



By Mulk Raj Anand

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Understanding the Text

1. What do you understand of the natures of Ramanand and Azam Khan from the episode described?

Answer: Ramanand, the grocer and the money lender, is quiet cunning and possess a servile nature that is fit for his business of selling groceries and money lending. He never gets angry but prevails on his customers like Azam Khan with cleverness and by provoking the so called pride. It is also evident that Ramanand regards his customers as always right at least in principle. So he always keeps his business first and pride secondary. Azam Khan on the other hand is a victim of so called pride. He is still lost in the past glory of his forefathers. He is arrogant, full of anger and short sighted. He is ready to sell all his property for the sake of keeping Ramanand's moustaches down, which was suitable to his(Ramanand) class. Obviously Azam Khan is living in his past. He is impractical, short tempered and doesn't know what is good or bad for him.

2. Identify instances in the story that show the business acumen of Ramanand.

Answer: Ramanand is a good businessman. His business acumen is evident from the fact that he readily agrees to lower his moustache on Azam Khan's request. But he lowers only one tip of his moustache just to cleverly provoke Khan to bring in more of his property for mortgage. Unlike Khan he never gets angry and keeps his business interests above all his priorities.

3. Both Ramanand and Azam Khan seem to have very fixed views. How does Ramanand score over Azam Khan towards the end of the story?

Answer: Ramanand and Azam Khan have a fixed view regarding themselves and each other. They are part of the social milieu that believes in the categorization of people on the basis of their moustaches. Ramanand belonged to goat class while Khan sahib belonged to tiger class moustache. They are both in harmony with the fact that they should not trespass into each other's boundaries. Ramanand scores over Azam Khan at the end of the story by turning up the tip of his goat moustache so that it looked like a tiger moustache. This enrages Azam Khan and he is tricked into selling all his property to Ramanand.

Talking about the Text

1. The episode has been narrated in a light vein. What social mores does the author seem to ridicule?

Answer: The author has mocked the society and its people who live in false pride of their community or lineage. How a fool who knows not of the practical matters and just to feed their image they go ahead auctioning their actual possessions. And such people are fooled by the smarter ones like Ramanand who bend but do not break. They alter their values according to the need of the situation

but do not compromise entirely on their pride. They are the cunning ones who take advantage of fools who are stuffed with their worn out social status and forsake the present to protect the past. The author has ridiculed such people who weave their fall with their insensibilities.

2. What do you think are the reasons for the references made to the English people and the British monarchy?

Answer: Indian society, unfortunately, is the one that takes pride in the language and culture of their rulers and not in their own rich and vibrant history. The nabobs and babus that were in British Raj are still looked up and are respected. Though the truth is that these are the people that ensured English Queen's authority on our land. The reference in the story of Mulk Raj Anand makes it clear. He cites an example of how the nabobs and generals in English army are to wear the prestigious lion moustache, which is worn by resplendent rajas and maharajas of our land. This makes clear how we Indians take pride in being slaves of Britishers.

3. What do you think is the message that the author seems to convey through the story?

Answer: The author has tried to make a point that how people living by age old impractical values weave their own fall and create unnecessary disturbance in the society. One should evolve as the time advances and the society grows. Sticking to false pride is not what will bring prosperity to one. One must be cautious and keep a wide eye to see if one is taking advantage of their virtues.

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