



ST. LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL
A JESUIT CHRISTIAN MINORITY INSTITUTION



CLASS - IX
ENGLISH TEXT STUDY MATERIAL

TOPICS: THE PRICE OF BANANAS

DATE:16.11.2020

THE PRICE OF BANANAS

AUTHOR

Mulk Raj Anand was a pioneer of Indian writing in English, he gained an international following early in his life. His novels *Coolie* and *Untouchable* set an entire generation of educated Indians thinking about India's social evils that were perpetuated in the name of religion and tradition. These and other early novels and short stories brought into sharp focus the dehumanizing contradictions within colonized Indian society. Through his writings he revealed that in addition to the foreign colonialism of Britain there existed layers of colonialism within Indian society. This internal colonialism stood in the way of India's transition to a modern civil society. An incredibly prolific writer, Mulk Raj Anand's creative career spanning a period of more than seventy-five years has been inextricably intertwined with the search for a just, equitable, and forward-looking India. He has written extensively in areas as variegated and diverse as art and sculpture, politics, Indian literature and history of ideas. Mulk Raj Anand received the International Peace Prize from World Peace Council, Sahitya Akademi Award, "Padma Bhushan" and Leverhulme Fellowship are some of the awards and accolades during his long literary career.

SUMMARY

The story, "The Price of Bananas" describes two characters that represent and symbolise two different classes. They have a face to face encounter which has its own aftermath. It all begins on a humorous note. When the story opens, the business man is seen walking into the railway station, followed by an obsequious coolie. The business man feels quite important as he walks superciliously into the railway station. Within a few moments, a mischievous monkey reaches for his cap from a tree top. The businessman is temporarily stripped of his dignity. He makes gestures to the monkey asking for the cap, but to no avail. The onlookers find this hilarious and they burst into peals of laughter which subsequently hurts and wounds the businessman's ego. Then comes a banana vendor who entices the monkey with a bunch of bananas, while also asking the monkey to return the cap. The monkey which is for a while confounded and surprised, relents to give back the cap to the banana vendor who in turn returns the cap to the businessman. The businessman is relieved

to get back his cap and he takes his seat in the train without even a simple 'Thank you', acknowledging the banana vendor's kindness. When the banana vendor asks the businessman for the price of the bananas, the businessman is surprised. Shrewd as he is, the businessman refuses to part with his money on the grounds that he had not asked for the banana vendor's help. As the train starts moving, the poor vendor's point of view is lost in the wind, falling on deaf ears. The narrator feels for the poor vendor and makes a cartoon of the businessman and shows it to all the other passengers except him. Thus they laugh making the businessman uncomfortable.

The businessman had his own preconceived notions about the whole incident. He had his own way of seeing things and justifying what he did. Had there been a paradigm shift in his approach, perhaps this conflict would not have arisen in the first place. After all, the two annas would not have mattered at all to the businessman. The main problem with the businessman was that his paradigm was not close to reality and he could not understand the feelings of a poor man. All that mattered to him was his ego which had received a big blow. Secondly, the businessman failed to realise that human relationships always thrive on reciprocity. There is always a give and take in social connections. In this case, the generosity of the banana vendor in retrieving the cap for the businessman should have been adequately reciprocated; sadly, that did not happen.

IMPORTANT WORD-MEANING

Descended – move or lead downwards

Boughs – the main branch of a tree

Overlooking – have a view of

Pitchers – a large jug

Generous – showing a readiness to give more of something

Delicate – very fine in texture or structure

Remoter – distant

Piteous – deserving or arousing pity

Cooed – make a soft gentle voice

Bated – eagerly or anxiously

Grievance – cause of complaint, specially unfair treatment

QUESTION – ANSWER

1. Why did the monkeys descend from the trees?

Ans: The monkeys descended from the trees to collect half-sucked mango stones and the remainders of food from the platform.

2. Why was there a great deal of amusement?

Ans: There was a great deal of amusement because a monkey snatched away the loin cloth of a pious person who was taking a bath under the pump.

3. On what did the narrator concentrate?

Ans: The narrator concentrated on securing a seat for himself in the train.

4. What did all the passengers feel for the poor vendor?

Ans: All the passengers felt sympathy for the poor vendor.

5. How did the businessman justify react when the monkey took away his cap?

Ans: The businessman shouted in utter confusion. His round and smug face was covered in perspiration. He ran towards the tree over the pump and stood threatening the monkey.

6. How did the narrator make fun of the businessman?

Ans: The narrator drew a cartoon of the businessman and showed his drawing to all the other passengers except him. Thus, they laughed and the businessman became uncomfortable.

7. How did the Sethji justify himself?

Ans: Sethji justified himself by saying that if the vendor did not want to help him to get his cap back, he should not have offered the monkey the bananas. He did not ask the fruit vendor to help him in anyway, it was his choice to offer Sethji help.