



HUMANISM AND SOCIAL REFORMATION IN MAJOR WORKS OF MULK RAJ ANAND : A CRITICAL INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand, one of the greatest novelists of Indian English literature, has through his works depicted the lives of the poor and the downtrodden and thereby articulating their submissive feelings and suppressed emotions. Anand came to the literary scene when the discrimination and bias were digging the roots of vivacity of our country. The extensive discrimination was deteriorating the nation. He wanted to demolish the evil practices in order to give freedom and progress to the country. His writing was an effective weapon for him and through it he left no chance to evoke the mindset of the people. The main aim of Mulk Raj Anand was to bring out in people what is essentially human in them by fusing the inner psychomatic reality. He wanted to show that the subjugation of poor, ugliness and misery of their lives were a result of the atrocities of the affluent section of the society. The hypocrisy and brutality of Indian Feudal life gave a new verve and spice to Anand. Anand projects himself as a humanist and several facets of social life were depicted by him. According to Anand, humanism was to live with unity and to dissolve differences. He believed that in the relentless struggle of life, to share and to love were the only residues of life. He stood up for the prejudices and barbarism done to human beings. Anand gave emphasis to the dignity of man instead of giving preference to caste and creed. His main aim was to undertake the contemporary issues and to bring out a new society through his reformist zeal projects, real themes and solutions in his work.

KEYWORDS :

Anand's '*Untouchable*' is a story of Bakha, a sweeper boy who is underprivileged and deprived from his basic rights to live with dignity, freedom and is left to live in utter poverty and isolation. The oppression made his innate creative urge choked, his sensitiveness throttled and his tenderness crushed. But the buoyancy of his spirit is not shattered and remains integral. Bakha wants to live his life with dignity and equality. He seeks dignified wages for his hard work and craves for freedom from manmade slavery and suppression. At the same time, he tries to untangle the ambiguity of life as to why the good often suffer at the hands of depraved and crooked. Bakha is highly shocked at the religious chauvinism, formalism and pretense. He wants to be free from the disgrace of untouchability and urges for casteless and classless society.

Untouchable has been hailed as an optimal and remarkable in the technical exploit. It is simple but powerful in the work of writer's sincerity. The most significant part of Anand's humanism is the annihilation of casteism in *Untouchable*. He understands casteism as a social crime against humanity because it has wicked effects on human mind.

Anand wrote '*Coolie*' to portray the troubles of coolies in class ridden society and how the economic exploitation is done by the upper class to the lower ones. The lower class had to work hard for their masters in order to keep the body and soul together. For the rich, the poor were a subject of exploitation and maltreatment. The feelings and emotions of the poor were disregarded by the capitalist society. The persecution of them reaches to such a level that life is considered as a threat and death as a release. Munoo, the protagonist, becomes the victim of poverty. He soon realizes that money gives status and identity to man. He got empathy neither from his home nor from society.

This novel gives the true picture of exploitation of the poor and comes out as an influential tragedy. Anand is a naturalist in showing the facets of Munoo's tragedy. Anand has centred his attention on the plight of the wretched subalterns who are exploited in the hands of all, made to work hard, hardly getting their meals per day, exhausted and prematurely die.

'*Two leaves and a Bud*' reveals the horrible plight of the workers in a tea plantation of Assam. The novel reveals how the protagonist struggles against the hostile forces in an unfamiliar landscape. The miserable conflict can be seen

between the masses of labourers and the Britishers. A tragic collides of interest and destinies results in the victory of exploiters over the exploited. The labourers were continuously abused and exploited and put to hard work. Even their women were assaulted. Escape from these conditions was impossible. Any kind of rebel by the labourers was dealt with a heavy hand.

This novel dramatically shows the counter pointing of good and evil. Anand expresses great concern for the tears and gloominess of the crushed humanity which translates in a tragic conflict. His fervor and strong social conscience has demarcated the lives and experience of a number of people living in an isolate and intractable society. Anand wants to protest humanity and desire to salvage the downtrodden from their demotion. His approach was rational who believes that their suffering would come to an end one day. His novel depicts the humanism of Anand, the rejection of Karma theories and God, and the negative impacts of poverty and fatalism. Anand was so annoyed with the inhumane treatment done by the British exploiters that he painted the novel with the darkest hue.

In the '*Big Heart*', the miserable plight of coppersmiths of Indian society is presented by Anand. Here the clash is between the 'thathiars' (coppersmiths) and the capitalists. The capitalists of the factory throw the artisans out of employment. The identity of living artisans is replaced by the non living machines. The capitalists were solely concerned to earn money without caring for the harm caused to the workers. By introducing the machine, the hereditary occupation of the subalterns is destroyed. But the hero of the novel Ananta realizes the usefulness of the machine. The consequences of such measure was sure as one of the workers Ralia, started to smash the machine in the factory. Ananta tries to stop him but in the clash, Ananta gets killed by Ralia. In the end of the novel, machine scores over man.

As a revolutionary idealist, Anand set social principles which allowed letting his work a specific purpose and notation. Anand wants to convey that the consequences of man's greed and selfishness are the evil results of machinery. The machines were the gap between the affluent factory owners and the labourers. Anand wants settlement between the interests of the capitalists and those of the labourers. Anand's obsessive disdain for the rigid casteism seems in this theme.

The *Big Heart* displays a new kind of limpidity and gives an

accented expression to Anand's optimistic and absolute convictions.

Anand's artistic creation touches the mind of the citizens in order to give the better version of human life. He believed that through art and literature man becomes conscious for his destiny and gets the higher principles for his soul. The practical consequence is that the writer looks upon his activity as a citizen and as a writer he reflects in his work to modify the world. Anand's ethical views present the staunch criticism of inequalities. Anand is considered as a communist and social propagandist. He believes that this is the tool to bring the array and civility in our world and nothing can wipe off humanity from this world. Anand's novels wedge the deep roots in the soil of the society. He treats with the contemporary themes, explores and interprets the Indian society equally – class, caste, man-woman relationships, conflicts and protests, resolution and compromise, suffering and exploitation, compassion and brotherhood with the visualization of humanism.

The methodology which is used here is comparative study. The comparison is done with the social issues seen during the contemporary period of Mulk Raj Anand and the same issues are evaluated with the present scenario of India. With the globalization, the mingling of people and cultures has accelerated India. The rapid development has multiplied opportunities for rapprochement and social interactions. But the gross challenge is that the humans are becoming more obsolete with their own technology. The people could not make moral decisions. The inhuman behaviour, exploitation, using people for advantage, hiding truth for their own sake are common among the people. For this social attitude, humanism is needed. Apart from this, India is still facing multiple issues, currently threatening to humanity. And to solve the massive problems, people need to be reminded of humanity's proven ability. As a democratic country, India is going through a lot of changes and chaos, both from within and forces outside the society. India is unequalled in its diversity – cultural, religious, social, economic as well as political. Since the departure of colonial British in 1947, the way India has evolved is not that much stimulating. The colonial past is not really shaken by India. On the contrary, India would rule themselves with their own ideas and failed to look at the larger issues faced.

Through the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, the researcher has rectified the several social issues which need the reformation from its roots. These problems are compared with the current social trends of India in order to know the status of the problems.

Literacy :

The terrain of India is full of inconsistencies. On one side, we can see enormous affluences and prosperity while on the other side, many Indians go without second meal every day. On one hand, India has achieved success in the fields of telecommunications, IT, and space whereas on the other hand, nearly 20% of Indians have sanitation facilities and 40% get the potable water to drink. India has the solutions for all kind of technical and software problems all over the world but India is still struggling with having 25% of world's poor in the country. To find the solutions for socio-economic, political, infrastructural, dearth problems is certainly a great comfort.

There had been very little progress of adult education until the end of the 1920s in India. In the nineteenth century some of the progressive rulers of Baroda, Travancore, Mysore had begun to extend their economic supports for the night schools and the rural libraries in India. The education of masses was considered as an important part of independence scheme by the national leaders who steered the freedom movement and were concerned. However the realisation for national

education was felt after independence in 1947 and that it needed collective help, massive reforms and optimistic change.

For the socio-economic growth of India, literacy is the main foundation. The development of the society can be possible through literacy as it plays a vital role in the economic expansion. Though it is a matter of concern that many Indians still cannot read and write. Gender biases still persist in rural areas due to lack of education. Eradication of illiteracy is indeed a huge challenge for India. Though the Government of India is doing its best in trying to make India 100 percent literate, it is a formidable challenge to create a learning society with a nation of one billion people.

Poverty :

Poverty is a condition where a person is not capable to accomplish the basic requirements of life – food, and shelter. It is a vicious trap that gradually ends up involving all the members of the family. Severe poverty ultimately leads to death. In India, poverty level is evaluated on the basis of both utilization and income. It is important to mention the concept of poverty line which is a benchmark for measuring poverty in India. The poverty and the poor have become a matter of concern and wide spread condition in India.

There are various reasons responsible for poverty. The main reason being the non-conducive weather condition of India. Such climate reduces the capacities of people to work and disrupts production. The eradication of poverty is a must for the economic upliftment and for the politico-socio awareness of the people. It is this poverty that causes hindrance in the development of India.

Unemployment :

Unemployment is a colossal problem faced by India as a nation. The individual factors that restrict the people are age, occupational unfitness and physical disability while the external factors are technological and economic factors. The trade cycle and globalisation are also responsible for the ups and downs in the business field. The growth of technology causes the chaos on job opportunities, computerisation and automation lead to technological unemployment.

Racism :

The racism is still practiced by some Indians in some parts of India. One can notice the deep rooted prejudice and stereotypes towards the foreigners especially the blacks. Racism is not a part of Indian psyche and is a negative value of life.

Sanitation :

India's major crisis in coming years is the status of sanitation. Efforts have been made but the results are limited. The Government of India has been making efforts, have undertaken Swachh Bharat Mission to review sanitation and hygiene conditions. It is observed that more than half of the rural inhabitants defecate overtly and it is a serious health problem. Sanitation is a behavioural issue and people should change their mind set to stop open defecation and to adopt secure sanitation practices.

Child Labour :

Child labour is the concerning issue in India. The increasing breach between rich and poor, privatization and neo-liberal financial policies causes the population out of service and without elementary needs. Laws made to protect children from dangerous labour are not effective and not executed properly. In urban areas children are used as domestic workers. The child labour is caused by scarcity and lack of social uncertainty. The entry of multinational corporations into the industry and the lack of universal education increased the

ratio of child labour.

The social reformation is needed to bring the radical change in the society.

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