**Humour in the Story "The Two Lady Rams"**

 Mulk Raj Anand's short story 'The Two Lady Rams' is an example of grandiloquence, irony and mock-heroic. The confluence of these three generates humour in the story. The story revolves around a corrupt contractor, Lalla Jhinda Ram who has been conferred with the title of 'knighthood' for the services rendered to the British Raj. Therefore, the governor invites him and the Lady Ram to attend the garden party. However he has two wives, a fact which leads to an agitated domestic condition. He settles the conflict by taking both of them to the garden party.

 The use of language in a complicated and bombastic way to draw attention and make something seem important is called grandiloquence. Calling the governor of the province 'the king's representative', 'shadow of monarch' and calling governor and his wife 'His Excellency and Her Excellency' are such examples. Besides, the evocative description of the quarrel between the two wives with the use of phrases such as 'trenches were dug', 'barricades were raised' and 'if gunpowder was not used, it was because women in India have not yet learnt all the tricks of Al Capone as the men have through the talkies' are other examples.

 The inbuilt mock-heroism adds on to the hilarity. Lalla Jhinda Ram has been conferred with the title of knighthood, but he is a corrupt contractor involved in bribe taking and forgery. During the 1930s, when many leaders including Rabindranath Tagore returned the 'knighthood' title, he accepted it merrily. But the title is merely a decoration on his name because he does not even have direct access to the governor. He pretends to be a cutlery seller to meet the ADC. Besides, unlike the conventional heroes, his father was an ordinary shopkeeper and he was able to amass wealth either by committing crimes or because of the enormous dowry brought by his elder wife, Sukhi. Simultaneously, it is also shameful on his part which questions him which type of knight is he, who drags away his wife, by pulling her hair, to her quarter.

 The vivid elucidation of irony accentuates humour. Ironically, he is looking for solution regarding domestic conflict from higher authority. But he gets a simple and honest answer by his chauffeur. Secondly, the governor is called 'holy of the holies', but he is carefree, corrupt and unfit to rule as he does not even know about the hardships that his subordinates are going through.

 It is not just mock-heroic and irony, but other instances too generate humour. The translation of Punjabi expressions into plain and literal English like 'Eater of her masters', 'I'll pull every hair on your head', 'gentlewomen' and 'don't eat my life' motivates hilarity. In addition to this, the sudden shift of Jhinda Ram's five foot five corpulence to six foot six Sahib plays its part in amusement. He is trying to see the elevated endorsement received by him after being conferred with the title. But he is unable to accept this because deep within his conscience, he is able to understand the reality of himself. There are also other snatches of pure comedy scattered in the story. The protagonist is Sir Jhinda to the younger wife Shakuntala because she only introduced romance in his life as her name suggests in history and folklores. On the other hand, he is Jhinda Ram to the elder wife Sukhi, because she raised the level of his living standard and brought comfort to his life in the form of big dowry. These events juxtapose the intricately woven ridicule and sublime to show mockery.

 Towards the end of the story, Anand calls Jhinda Ram and his two wives, the three staunch pillars of the British Raj. Interestingly, the three staunch pillars are army, police and civil servants. But he addresses them as so, to mark point on the reality that British would never have been able to reign in India so freely without the Indian collaborators like Jhinda Ram. Anand very well catches, authentically the condition of subservience in the Indian society through this story.

Source: Internet