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REVIEW ARTICLE

**K. A. ABBAS – A DEXTEROUS SHORT STORY
WRITER**

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K. A. Abbas – A Dexterous Short Story Writer

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Even though Abbas output is meager in terms of his writing in view of his slender volume of "Inquilab" "The world is my village" and the auto biography "I am not an Island", we have to rank him as a supreme short story writer for his rich and abundant contribution to the distinct genre of short story, his novella "The walls of glass" nearly a hundred short stories merit the attention of an avid reader as well as an erudite scholar. His shorter fiction is contained in six volumes. They are:

1. Rice and other stories
2. Not all lies
3. Cages of freedom and other stories
4. The black sun and other stories
5. One Thousand Nights on bed stone

Regarding the deft handling of short stories by K. A. Abbas, Mulka Raj Anand pointed certain salient points in his writing :

"It is your alliance with such moods which gives to your stories the predominantly lyrical tone which I so much admire in your short fiction. Apart from 'Sparrows', it is reflected in your latest story, 'Saffron Blossoms', surely the most hauntingly poignant piece of lyricism that has come out of the Kashmir struggle. This poetic note is also struck to great effect in the constant iteration of 'Sylvia' in the story which bears her name. And it is present in the irony which is behind 'Flowers for Her Feet', and in the conception of 'Twelve Hours' though you shield before the tenderness implicit in the young girl' bursting youth and in the ex-prisoner's frustration in that piece and did not build up the tension necessary to communicate their yearning for each other at high enough pressure. The lyricism is never quite absent from your pieces and it is this quality in your fiction which distinguishes your short stories from much of the pedestrian naturalism that still survives in the Urdu short story.

His themes depict the plight and agony of the downtrodden, the chill penury of the peasants and rural women, the caste and class conflicts, the decadent society and its impact on the later day society.

There is no love at first sight or the rhapsodically utterances of the lovers in a cosy corner but those dialogues which heighten our consciousness and concern for the lowly and lost, those lives submerged in shadows of plight and predicament. The Sunday states man (10th April 1977) describes the essential qualities inherent in his personality which have permeated throughout his novels and short stories.: "Abbas is an island because he has given equal consideration to all these varieties of people ungrudgingly even if he suffered personally in the process, but never gave vent to any anger or hatred or disgust. Ever so yielding.

He has allowed himself to be used without getting anything in return, even if he desired to have something in return a particular time from a particular person. But it is typical of Abbas never to ask for anything in return for favours extended to any individual, living or dead.

" Abbas is an Island living ordered" Mulka Raj Anand appreciates the lyrical quality in his writings. In almost all the short stories, we find his poignant feelings articulated in subdued tones of lyricsim, the title of his short stories evoke feelings of concern and compassion.

His pouse refrain and iteration deeper one's feeling and cause ripples of emotion and empathy for the character, for instance in "Sylvia" that two recurring words "Sylvia" and "Ma" leave a long lingering, impact on the minds of the readers.

His symbol of sparrow and a dumb cow in the two stories stand for awakening of deeply buried dormant feelings of love of humanity and individuality, Either Rahim Khan or Haridas are two legged bipeds one seething with hatred and the other with revenge, but Abbas provides a fitting finale by infusing love in the embittered sole of Rahim Khan and a shocking Hari Das blurts out his parental concern by calling the Muslim girl as " Daughter".

Being a man concern about the grinding poverty, he has introduced a few dialogues which provoke people in squalor and poverty to resort to suicide through "Three Women" the following lines from "Three

women” illustrate the obstinate determination of the beggar to fall under the running train. You know exactly what I mean, the beggar woman replied.

Her gaze was still fixed on the horizon as she watched fascinatingly, the little black dot that was the engine, grow visibly bigger. You know that this train can solve all our problems “we notice how the last sentence sums up the beggar woman’s agonized determination to solve the problem of misery and wretchedness, “In the miracle of Prajapur” he cites the example of a mother who gives birth to quintuplets when people in large number through to the hut, the inebriated husband speaks in harsh and satirical manner, the entire dialogue in a good example describing the pangs of hunger and misery. Then turning back to his hut he shouted:

‘Lajo, oh Lajo, why do you cry? Dry your tears. Look what they have brought for your babies. What does it matter that they didn’t get enough milk to feed, that they didn’t get medicine when they were sick? What does it matter that they got pneumonia when they rains came and the roof leaked? What does it all matter? Get u, Lajo, and thank these kind people for they have brought silken shrouds for your life little ones’. Shocked and speechless, when the members of the deputation went inside the hut, they found Lajo, her face covered with her odhni, in a corner on the wet mud floor and sobbing. Wrapped in dirty rags were five little babies-DEAD!.

In the entire selection of short stories “ The Flag” stands out as a great example of the evil of poverty. Abbas dexterously builds up the incidence but ultimately the last paragraph causes surprise and shock to the readers, the punishment for covering nakedness well as the struggle for a few food items is a severe and heart reading, come has to read the concluding lines to comprehend the attempt of the writer to show the ugly face of poverty :

He has committed not one but three crimes” Three crimes what are there,

1. Theft
2. Insulting the National Flag and
3. Being found naked on a public thorough fare. That , too is a breach of a law you know high above thousands tri colour flags were fluttering in the breeze - as if they were laughing at the Irony of it all.

Abbas expounds the much believed Doctrine of Karma through the character of chanda in “ The Sword of Shiva” he also justifies the concept that Dharma will mete out justice irrespective of caste and the wronged one.

The following lines amply reinforce the doctrine of karma “ every thing depends on our karma, my son, the deed is the seed and we reap what we sow

The all seeing I of god sees every thing sees through seven fold walls of stone and is not deceived by clean white clothes are princely turbans are by the show of all the richness of the world. Believe me my son god’s I sees right through in to the hearts of men, sees the evil and untruth and rottenness that may be hidden inside there. And when the sword of shiva strikes it cuts through the tallest and sturdiest tree, as if made of wax or even butter, and reaches the necks of the guilty ones. I know my son, I Know because I have seen”

Abbas has been labeled as “ Nehruvian” in his mode of thinking and it is demonstrated in his “ The New Temple” When people resist the removal of the temple, there is an exhortation from a leader.

His words are echo the faith of Nehru in dams but they are couched in a language suitable to the occasion and for their appeal and understanding. “ It was mangal who spoke, and he said yes father, our New Temple is beautiful. But he was looking out to the miracle of the New sea created by men like him and beyond it to the dam, That mighty structure he had helped to raise dedicated to the glory and happiness of man. The concluding paragraph short story fortifies his faith in Nehru’s idealism.

The sense of Individuality manifests strongly in “ Sylvia” apart from her monotonous routine, she indulges in. Self thinking regarding her future, her inner thoughts about her future life in- a home. And husband, her children occupy her mind abbas vividly and beautifully describes her assailing thoughts which torment her daily. “ That desires, the ambitions, the cravings that she kept locked up in her heart now burst forth with the force of ariver in spate. Marriage a kind loving husband a nice comfortable home a big soft – matted bed. And most important of all children Sylvia’s own children would she never be able to have them. This question constantly ticked in her brain, even during duty hours. Then her steps in voluntarily led her to the children’s ward and she forgot everything in the merry laughter or the bashful lisp of some fluffy-haired little darling till the sister’s shouts reminded her of

bitter reality and she turned to her own ward. More over her persistant thoughts for a home and marriage at last resulted in seeking a solution. Abbas splendidly describes in a few lines about her final resolution to dedicate her self to the nursing profession. Dawn had already broken. Through the open window a soft cool breeze was blowing.

Sylvia raised her eyes and caste a glance around the ward. Forty patients. Her forty patients, her forty children it was her duty to look after them, to feed them, wash them, cloth them, place her soft hand on

their feverish cheeks and brows, to say yes Son I am here, when any one of them called out in their delirium-“Ma”.

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In my endeavour to analyse the short stories of Abbas. I have not only given the gist of them but even made my critical comments, In almost all the short stories, one notices the under current of enormous sympathy of the writer for the characters. He depicts the exploitation of a women or poor people with profound concern and compassion. His stories are not myths or fairy tales to transport the readers into the world of pure, unsullied joy. We find pangs of separation, aching loneliness of isolated persons, humiliation consequent on betrayal and stark poverty. His humane treatment endears everyone and the reader experiences the effect of catharsis on completion of reading his stories.