. His volume of short stories entitled *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* bring out his involvement in the many social problems of India. This story pictures rural India of yesterday in her struggle to free herself from the shackles of the old order.

'*The Barber's Trade Union*' is the first story of this collection and story collection is named after this story. Chandu is the barber boy who formed trade union against Jamindar Vijay Chand to teach him a lesson for his landlordism and overbearingness in the story. The writer wants to see the weaker section of people united against the exploiters. Chandu, the enterprising rustic Barber boy, who is bitten by the bug of modernity dares to wear the cloths of a doctor and is threatened with dire consequences for this out of impudence by the village elders. In the end it is Chandu who wins, when he goes on a strike, organizes a Barbers trade union and is successful in breaking the age old custom of the Barber's dancing attendance on the village elders.

'*The Barber's Trade Union*', the tale of a dynamic barber boy, is satisfying diversion from the serious novels that preceded it, namely coolie, untouchable, the Lalu trilogy. It explicates the conflict between a barber and the traditional society. The exploitation of the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed, a recurring theme in Anand's major fiction, is handled here with a deft touch of comedy. The setting of the story is a typically North Indian village. The narrator is sympathetic towards the protagonist. The events in the story are an outgrowth of its central character named Chandu. Chandu is both an individual and a type. Unconsciously though, he embarks on an exploit which ultimately brings about his emancipation. Chandu is natively egoistical like most great men of India.

Chandu's portrait as the underprivileged lad of the village is highly realistic. He was weak in mathematics, while at school. He has to seek apprenticeship to the hereditary profession of the Barber's caste. He is sent out hair-cutting in the village and this keeps the young boy too occupied to devote time to his studies. He is the victim of society, like Anand's other heroes. The narrator's mother constantly dissuades him from playing with Chandu saying that he is low caste barber's son. Chandu has to quit studies after the death of his father.

Chandu decides to dress up like the city doctor Kalan Khan. The doctor's dress represents a happy change from the tradition. Chandu's appearance in the new garb causes unprecedented disorder in the village. Chandu, insulted and humiliated by the village superiors, takes to a path of action. He revolts against his lot to find a way out of his predicament. Though he belongs to a lower strata of society, he is not dull witted. With the intent of teaching the orthodox idiots a lesson, he abandons his practice in the village.

Through this story Anand has drawn our attention to the social problems which in the thirties and forties were accentuated by the glaring contrast between the material comforts of the rich and the destitution of thousands of poor people.

In the story '*Duty*', Mangal Singh is the pathetic character. For his duty he has to face many onslaughts of his seniors. Next story '*The Maharaja and the Tortoise*', depicts the blind faith of the Hindu Maharaja, sir Ganga Singh and his loyalty to the British King. The story '*On the Border*' reveals the devastation done by the foreigners on the border and the feeling of a woman for her child involved in it. In the story '*The Liar*', Lahu is the Liar who narrates fantastic and romantic story to the child Anand about his experiences of hunting.

'*A Rumour*' is the tragic story of Dhandu. He hears rumor that there is a mill at Bariwal which provides employment. He roams here and there in search of that place and is ever run by lorry and meets his tragic ends. '*A pair of Mustachios*' is an exceptionally humors story. It shows how Khan Azam gives a special first to his mustache, maintaining the valiant uprightness of the symbol of his ancient and Nobel family though he has become pauper.

'*The Lost Child*' is renowned story of Anand. The goes to fair and wants possess things around him but he gets lost in the fair and forgets all allurements of the fair and keeps repeating – 'I want my father and mother'. This story is symbolic and emanates poetic impulses.

'*The Cobbler and the Machine*' - Saudagar an old cobbler is the victim of the machine. He oscillates between hope and desire for playing off his debt; he drained his life blood by the sweat that was always pouring of his body. In the story, Saudagar an old rustic cobbler who has a passion for the machine, incurs a heavy debt in importing a shoe stitching machine from abroad, though he is half afraid that god would curse my fingers and those my pupils and make them incapable of sensing at all, if I began to use this machine. When the machine arrives, instead of saving time and energy, as he had hoped it would, it only brings in retributions.

'*A Confession*' is the confession of Mr. Latif the municipal Commissioner how he was enraged by a collie. He wanted to pay him two annas but the coolie insisted four annas. The remaining two annas were paid by GulsanRai. Latif confessed that every moment the coolie seemed to be hanging around him. In the story '*A Promoter of quarrel*,' the shopkeeper Nanak is the real promoter of quarrels. He takes supply of milk from cowherd women but makes haggling in payment.

'*Lullaby*' is a small story but it is successful in manifesting the grimness of tragedy. There is vivid portrayal of the miseries and poverty of laborers, the brutality of the factory owners. The story is surcharged with the love of mother for her child. Phalini sings the lullaby to hush up her ailing child but he is dead. The mother yells a piteous cry. The roaring machine never stops to console her. The machine goes out roaring as if nothing has happened.

The tragic story '*Lullaby*' evokes our pathos and pity. We become sentimentally attached to the mother and the child. Anand wants to evoke pity towards Phalini, a poor mother employee in a jute factory. She is singing the lullaby and she is feeding the machine with handful of jute. The baby is dead and the mother burst into tears. But the whole factory seems to be indifferent and cruel. The noise of the Machine is intensifying the tragedy and the cruelty associated therewith.

'*The terrorist*' is in real sense the historical figure SardarBhagat Singh who threw bombs in the Indian legislative Assembly. The intermingling fact and fiction has made the story '*The Terrorist*' an absorbing story. '*Kashmir Idyll*' gives the glimpse of feudal society. NawabZaffarullah is a prototype of khan Azam Khan. Rather more than that Nawab has his feudal right to compel his young tenants to row his pleasure boat. The young man is fatigued and shocked of his mother's death. The story at the end takes a turn when the feudal power is chocked to death by his fit of laughter. The Nawab falls dead.

'*Informers*' is a plot less story. It is the story of revolutionaries and a man from them plays the role of approver. He becomes an informer. It is not so touching as '*The Terrorist*'. 'Lottery makes Shankar the washer man crazy and he pledges his wife to a money lender for ten rupees. The story at the beginning seems to drift to the gloominess, takes a stride to end in comedy to the utter surprise of the reader. Anand has repugnance not only to the feudalism but also to the Indian priest hood. In the story '*Mahadev and Parvati*' he attacks the priest for his exploiting tendency affecting the simple people like Mahadev and Parvati who repose their faith in old Hindu Tradition.

Anand's writing is a result of his close observation of life around him. His birth in a family which was not rich yet not in poverty the religious intolerance of his parents and the traveling because of his father's transferable job from place to place enabled him to gain rare insight in to the life of the common man. All these factors made a deep impact not only on his life but also on his writing. He deals with the themes like the caste system, class structure, religion education and status

of women in Indian society. He reveals his social humanism by protesting against social evils and the tradition society. He hates and detests all types of exploitations and protests against anti-human forces. To Anand, art is not for art's sake. It is for life and it must convey some message to modern man.

Mulk Raj Anand protests against the social issue like poverty, caste system class, dehumanization, superstitions and ignorance. He observes the social evil faced by the country both before and after independence and presents them in a way to invite attention of the readers to contemporary issues. He appeals the reader to be aware and act against everything that works as obstacles in the progress humanity. His writing is a purposive literature of protest giving justice to the lower strata of the society with whom he has spent his childhood.

Mulk Raj Anand is the first Indian author who writes against caste and class system. He writes about the untouchables, the peasants the oppressed and suppressed section of society human dignity and suffering of the downtrodden. Caste and class are very complex phenomena. Caste has traditional association with occupation. Each caste has its own occupation e.g. the Cobbler regarded it is his duty to prepare shoes and repair shoes. No one can change his caste. It is determined by one's birth.

He shows the role the caste system play in the destiny of an individual. The untouchables have to suffer from misery, poverty exploitation and humiliation at every step direct or indirectly. Apart from the caste system Indian society also faces the rigidity of class system based on money power that gives rise to the tension the dominant rich and the subordinate poor class. The privileged class always tries to exploit the poor.

His uniqueness lies in his treatment of specific castes which according to him is the origin of evils in Indian society. He discovers that caste alone is not the only evil in our society. He finds that class distinction is equally evil and that the social order must be changed to give justice to the lower castes. Social realism and humanism are the two outstanding traits of his fiction. In dealing with social problem the emphasis was laid on realism. He writes realistically in his fiction about the domed lives of the down trodden and the oppressed who are all victims of poverty class hatred race hatred and inhuman cruelty. His short stories are an expression of a deeply felt anger against the contradictions and oppression of the Indian society exploitation and aggression greed and selfishness stupidity and violence.

Some of the important tenets of Anand's humanism are that his short stories illustrate his sympathy for the underdog his criticism of the caste system. He describes denunciation of poverty, corruption and selfishness, his admiration for women and his deep insight into the psychology of children. Anand pronounced sympathy for the underdog as well as his fight for the rights of the lowly and the lost forms important elements of his humanism and this is at work in some of his stories.

The low status of women is yet another cause of evils that exists in society. Women especially poor woman as a class suffer at the hands of the man. In the first place they are treated as beasts of labors and secondly they are used as victims of the passion men. Anand is a champion not only of the low class and the depressed class but an advocated of women's freedom. In this sense Anand upholds the dignity of not only the downtrodden but women as a class also. The position of women in tradition Hindu society is recurring theme in Anand's fiction and quite a few of his short stories are devoted to it bringing out both the tears and the laughter latent in the subject.

Another theme which recurs in many of the short stories is that of the exploitation of the poor and helpless the down trodden and the oppressed a theme with which so much of Anand's longer fiction is preoccupied. That aspect of the theme where the agents of the exploitation are either traditional forces like casteism, communalism, feudalism the suppression of women

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