



Manoj Das' "The Man of Down Trodden Masses": A Critical Study on Manoj Das Selective Short Story Collections

Banothu Shankar¹, Dr.Ritu Benjamin² and Dr.Venkataramana Rachuru³

- 1) Research Scholar, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Department of English, The ICFAI University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India, shankar.b2854@gmail.com
- 2) Research Supervisor, Assistant Professor of English, Faculty of Arts, The ICFAI University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India, rituatul.b@iuraipur.edu.in
- 3) Research Co – Supervisor Professor of English, CMR Engineering College, Hyderabad, rvenkatabhavani@gmail.com

Page No.50-54

Received: 10/12/2025

Reviewed: 16/12/2025

Accepted:23/12/2025

Abstract: Manoj Das is one of the finest short story writers he was conferred of Indian subcontinent and a master storyteller in Oriya and English. The uniqueness of Manoj Das short stories is depicting the Indian psyche through his powerful narrative technique. His style of displaying the Indian Social milieu is too remarkable of using the language in precision and he was with Sahitya Academy's highest honour "Immortals in Literature".

The present research paper Manoj Das' *The Man of Down Trodden Masses – A Critical Study on Manoj Das Selective Short Story Collections* describes about Manoj Das powerful storytelling methods as to mirror the photographic sketches of down - trodden Indian rural mass - their simplicity of living, tradition and beliefs , innocence, poverty- stricken conditions, social life and miseries. By reading his short stories the readers of alien countries apprehend the realistic scenario of patorial India. The short stories that are chosen for the research paper – *The Misty Hour, The Owl, The Bull of Babulpur, Lakshmi Adventure's and Trespassers*

Keywords: Manoj Das, Indian short storywriter-narrative technique, rural India - down-trodden masses, tradition and beliefs-social realism-remarkable precision

Introduction

Manoj Das is one of the finest short story writers of Indian subcontinent. He is a master storyteller in his mother tongue Oriya and English. To his credit, he has more than ten volumes of short story collections. The uniqueness of Manoj Das short stories is depicting the Indian psyche through his powerful narrative technique. His style of displaying the Indian social milieu is too remarkable of using the language in precision. He has been acknowledged with Sahitya Academy's highest honour "Immortals in Literature. The short stories of Manoj Das is apparently known for mirroring of Indian social life. To display Indian scenario he paid much attentions and care to present the short stories more realistically. The short stories of Manoj Das are par with the short stories of famous English short story writers of the world. His short story depicts about the serenity that infuses the life in general of Indian society and the pastoral Indian life in particular.

Manoj Das is a short story writer who is an entertainer to the core. While his short stories have been portrays multiple plots, unfolded element of them his clear touch of



entertainment in transparently visible. His short story plots are generally the pompous politicians, grandiose Pundits.

Manoj Das short story collections are ideal model of Indian psyche. His short story collections have been accommodated with hardcore realism, irony and satire as well as Man's experience with infra or supra human elements.

The research paper *Manoj Das' The Man of Down Trodden Masses – A Critical Study on Manoj Das Selective Short Story Collections* has been deeply studies about the supremacy of bureaucrats, Pundits, Zaminders, politicians over the down trodden neglected class of India rural mass. To begin with *The Misty Hour* is a short story which deals not only about mystical elements but also showcases the emotional and societal obligations of ordinary Indian folk. In it Aunt Roopwati the protagonist aged around 70 years. She hails from a reputed family and was graduated. Her past times were reading a poetry, and she was too passionate towards literature. She was a woman of empathy and did support the subaltern perspective:

No doubt, quite a few ladies from respectable families had come out to join the freedom struggle around that time. But none of them was as smart and dashing as Roopwati, none as fluent a speaker as was she. Thus, endowed as she was with a rich assortment of virtues, any one of which could have brought renown to a lady in those days, Roopwati, her admirers thought, was destined to conquer great heights of glory. She herself had neither any doubt nor any false humility in that regard. She was sure no position was too high for her and she made no secret of it. (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories - P-2)

In the short story Manoj Das stresses that even the people who belongs to excluded individuals had a profound moral, balancing and emotional disturbances in handle in a shrewd way:

A fortnight later, while Chinmoy Babu was presiding over a function held on the occasion of a foreign cultural troupe's visit to our city, Aunt pushed her way to the dias again and made for the chair by chance lying vacant by the president's side, her board smile glittering in the floodlight. Chinmoy Babu suffered her to sit near him, but was not as cordial as on the previous occasion. Someone had probably reported to him Aunt's latest claim. It is difficult to say whether or not Aunt took note of Chinmoy Babu's indifference, but we observe that thereafter, on the slightest provocation, she asserted that Chinmoy Babu indeed loved her. (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories – P - 4)

Here in this short the mist symbolises the hidden existence and namelessness which are the common phenomenal facts of the Indian social milieu:

There were only three or four men scattered around the lake and I did not see Chinmoy Babu among them. I climbed the embankment and looked towards the cremation ground lying below it on the other side. I located him near the ruins of the temple. He had gathered a bunch of flowers and was pruning them. I was going to call out to him but stopped. He advanced towards the pile of ashes – the remains of Aunt's pyre. He sat quiet and wiped his eyes again and again. Then it began to drizzle. When he was about to get up, I took a swift turn and reached the car in a few rapid strides. (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories – P - 6)

The short story *The Owl* is about how the rural mass of India is intrigued by the supernatural power of an Owl. It indirectly criticized the feudal system of rural India. The short story *Owl* highlights the hidden fears and insecurities that have been felt by the neglected class of Indian rural mass. The short story is openly displays the psychological and emotional uncertainties of disturbances encountered by the marginal sect of pastoral India. The bird owl



is being epitomized as the keen bystander of societal ignorable spots and the plights of the disempowered class of people. It has indirectly emphasises how down-trodden class have been neglected by the name of the rules to get justice. The short story *The Owl* is an idealistic manifestation of Manoj Das sympathies towards the neglected people of the society:

The villagers followed the palanquin up to the edge of the village and then sat down on a mound not far from the temple. They sat silent, mostly gazing at the palish moon. 'Tu-whit!' came the call from the temple. 'O God! The owl is not dead, after all!' muttered Balbhadra Das, his bewilder voice cracking. The villagers sat agape, looking at the dark temple partly visible behind a row of palm trees. Nobody spoke. The owl hooted for five minutes and fell silent. The pundit gave out few dry sobs. They forgot all about time until the east began to brighten. Birds on the marshland started calling to one another. "Is the rumour I heard in the market the other day, that the Zaminder system will be scrapped, true?" someone asked. Nobody cared to reply. (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories – P - 27& 28)

Manoj Das is a keen observer of the sensitive degradations of manners and morals of the human society connecting with how do feudales play a domineering role to suppress the feelings of the poor man rural India. The short story *The Bull of Babulpur* which has strongly suitable to the theme of the same; on one hand about the passionate features of the *Bull*, on other hand it portrays the selfishness, shrewdness and opportunities of rich through the character of Mr. Boral. He was by profession a famous criminal layer, by the whims of the time felt depressed in life and wish to spend his further life with his grandpa. In the process of switching over to self-restraint he has encountered with *The Bull of Babulpur*. He was a nearly defeated and weakened by the powerful and huge popularity of the Bull, he was shrewd enough to enter into the politics.

The Bull after wandering here and there again it resorted Babulpur where it was started its tenure. After seeing the Bull, the rural mass began to shout the slogans 'Jai to the great Lard Babuleswar, Jai'. After witnessing this scenario Mr. Boral has been sensing to think about entering into the politics. He has utilized the dramatic situation and in loud intonation of voice he started addressing to the mass:

on the bull's forehead, and the bull showed appreciable patience in letting him complete the ceremony. From the next house came a pair of water-melons. Again the bull showed its understanding and obliged the devotee by munching them patiently and thoroughly. Meanwhile the constables had been provided with chellums of tobacco which they thankfully enjoyed before resuming their slow march with the bull. After an hour's stroll the bull returned to the very spot from which it had started. It then slowly crouched and adjusted itself to a relaxed position and closed its eyes and continued to ruminate. "Jai Baba Babuleshwar!". "Jai to the great bull of the great Lord!" Suddenly a voice with an unfamiliar accent was heard struggling to make itself prominent during the short intervals between the shouts raised by the crowd. People became curious. "My brothers and sisters!"

All became quiet. Boral had taken his position on a small mound. He extended his arms in the style of blessing the crowd.

"My brothers and sisters! Jai to the great Lord Babuleshwar!"

"Jai, jai!"

"And Jai to the great bull of the great Lord!"



"Jai, jai!"

"My brothers and sisters! This is a historic evening. This handsome, sacred bull is the glory of our village. Let us unite under his shadow and resolve to. (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories – P - 225)

The short story is an ideal example of how the upper class section can use the sentimentalism of poor of India and have play a vicious role in the process of showing discriminating the down - trodden class in the all the walks of social life.

Manoj Das short stories are definitely a comment on human life and situations. They described about the miseries and sufferings, pathos and helplessness of neglected rural mass of India. His short story themes reflect about pompous of the rich and mildness of the poor as if like in the short stories of Guy De Manupassant and Katherine Mansfield.

The short story *Lakshmi's Adventure* is one of the best illustrated piece how the poverty sticken in conditions of Indian rural mass has been exposed openly. It is obviously exposes the beliefs and superstitions play their part to ruin the social life of the down trodden mass.

It is a short story about a lovely little girl called Lakshmi, who was pitiless killed by so called the honourable class people of the society. When the enter village was stepped in siesta, Lakshmi who felt irresistible hunger, came out of her house and was stolen two bananas from the temple's sanctum sanctorum. Then the priest of the temple woke up and shouted. Joined by the villagers he was started to running after her. To escape from the graves situations, lakshmi jumped into a pond. She was been rescued her father, later suffering from fever and was dead.

The short story *Lakshmi Adventure's* is ultimately exposes the truest plights and dilemmas have been injured by the neglected rural mass of India. Lakshmi is a character, who represent as a lone lyrical crime against the tyranny of feudal society:

Lakshmi stood waist-deep in the water, and held the two bananas close to her bosom.

"Come out!" commanded the priest and "Come out!" demanded many more voices. But Lakshmi did nothing except cast a blank look at the crowd.

Soon her Papa elbowed his way through the crowd. Lakshmi began to cry. Papa entered the water without a word and took her in his arms.

The crowd commented excitedly, "What a daughter!" "Virtue personified!" "The issue is not just a few bananas, but the character of the girl."

Papa gently removed the bananas from Lakshmi's hands and surrendered them to the priest and moved away from the crowd.

Lakshmi did not speak any more. She had an attack of fever. After silently suffering for three days, she died. (Mystery of the Missing Cap and Other stories – P – 313)

In the short *Trespassers* Roy Saheb there was a time when he drove away the narrator and punished him for trespassing into his mansion. Tables are turned and at present he plays with narrator's son. The things were happened like this because his sons are obedient towards



their wives. In the old age Roy sahib left alone needs a companies time heals everything: when the narrator was in a low cadre of socio-economical status, as he was being belongs to the neglected class, Roy has warned him against trespassing. This short story is satirically narrates about how time brings transformation in the mindset of upper class towards careless and poverty stick in people.

Conclusion:

The art of short story telling of Manoj Das is par with the world famous short story writers like: Antony Chekhov, Maugham, D.H. Lawrence, O.Henry etc; his short story manifest various themes like; realism and fantasy, irony and satire, symbolism and socio - cultural life of rural India. His short stories are full of memories of reminiscences of good olden days distilled by photographic sketches of men and things. Through his short stories are not only collections emotions with tranquillity but also the remembrance of things of the past. He is a writer, one who supports the down - trodden rural mass and reflected their lovely world and their innocent nature through his short stories. He depicts the true, socio realities of the humans through the portrayal of urban and semi urban society. While he was displaying the true domineering about the hierarchical sect and the plights of the poor he has presented an idealistic rural setting that is perfectly suitable for mirroring the truest social realities of Indian rural mass.

Reference:

- **Das, Manoj.** *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1990.
- **Das, Manoj.** *Mystery of the Missing Cap and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1993.
- **Das, Manoj.** *The Submerged Valley and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1979.
- **Raja, P.** *Manoj Das: A Reader*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005.
- **Raja, P.** *Many Worlds of Manoj Das*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013.