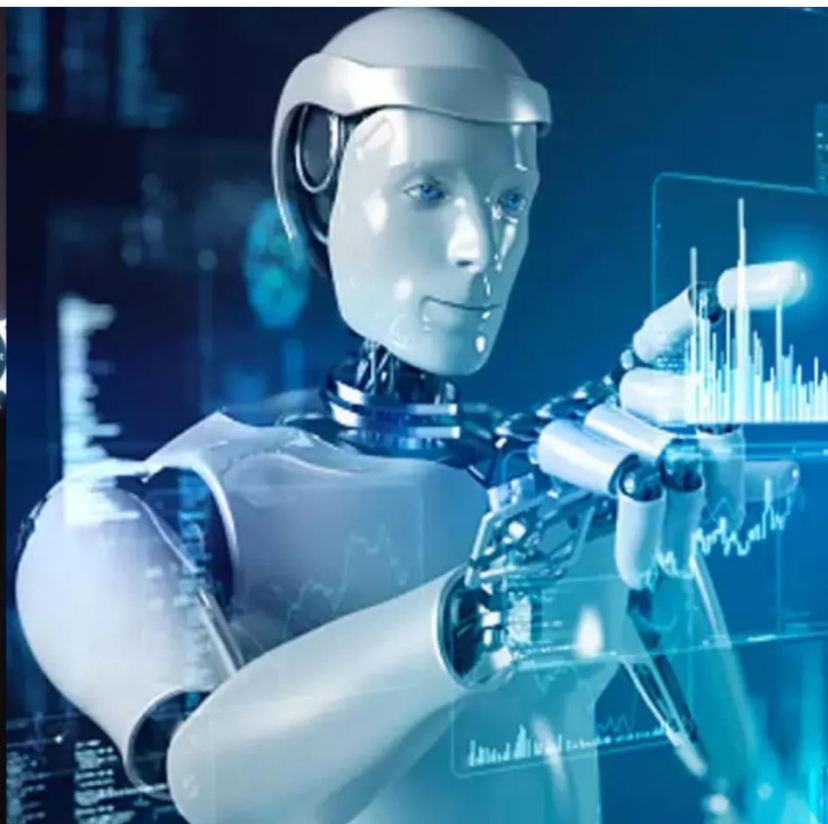




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# ‘Mulk Raj Anand’ and his Short Stories

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**ABSTRACT:** Mulk Raj Anand, an eminent Indian English writer, was a pivotal figure in the 20th-century progressive writers' movement. Through his narratives, Anand meticulously illuminated the genuine social responsibilities inherent within society. The present paper endeavors to delve into the psychoanalytical dimensions present in his short stories while also scrutinizing the underlying perspectives that inform his narrative style. Anand has depicted India in its diverse and vibrant essence through his short stories. This research work seeks to explore and comprehend the psychological intricacies within Anand's short tales, endeavoring to analyze character portrayals and the psychological motivations that underpin them, all while considering the contextual backdrop and circumstances that shape the writer's imagination. Moreover, the analysis will encompass the themes prevalent in his stories. Anand's consciousness narrative technique within his short stories facilitates a deeper understanding of the latent psychology and reflects the socio-cultural milieu of society.

**KEYWORDS:** Prominent, Responsibility, Analyzing, Character, Socio-Cultural Background, Theme

## I. INTRODUCTION

All of Anand's short stories are earnest endeavors to unveil the anguish and suffering of the lower castes and classes in India. In his narratives, he addresses the economic disparities and psychological torment experienced by those trapped in poverty. Anand brings to light the concerns of all individuals inhabiting society; his approach diverges from that of Renaissance humanism, which merely contemplates human existence. Instead, he adopts a realistic perspective focused on the enhancement of human welfare. Through his writings, he emphasizes societal issues, particularly those affecting marginalized groups. He adeptly maintains a balance between thematic depth and a rich variety of moods and tones, as the brevity of short stories allows for extensive experimentation. Consequently, his works avoid exaggeration and moralizing. Numerous influences have shaped Anand's artistry in short story writing, drawing significantly from Indian folktales and fairy tales that captivated him during his childhood when he listened to his mother recounting these narratives. Anand's writing exhibits a synthesis of traditional Indian storytelling and a Western psychological approach. He embraced the Indian folktale tradition while striving to grasp the collective psychology of European short stories, ultimately merging these styles into a novel form that extends the ancient Indian narrative into a contemporary understanding of psychological complexities. Thus, it is evident that Anand's storytelling is a comprehensive synthesis of Eastern and Western influences, as well as old and new methodologies. Undoubtedly, his short story artistry is distinctly unique, characterized by a vivid amalgamation of traditional folktale frameworks with a profound focus on character development and the socio-political contexts of contemporary life. By showcasing the myriad shades and hues of social surroundings, these stories express the reformative zeal of the writer. His collections, such as "The Lost Child and Other Stories" (1934), "The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories" (1944), "The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories" (1947), "Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories" (1944), "The Power of Darkness and Other Stories" (1959), "Lajvanti and Other Stories" (1966), "Between Tears and Laughter" (1973), and "Folktales of Punjab" (1974), encapsulate his portrayal of social issues with a touch of humor, rendering these narratives all the more captivating. His characters predominantly inhabit rural settings and are frequently the downtrodden, striving to liberate themselves from the constraints of orthodox social values. Through his literary endeavors, Anand consistently reflects the socio-cultural landscape of society, capturing the true essence of India both before and after independence. The stories can be categorized under various themes, such as lyrical awareness and social consciousness. Anand, deeply influenced by folk and fairy tales, aimed to intertwine the framework of these narratives with a concentrated focus on characters and contemporary life situations. For instance, in Anand's short story "The Lost Child", the author illustrates two contrasting psychological states: the initial exuberance of a child enchanted by the beauty surrounding him, followed by the despair of a child separated from his parents amidst the fair. The subsequent story in the collection, "The Eternal Why", explores the inquisitive nature of a child, who yearns to comprehend the world and the novel experiences he encounters. Similarly, one of Anand's notable works, "The Barber's Trade Union", delves into the emotions of a barber boy from a lower caste, juxtaposed with his upper-caste friend. Chandu, the protagonist, harbors aspirations of social recognition and possesses



a talent for reciting poetry. He assists his father after school, but his life takes a turn following his father's untimely demise, compelling him to abandon his studies and assume full responsibility as a barber. Everything appears stable until one day, when he dresses as a wealthy upper-caste individual, leading to profound changes in his life as he grapples with the discrimination imposed by upper-caste society. Ultimately, he finds his voice, advocating against inhumanity and skillfully transforming into the union leader of barbers. Through this narrative, Anand amplifies the plight of marginalized workers enduring exploitation. In "Lullaby", Mulk Raj Anand poignantly captures the relationship between a mother and her son, as the mother sings a lullaby to her dying one-year-old child while operating a jute machine. Fate, however, has already dictated the child's demise, rendering the human song obsolete amidst the relentless sound of machinery. Anand starkly illustrates the harsh realities of life, which are often too unpredictable to accept. The writer emphasizes the mother-child bond and explores the psychological turmoil of a mother grappling with the agony of witnessing her child's impending death. In his collection "The Power of Darkness and Other Stories", Anand delves into the theme of mortality. In "Old Babu", he portrays the struggles of landless laborers and their exploitation by affluent farmers. Old Babu, who appears so aged that no one wishes to employ him, is not the sole character traversing the road. In "Birth", a heavily pregnant woman follows her father-in-law as they both labor to break stones for road construction. Anand underscores themes of mortality, struggle, despair, reliance, fear, and hope within this narrative. All of Anand's short stories are earnest endeavors to unveil the anguish and suffering of the lower castes and classes in India. In his narratives, he addresses the economic disparities and psychological torment experienced by those trapped in poverty. Anand brings to light the concerns of all individuals inhabiting society; his approach diverges from that of Renaissance humanism, which merely contemplates human existence. Instead, he adopts a realistic perspective focused on the enhancement of human welfare. In "The Parrot in the Cage", Anand accentuates themes of conflict, desperation, loneliness, hopelessness, and struggle. Conversely, in "The Tractor and the Corn Goddess", he explores themes of self-importance, generosity, failure, responsibility, modernity, change, and suspicion. In "A Cock and Bull Story" from the collection "Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories", the protagonist Amru exploits his position, considering himself superior as he claims descent from the holy bull that supports the world, offering rituals to individuals in exchange for monetary compensation. In "Silver Bangles", Anand highlights themes of jealousy, patriarchy, connection, insecurity, and anger. Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator, the story unveils Anand's exploration of women's suffering and the chauvinistic attitudes prevalent among men. Lajvanti, the protagonist, is a helpless woman subjected to harassment by her brother-in-law, Jaswant, while her husband remains absent, pursuing his BA at college. Despite her vehement opposition, she finds herself unable to shield herself from Jaswant's lustful gaze. Anand symbolizes her helplessness through the imagery of a caged bird in the titular story, "Lajvanti". In "A Pair of Mustachios", Mulk Raj Anand addresses themes of pride, class, conformity, acceptance, tradition, and freedom. He illustrates how individuals are constrained in their self-expression due to the prevailing class system. Through his short stories, Anand elucidates that the true challenge within societies lies in the undue significance individuals attribute to themselves based solely on their perceived social class. In "The Gold Watch", Mulk Raj Anand explores themes of control, innocence, anxiety, acceptance, disappointment, change, and connection. Anand suggests that many individuals are compelled to adhere to paths dictated by their employers due to their societal positions, concurrently critiquing colonialism and its impacts on the average Indian populace. In "Fear of Fear", the narrative conveys themes of determination, fear, resentment, independence, and cruelty. The story, narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator, portrays the character Dev, who resolutely refuses to consume food or comply with his parents' requests. His obstinacy impedes his willingness to heed any commands. This research work endeavors to comprehend Mulk Raj Anand's short stories and to unveil the intricate psychology of the characters he portrays. Anand adeptly encapsulates realism, social responsibility, the exploitation of women, the plight of the oppressed, and the socio-cultural landscape of post-colonial Indian society, alongside the economic conditions of that era. Through his narrative techniques, he explores themes of consciousness, allowing readers to engage with the thoughts of characters, which ultimately aids in uncovering both the writer's and the characters' psychological landscapes across different stories. Anand vividly articulates a spectrum of psychological states, from childhood to adulthood, drawing inspiration from the real-life experiences of individuals in India during the independence era. Diverse characters exhibit distinct psychological profiles, including the psychology of a child, the plight of exploited women, the struggles of an oppressed barber, and the anguish of a helpless mother. Anand profoundly delves into the psychology of humanism through his short stories.

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