

Art of Characterization in Indian English Short Stories: A Literature Review

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Received: January 30, 2019

Accepted: March 10, 2019

ABSTRACT: *Short story is a very popular form of fiction. A story is a series of events told for the purpose of entertainment; it may be either true or imagined or a mixture of both. It is a succinct tale excluding the details. Short story is a work of short fiction, broader than an anecdote, much shorter than a novel and comprising of all the elements of a novel like plot, structure, idea, development, characters and so forth. Characterization is the way a writer reveals the personality of a character. It refers to the author's manner of presenting characters. Many authors like Rabindranath Tagore, Manju Kapur, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai are prominent literary figures who have written a number of short stories. The present study has its focus on two Indian English short story authors namely, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. In this backdrop, the present paper is an attempt to study of art of characterization of these writers with the help of literature review.*

Key Words: *Short Stories, Characters, Characterization, Protagonist, Behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of short story in India is rich and powerful, its impact on Indian Literature can still be observed. But when it comes to short stories in Indian Writing in English, the genre was properly developed only after the independence. The pre-independence period is filled with literary works in English but they are mostly novels or plays. The short stories were only a small add-on to the large English literary world of India. It is only in the post-independence period that the short story was given importance in Indian Writing in English. With an increase in English speaking population and decrease in availability of time, people moved to short story for literary pleasure. Instead of spending days on reading a novel, the fascination of getting the whole story in less than an hour seemed an appreciable option. Though, with the number of novels being written, it is evident that the love of novels and detailed story telling is still alive, but the short stories have also made their mark.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most prominent authors of Indian English Writing. All his characters are alive and the situations are realistic. Be it his novels or his short stories, the text connects to common people because of his keen observation and deep understanding of human nature. His stories are full of varied human behavior and an insight in the human mind. Some of his important short story collections are *The Lost Child and Two Lyrical Stories* (1934), *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts and Other Stories* (1976), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1994), *Things Have a Way of Working Out and Other Stories* (1998), *Man Whose Name Did Not Appear in the Census and Other Stories* (2006), and so on.

R. K. Narayan, is one of the three most important pillars of Indian Writing in English; the other two being Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. They are also known as the golden-trio of Indian English Writing. R. K. Narayan was an active member of the Indian writing community for almost sixty years. He is an Indian English writer known for his works set in Malgudi, the fictional South Indian town. In his writings, he highlights the everyday life of his characters in social context. He explored the ordinary human life with humor and compassion. He has written a number of short story collections including *Swami and Friends* (1935), *Malgudi Days* (1943), *Dudu and Other Stories* (1943), *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1945), *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *A Horse and two Goats and Other Stories* (1970), *Under the Bunyan tree and Other Stories* (1985), and so forth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the papers written in past five years are studied. The papers are as follows:

Trimurthy, E. S. S. Narayana (2014) in the paper entitled *R. K. Narayan's Writing Style*, critically analysed R. K. Narayan's works in terms of language, syntax, and its artistic devices. The explained different linguistic expressions and analyzed them with reference to an author. It included the choice of words, syntax, sentence structure, figurative language, the rhythmic pattern and rhetorical devices. The paper measured Narayan's artistic writing style in the light of these linguistic expressions. The tone, diction and imagery in different works are scrutinized with a keen eye. The author says, "It is the stylistic features of his art of fiction that are analyzed by numerous critics."¹ and concluded the paper by saying that Narayan is a professional writer who maintains a great combination of art and acumen.

Trimurthy, E. S. S. N. and Karmarkar, Rajendra (2014) in the paper entitled *Characters and Characterisation in the works of R. K. Narayan*, the authors discussed the qualities of characters and art of characterization as presented by R. K. Narayan in his major works. According to the authors, the zest for life in the characters of Narayan's fictional world is remarkable; the people are all hale and hearty, irrespective of their social status. The authors complimented Narayan's art of characterization by saying, "His characters, as a matter of fact, are individuals, rather than types."² The paper discussed on the devices used by Narayan to depict his characters.

Dash, Durga Prasad (2015) in the paper entitled, *Social Vision in the Short Stories of Mulk Raj Anand and Manoj Das*, discussed the social aspects of the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand in comparison to Manoj Das along with their writing style. The paper analyzed the psychological and social importance of their work. Their short stories were focused on bringing about a social change for the betterment of the society. As the author says, "They try to show a large picture of the society through the small canvas of their short stories."³ The paper studied the vision of the society through the short stories. It discussed the social stigmas like caste system, untouchability, unequal hierachal social division and economic exploitation.

Gupta, Lalita (2016) in her paper *A Socio-Psychological Spectrum of Child-Life in The Lost Child and Other Stories by Mulk Raj Anand*, explained the impact of children characters in understanding the changing social spectrum. She also studied social-evils through the consciousness of their child protagonists. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the origin and importance of Indian Short Story as a genre. The second part has its focus on *The Lost Child and Other Stories*, its socio-psychological study and the characters present in the short stories of the collection.

Mor, Anoop (2016) in his paper entitled *Mulk Raj Anand's Short Stories: A thematic perspective*, discussed the variety of themes available in the short stories by Mulk Raj Anand. He studied themes like religious hypocrisy, exploitation of the have-nots, social injustice, tradition versus modernity, and the position of women in the traditional Indian society. The paper discussed Anand's works in light of the things that influenced him and his motive to write the stories. Anand have presented the issues that are appealing to mind and affect everyone. The societal unjust depicted in Anand's works is realistic which helps us sympathize with the suffering of the people. In this paper, Anand's short stories that represent the problems of Indian society like casteism, feudalism, suppressions of women, modernization, religion, etc were discussed.

Naz, Farah and Namrata (2017) in their paper entitled, *The Short Stories of R. K. Narayan: A Study Character*, discussed the different themes in the short stories of R. K. Narayan. The paper discusses the qualities of Narayan's short stories. The study discussed about the realism and romanticism in the said short stories. The paper studied the themes of the short stories by Narayan including road side events, the family atmosphere, the innocent mischief of children, their innocent talk and tricks remind an adult of his childhood and their social relevance. The paper also reviewed the techniques of his writing along with the plot and structure of the short stories.

Goel, Ruchita (2017) in the paper entitled *R. K. Narayan's Malgudi An Imaginative Locale* talked about the town Malgudi. The paper suggested that Malgudi, the fictional town created by Narayan as a plot for his works; is impeccable. Its historical records given by Narayan are specific and yet the geographical and physical conditions of the town grow gradually. With every story, the town develops just like a living being. The social developments and changes affect the town of Malgudi like any real one. The paper concluded with the qualities of Malgudi as a town, both in the text and as a fictional one.

Sophy, Margret (2018) in the paper entitled *Art of characterization: A comparative study in the selected novels of Mulk Raj Anand & Raja Rao*, as the name suggests, compares the art of characterization of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in their respective novels. The paper highlighted the transition of Indian fiction initiated by the golden trio and their impact on the Indian English Writing. In the said paper, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and *Serpent and the Rope* are compared to Anand's *Collie* and *untouchable* in the light of the art of characterization.

Singh, Nidhi, (2018) in the paper entitled "*The Lost Child*" Mulk Raj Anand's *Magnum Opus* attempted a study on the importance of the story *The Lost Child* in Anand's literary works. The author says, "...it is a gem of lyrical writing which has been translated into other languages more extensively than any other story of his."⁴ The author studied the development of the story in great detail while complimenting Anand's literary excellence. The components of a story, as seen in *The Lost Child*, are inspected. The paper concluded with the appreciation of Anand's explanation of child's psychological situation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Research papers have been written on different themes, plots and ideas present in the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. They give emphasis to the characters, the art of characterization, the writing style, or social perspective, imagination, humor, and so on. After studying the papers mentioned before, we can say that Narayan never challenged the trend, but found a way to write for pleasure while being aware of the society and its norms. Narayan focuses his works on the people and creates characters that are realistic and true to life. "R. K. Narayan is a realistic writer as he does not portray the qualities of his characters rather he observes how his characters react to their social world, the world in which they perform their daily routine."⁵ Anand, on the other hand, draws a true but pitiful picture of the lower classes of Indian society. "...Anand has drawn man's attention to his miserable plight but has also infused in him enough courage to lash at the inhumane pattern of relationships that allow one to prey upon the weaker members of the flock."⁶ All these papers discussed different aspects of short stories written by Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. The stories are studied and scrutinized in the light of their art of characterization. Anand's works are completely dedicated to the cause of social development whereas, Narayan, at times, writes simply for the pleasure of writing and reading.

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