

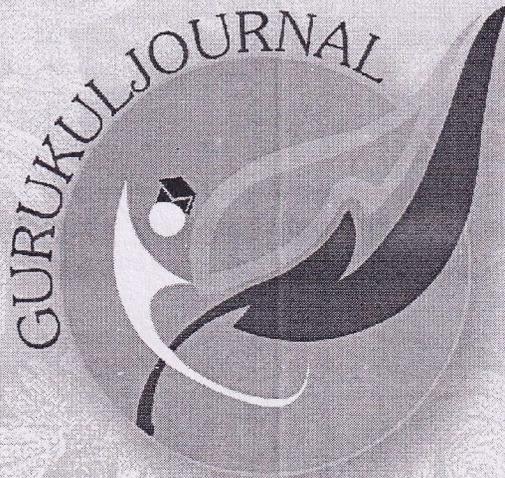
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Prose Poem and Lyric Awareness in the stories of Mulak Raj Anand

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Mulak Raj Anand is one of the most outstanding storytellers, by virtue of his fecundity and the great variety of theme and moods, tone and technique which characterizes his short stories. He has so far provided more than half a dozen collection of short stories over the last forty years. Anand's short stories reveal other modes also, such as social satire, uproarious laughter and acute psychological perception. The first group represents the stories of "Lyrical Awareness". In these stories the element of incident is almost minimal, the emphasis being an imagination emotional apprehension of an aspect of life, either on the human level or on that of animal creation. As in all lyric poetry, the themes have one element, such as birth and death, beauty, love and childhood and the treatment often reveals a symbolic dimension added to realistic presentation. There is also an appropriate heightening of style, in keeping with the mood and tone of the narrative.

The first story on the group "The Lost Child" illustrates almost all these features and is easily one of the most memorable of the Anand's short stories. It is a fable in which the traumatic experience of a child also symbolizes the eternal varieties of human condition. The story has a neat and balanced structure and the description in a lyrical vein¹. "The Lost Child" is admittedly one of the most famous of Anand's stories both from the point of view of technique and novelty of the theme. Anand has called it "a prose poem" and all most every critic of Anand has commented upon the story of glowing terms. Thus, Dr.K.N. Sinha believes that his famous story is "satisfying autonomous and complete on a work of art"². Similarly Dr. G.S. Balrama Gupta also nods in approval: - "The Lost Child is perhaps the most popular of Anand's prose poems"³. Dr.C.V.Venugopal likewise remarks. "The story is devoided of many sentimentality and asher triumph in vivid portrayal"⁴.

More recently, Dr.M.K.Naik, the author of a standard history of Indian English Literature has remarked:-

"The Lost Child" is really a remarkable story where a little child while visiting a fair in the company of his friend becomes so enthralled by a sight of colorful shops displaying various items on sale that he finally loses contact with his parents in the process. When we realize his blunder, only deep cries comes out of his embittered heart. When a man from the crowd tries to soothe him and even offers him to buy a toy, garland and sweets and also a tempting offer of joyride, the child refuses and keep on repeating "I want my mother, I want my father"⁵.

Evidently, Anand's success lies in impressing on the readers the little child's awareness of losing his primal innocence and paradisiacal existence. The child becomes a symbol of Adam in his error as well as in his realization of error. The story easily compares favourably with Graham Green's exploration of a similar theme in the well known story "The Basement Room". Anand's success is all the more credible because he demonstrates through the child's outburst that a premature exposure to the tempting realities means fall from grace and exile from heaven. In a similar vein, Anand has tried a few other "prose poem" and stories of "lyric awareness". The





stories like "The External Why" and "The Conqueror" have its hero in a five year old child, who wants to be accepted among people who are certainly much older than his other playmates. The senior boy excludes the child from their game but the little child is undaunted. As the other child recede to the foot of his hill, the small child shouts and at the top of his voice "Wait I am coming". But the boy realizes that the grown-up boy has played a trick with him. Hence, he takes up the challenge and he moves towards the hill but he stumbles in the process against the rock. He begins to cry in fear and dewy tears come to his eyes. For a moment child looks at the blue sky but suddenly takes a decision to reach the top of the hill, unmindful of the result.

"But in the darkness of the swiftly approaching night he ran up the hill, his bright face showing to his fellows the torch-light of the conqueror".⁶

The success of the story lies in demonstrating the invincibility of the human will represented by a child.

"The External Why" also presents a similar amount of the consciousness of the children in their utter innocence, vivacity and boundless curiosity. The children of these stories are little elfins and potent symbol of human consciousness in the early stage of purity and innocence.

"Lullaby" is one of the most successful stories of Mulak Raj Anand and it has been regarded as a "little masterpiece in the rhythmic prose"⁷

All of Admirers of Anand have referred this story on a "prose poem". As Dr. M. K. Naik remarks-

"Lullaby", showing a rare delicacy of touch, is a fine evocation of a young mother's state of mind as she sits rocking her dying child in her lap and remembering her lover, while she feeds the machine with handful of jute in a factory.⁸

Here is a working woman named Fhalini sings lullaby to quieter her little whining child. But the story shows that in the grating noise of grinding machines, her lullaby is suppressed and only the monstrous roar of the machine is audible. Finally the woman feels the hands of the little child and finds them stiff and she burst into piteous cry. However, the roaring machine continuous to grate as if nothing has if happened. This is a perfect story which suggests and conveys more through its evocative language. This misery of labourers in general and the misery of female labourers in particular. The brutality of factory owners in particular and love of a woman for her child- all these entire fortune in the making of a golden bed, studded with costly jewels.

"Birth" one of the most successful stories of Mulak Raj Anand easily reminds of one of the Anand's great evocation stories triggered with deep human pathos. The strong can easily compare itself with the deeply moving poetic stories like "The Lost Child" and "The Lullaby". Dr. Sinha calls it "a rhapsody to creation" a spontaneous celebration of the upsurge of life. Thematically the story is a kin to "Lullaby" on each of the two stories celebration the courage of a working woman, especially of her spirit of endurance. Anand describes her not only a woman but a spirit representing the mother earth's travail and agony. The success of the story lies in Anand's authentic reproduction of the minute details of the feelings of a woman at the moment of giving birth of a child. The success of Anand lies in demonstrating through vivid details to her husband, father-in-law and fellow stone breaker- the fruit of her labour with the sense it pride and fulfillment. All Anand's critics have singled out this story for special praise. Dr. M. K. Naik



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considers this story as a "prose-poem" and links with the story "The Lost Child". Dr. K. N. Sinha pays glowing tribute to Anand's telling prose style which takes on the quality of poetic prose. Dr. G. S. Balrama Gupta also praises Anand for choosing a very difficult and humanistic theme and, what is more, for rendering the experience with profound understanding and sympathy.

In his half-humorous and half-ironic way, Anand draws our attention to the plight of marginalized, the poor and the illiterate, and penetrates their innermost feelings and emotions. Straightforward, unpretentious and expertly crafted these unforgettable vignettes of life in twentieth century India are sure to haunt the reader long after the book has been kept down.

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