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## Mulk Raj Anand: A Man from Indignance to Social Protest in the perspective of 'Untouchable' and 'Coolie'

### Abstract:

*Mulk Raj Anand was called 'propagandist' by Indians because he wrote for them who were not known or recognized as human beings at all. They were not admitted into the society even for their castes. Through his writing, he presented the hypocrisy of the upper class society and how the various hells were made by man for man. Anand took the childhood experience of him as a raw material and make people aware of the plight of underdogs. Firstly, the paper presents the soft corner of the author for the suppressed and down trodden who were deprived from their human rights through his novels. And secondly, the heroes rose with the question of self-realization and their inner feelings to rebel against the society.*

**Index terms:** Inertia, Oppressed, self realization, pity, rebellion, sympathy

### I Introduction

Anand's literary career began with *Untouchable* (1935) and within a decade, he got the quick succession for *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) and *The Big Heart* (1945). His notoriety in writings was due to progressive leanings and fearless style and therefore in the period of thirties, his novels were either debarred or withdrawn from distribution. Even he was neglected for a long but now the critics admire his work and believe that Anand deserves critical attention for the fiction writing. His acquaintance of the life of the oppressed was intimate- he spent his childhood with them to bring the authenticity in his work. In the preface to *Two Leaves and a Bud* (second Indian edition, 1951) he wrote for them:

"..... only repaying the debt of gratitude he owed them, for much of the inspiration that had given him to mature into manhood, when he began to interpret their lives in his writing."

Anand mainly focused on the problem of self realization. All the heroes of him simlize a constrictive, apathetic and unreceptive environment but they accept the situation as well as simultaneously they try to improve themselves. That is why they are static and dynamic at the same time. Static in the sense they are unaided, fragile and powerless and dynamic because they fight against the social and economic strength that refuse them their human rights. Though they were denied to education and were mentally backward but they show readiness to understand everything. They were the men of veracity, elegant and hard working. That is why Anand states in *Apology for Heroism* that:

“There was less heroism, but many heroic gestures”. It is the “heroic gestures” and not “heroism” that the novelist lauds in his novels. This aspect of his novel the faith in the potentiality of man, is derived from European Hellenism and not from “the traditional attitude of India” which in this regard, “has been essentially non-human superhuman.”(pp.95)

The feeling can be exemplified in Bakha, the central character of *Untouchable*. He also became the victim of humiliation and indifference by upper class society. He was conversant for his low position but he used to think that he was higher or superior to others. The essential feature of his personality was his superiority complex which could give him the identity in the society. He put on the discarded clothes of Tommies with pride though it was inconvenient to him. To look like sahib, he would sacrifice the physical comfort. He knew that the rise in status is imaginary. By wearing English clothes, he cannot be English. He went to Christian Missionary to change his religion (Hinduism) that treated him like crust. But he was able to see that in the missionary also the life was miserable. Bakha was mistreated and repulsed by his own community. The Hindus shouted from the distance not to pollute them by touching and didn't pay him well to live life with dignified. Bakha's sentiments and acts of kindness were not recognized by them. The insults that he was bearing even then he had faith in God. He lost himself in the rhythm of the song sung in the temple. But when his own sister was molested by the temple priest that was the most shocking realization he ever received. And he was counter attacked by the priest that he polluted the temple by entering in it. Though he want to take the revenge for this but he was aware of the limitation given by the social structure. There was the rising rebellion within him but without any discernible alternatives he was helpless to action. Although with this humiliation and insults, he was lively to his dignity and honor. His own people accepted the situation but he was doing his individual protest. Bakha always want to change the old ossified order and stagnant condition of life but he was always denied socially to raise his voice. He was slapped by a man for touching him and with wrath:

“The strength, the power of his giant body glistened with the desire for revenge in his eyes while horror, rage, indignation swept over his frame. In a moment he had lost all his humility, he would have lost his temper too, but the man who had struck him below had slipped beyond reach into the street”. (P.42)

Bakha was always defeated in struggle between of the individual and society. Every time his protest becomes more enunciated. One can see Bakha passive acceptance of his fate:

“What is the use.....They (the caste Hindus) would ill-treat us even if we shouted. They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt”. (P.70)

Education was declined to him as well as to his community. To his solutions, he got the vague idea from missionary, the Mahatma and the progressive poet. His forthcoming period was going to be an indecisive repetition of the day he spent the whole day in the novel. But as E.M.Forster said in the foreword to the novel: “On the surface of the earth, if not in the depth of the sky, a change was at hand”. How the scruples for downtrodden rose was the purpose of the writer. The physical encounter between the hero and his antagonists are skillfully avoided by Anand. He mainly focused on the social awareness of the raw youth and his fight against conservative society.

In *Coolie* (1936), Munoo's unendurable suffering and perpetual apathy is canvassed by Anand. It presents the core of life stories of a down trodden who was promoted on the whirlpool of experiences. But every bitter

experience alternated with the happy one whether he was employ to bothersome Mrs. Nathoo Ram or caring Mrs. Prabha Dayal or pulling the rickshaw in Shimla. He was itinerant, reliant and victim of circumstances. He believes that the root for his suffering is only due to economic subservience and that is why he engaged himself for that obsessive feeling. His social identity was always ignored but he was not supposed to forget his identity. Whenever he became conscious, his sense of self pity overpowered him. His soul surged up for the rebellion where the question raised to him. But for more humiliation he dared not. Munoo's life in the last phase was joyous. Munoo was sympathized as a rickshaw-puller but he was admired also for his supple and young body by his employer. Munoo was poor, uneducated and passive and also he showed less awareness of his status in the society so his life became more pathetic in the hands of his masters.

The ill-treatment shattered the dreams of Munoo at Nathoo Ram's family. He accepted his identity as a slave, servant as he was passive and incapable to analyze his situation in the cruel world. He never had done self evaluation to himself that why he was a servant. The glamour, glory, splendor of the world made him blind and to remain as small, dismal and dreary. The ignorance of his potentialities kept him chained to the wheel of coolie's destiny. Even he got suspicious for motherly love received by Mrs. Prabha though the affection of her was genuine. With Mrs. Mainwaring also he lived an honest life as a rickshaw-puller without questioning his role on status. He was a man with no ambitions or ideals. He gave more preference to live than to his mind. So he never dreams to be a rebellion for the ever active society. Munoo came across with the love and sympathy from the innocent love of Nathoo Ram's daughter to sexual love of Mrs. Mainwaring and motherly love of Mrs. Prabha. Otherwise Munoo had a notion about his status in the society was not that bad. He met straightforward, timid and blunt Prabha who was just like him and whose feeling echoed to Munoo every time. Even the sharks like Nathoo Ram and Ganpath used him as for sycophancy and opportunism. Mrs. Mainwaring too, was neglected, humiliated and tortured as she was English with Indian blood from her grandmother's side. The individual's position in the society was determined with the complexion and education. All the characters are fatalists in one or another way because either they want to imitate their superiors or they want to placate themselves in the significant place socially. The novel neither toughen Munoo's attitude nor bring any positive improvement in the social set up but it ends up with Munoo's acceptance of humiliation with the pride and goes with his life. In *Coolie*, Anand states:

"Munoo clutches at Mohan's hand, felt the warm blood in his veins like a tide reaching out to distance to which it had never gone before" (pp.282)

Anand is the writer who points out the socialistic theme in his writings. Through the sense of anger, he portrays the exploitation and suffering of Munoo to express his love and tenet of humanism for man. The central focus of Anand was poverty, hypocrisy, capitalism, industrialism selfishness, greed, communalism etc. In *Five Contemporary Indian Novels*, P.K Singh observes:

"Anand is very much a man of the world, living and loving in accordance to the rhythms of his own nature. He has never been above the battle; rather, he has fought bravely against wrongs and injustices. He has composed the theme song of love and has made his voice echo in clamorous notes to arouse the conscience of humanity." (p.17)

## II Conclusion

In sum up, one can say that Anand had a deep sympathy for the down trodden and it overflow when he finds man deprived of his human rights. His passionate love for them and unequivocal commitment toward the writing logically gives the essence of fusion of both Gandhism and Marxism. Anand wants to liberate mankind and convert the misery and pain by divulging the true nature of man with his intrinsic weaknesses. He chooses the underdogs as his protagonists because he wants his reader too to help in eradication of social injustice and exploitation of the society.

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