



## MULK RAJ ANAND AS A SOCIAL REALIST WITH HUMANIST CONVICTIONS AND HUMANITARIAN COMPASSION IN ALL RESPECTS: A NOTE

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this paper is to project Mulk Raj Anand not only as a social realist with humanist convictions and humanitarian compassion in all respects but also as a committed writer whose art is an amalgamation of Bankim's romanticism, Tagore's humanism and the deep concern of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Prem Chand for the down trodden people.*

**Key Words: Social Realistic, Humanist, Conviction, Compassion, Amalgamation, Romanticism, Deep Concern.**

Mulk Raj Anand is a social realist whose art is an amalgamation of Bankim's romanticism, Tagore's humanism and the deep concern of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Prem Chand for the down trodden people. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes:

“There are novelist about whom one critical study could be written, but one would be enough. There are novelists who would be effectively suffocated even by one research performance. And there are novelists who are large – who invoke multitudes – who can survive several attempts to probe and sound and contain them. Mulk Raj Anand is surely one of the last category” (Qtd in Paul 5)

Yielding to a considerable influence of Marx, Anand in his literary expeditions departs from Tagore who deals with the life of the upper and the middle class people of Benagl and overtakes Prem Chand in his entering the gloomy world of the outcastes and peasants. His commitment to the well-being of the underdogs of the traditional Hindu society is revealed in his sympathetic treatment of the untouchables, especially the sweepers who are unjustifiably turned non-entities by their filthy but indispensable job. The curse of untouchability, besides its origin from the four varnas of the Hindu religion, sticks to the nasty profession of cleaning the dung of animals as well as human excreta and the belief that the products are ritually unclean as well as physical unpleasant, and that those who carry them away or otherwise help to dispose of them are outcastes from society” (Forster 8). K.N. Daruwalla expresses his anger towards the hypercritical practice of untouchability, when he says:

“In India  
the left hand is outcaste  
Because it cleans the arse” (Collage I – P 76)

The success of Anand's ability in transmuting the feeling of untouchability through characters like Bakha and Bhikhu lies in his acquaintance with the outcastes in his boyhood and the bitter experience he himself once had in the ship:

“On board the ship, the British passengers, particularly the Assam tea planters, treated the Indians' with contempt, except for the Maharaja of Alwar who was travelling first class. Even the Australian passengers were looked down upon, because their broad accent was not 'English' enough and they were supposed to be descendents of criminals



who had been sent to the big desert island, generations ago. I began retouching my novel **Untouchable** from the new anger I felt about being an outcast of the society on the ship” (P 9).

Anand shows his protest as a writer regarding the torments of untouchability by bringing the outcasts to the literary stage thus boldly breaking the illusive concept that. “There can be no tragic writing about the poor! They are only fit for comedy, as in Dickens; Canine can’t go into literature” (Sackville 2). Anand’s making of Bakha, Munoo and Bhikhu as the heroes of the novels with their sordid state of life has now secured a worldwide recognition. In the novels **Untouchable**, **Coolie** and **The Road** Anand movingly presents the sorry state of the outcasts in which their survival with dignity is in no way possible.

Mulk Raj Anand is an angry young man who cannot tolerate ‘exploitation’ of one man by another man or of one class by another class’. He is a sworn enemy to all kinds of exploitation, be that economic, social or political. The main evil Mulk Raj Anand attacks in his novels is the evil of exploitations of one man by another man, of one class by another class. Anand also noticed how the villagers in India lay groaning under grueling poverty. On his impressionable mind was also indelibly imprinting how the very life-blood of the poor, simple ill-treated farmers was being sucked by parasites like the landlord, the money lender and the religious priest. Anand had gained the first hand experience of all these categories of people and this experience stood him in good stead. The novels **Untouchable**, **Coolie** and **The Road** suit well Willbur Scott’s concept of art:

“Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space answering to a community of which he is an important, because articulate part” (P 123)

As a Stalwart of India novel in English, Anand raises the predicaments of paupers and sweepers in his writings by presenting their problems and propelling them towards their own place where they can breathe fresh air and feel their own worth and existence in a fast changing world. He champions the causes of the masses who struggle to establish the identity of the nation and their own. His characters appears as rebels but their struggle is born of self-realization and self-actualization.

Being a voluminous write, Anand brought out his novel **Untouchable** in 1935, which is a story of a sensitive boy, Bakha, who is a victim of the present caste and class system. The novel shows that Bakha is a representative of the Untouchables. It was a stupendous success. And he published his second novel **Coolie** in 1936. Here in this novel, the protagonist Munoo is a young hill boy. It is a story of fifteen year old child labourer who dies of tuberculosis. It is a great epic of misery and pathos. Munoo in this novel is a universal figure and the novel has epical quality. Both the novels present the genuine picture of the contemporary social injustices. Maintaining the same temple of social realism, Anand creates another character destined to suffer, Gangu in his third major novel **Two Leaves and a Bud** (1937). This time his protagonist is a poor Punjabi farmer who is brutally exploited in a tea plantation and killed by a British official who tries to rape his daughter. The novel explores the injustice of British Raj and the exploitation of the colonialists and the pathos of Indian masses. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes on the merits of these novels thus:

“If **Untouchable**, since it explore the impact of the caste cruelty on the adolescent mind of Bakha, has a sort of piercing quality that is akin to the lyrical; if **Coolie** with its enormous



rage and multiplicity in action and character, has an almost epic quality; then **Two Leaves and a Bud** may be said to be a dramatic novel, and certainly it culminates in a tragic clash of interest and destinies, and what is fine is put out, and what is dark is triumphant. Again we start from a village in North Western India. Munoo's peregrinations over vast spaces of Northern Western India, but Gangu crossed India horizontally from a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab to the Macpherson Tea Estate in distant Assam" (P 343).

Anand explores the injustice of British Raj and the exploitation of the colonialists and the plight of the Indian masses. Commenting on Anand's social concern, Dr. Arvin Nawale writes:

"Anand's main themes are based on such problems as casteism and human affliction caused by a variety of factors. He desires to make in the readers an instant make fullness of the dehumanizing social ills to stir the springs of kindness in them and to turn on them for the exclusion of these ills in order that a pleasing, just social order may come into being" (233).

As a sensitive writer, Anand is sensitive to the sufferings of others and against injustice of any kind and his concept of literature, as Cowasjee points out, "..... is to reveal life in all its contrarities and in the process to create awareness in the reader" (38). That is why he chooses a subject that would bring to limelight the miseries and humiliations of the victims of different kinds of exploitation. In Anand's novels, one could also see simple human beings suffering due to priestly exploitation or industrialization or indentured labour. Untouchability in **Untouchable**, the labour problem of textile mills in **Coolie**, slave driving of the labourers in **Two Leaves and a Bud**, the problem of introduction of machines and consequent unemployment in **The Big Heart** stand as witness to Anand's emotional concern for the low caste people. As Anand's aim is to expose the evils of the economic and social order, he gives more importance to his views and beliefs than the nuances and subtle intricacies of the artistic medium through which he expresses his ideas. "Style is to be given importance only to the extent it lends itself to the enunciation of the theme". (Thillainayagan 229). Anand's greatness as a writer rests on his serious concern for life and the way he chooses his themes to make his novels socially relevant.

Anand's **The Road**, portrays not only the suffering of the untouchable but also of the magnanimous caste – Hindus who try to awaken the conscience of the members of their own community against the evils of untouchability. To be honest is a dangerous thing where the rule of hypocrisy dominates. That is what led to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. Dhooli Singh is a social reformer whose fight against untouchability in a society where casteism is interpreted in terms of religion, is considered as a challenge to religion itself. But he represents the true religion, he personifies the author's vision of an ideal Hindu humanist.

Thus, Anand is both a great humanist and social realist for his insistence on the dignity of man irrespective of caste. Greed and wealth, his plea for the practice of compassion as a living value, his conception of the whole man, his crusade against feudalism and imperialism are the essential features of his humanity and social vision. One of the humanistic themes dealt with by Anand is nothing but 'search for social reality' and he has proved himself to be a social realist in all respects.



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