



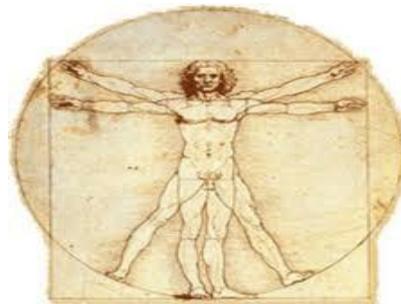
Anand's Humanism in "Untouchable"

ABSTRACT:

Among the Indo-Anglican novelists, Mulk Raj Anand occupies one of the paramount positions as a humanist. Through his humanism, he wants to restore the respect of man and message of love and compassion. In his writings, he elaborated the philosophical objectivity with sympathetic insight of the human anomalous position with a great measure of integrity. He was a fiery voice of the down trodden and his descriptive quality has drawn the pathetic attention of the readers. His first novel 'Untouchable' is the story of a sweeper boy named 'Bakha' who was coming from the lowest stratum of the society. Bakha became the victim of humiliation and suppression though he was tender and soft. Anand has explored the plight of suppressed in objective way. He wrote for the upliftment of poor, down trodden and weaker section of the society. And he successfully communicated their hopes, aspirations, pains and frustrations in the form of writings.

INDEXED TERMS: humanism, love, dignity, down trodden, exploitation, compassion

I Introduction



Humanism is actually, a philosophical and rational stance divulges us through science, inspire by art and urge by compassion. In humanism, the emphasis is given to the importance of human beings, place and nature in the universe. It gives the affirmation to the human dignity and gives support to the individual liberty. It believes that human beings have right and responsibility to shape their own lives. It enriches and nourishes the lives and zests the adventure of discovery. It seeks new knowledge and explores new options. In Humanism, the importance is given to the human needs and values than the religious beliefs. The person is set with his own ethics, curious about the knowledge of the universe. With this, he can enhance the emotion, deepen the sympathy and improves our perceptive. A humanist never afraid to a challenge and explore.

Humanists give the rejection to arbitrary faith, authority, revelation and state of consciousness. It is more considered as the philosophy of imagination and compassion. In humanism, the person is accepted and loved with his weaknesses, instincts and impulses. In humanism, the centre of the study is given to the people, to their dignity and worth. It commands the respect for the person. It is the ethical system that hub bed the concept of dignity and freedom of man. W.T. Stace states this term as;

“Man is the measure of all things certainly but man as a rational being, not as man as a bundle of particular sensations, subjective impressions, impulses irrational prejudices, self-will, mere eccentricities, oddities, foibles and fancies” (pp.123)

Mulk Raj Anand is distinguished from the other writers as a social philosopher and a writer with a high value who mainly focus on man-centered universe. He believes in high ideology content and ethical views. His writings reflect the spiritual and natural bond to man and this is nothing but his deep affection for humanism. His intense view of the whole man gave birth to his own humanism named ‘Comprehensive Historical Humanism’. Anand’s humanism and the sympathy towards the down trodden led him to portray the miserable life of the underdogs so that the Indian Intelligentsia arouse the compassion for them. The more attention is given to a man who trapped in a milieu, burdened with full of stratification and contradictions. Anand in *Apology for heroism* states that:

“[...] as my media as a writer were the memory and imagination, and the substance of my work the whole of my varied experience, the theme of my work became the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationship, rather than one single part of it.” (pp.78)

A creative artist naturally presents the ideology on philosophy of life which he advocates. So is with Mulk Raj Anand. By analyzing his fictional works, we come to know that Mulk Raj Anand was highly influenced with the humanist philosophy. All his response to the down trodden were human. The objective behind was to make aware to the people of low strata of life about their potentiality and not to consider as a subsidiary human beings. The clear line of the demarcation within the society is clearly shown by Anand. He plea for the compassion and insists on the dignity of man. The society, where the rulers rule as the high caste and keeps the distance from the down trodden. They were meant to perform the low level duties and were made isolated from the main stream of the society. They were exploited ruthlessly at all levels-personal, social, economical and political. Anand was highly influenced by Aristotle, Marx, Ruskin, Gandhi and many others. Their philosophical theories gave much impact to his writings. His mission was to make powerful attack on the evils like hypocrisy, brutality, insensitivity. And by love and compassion, he wants to make the life of man dignified and joyous. Anand in *Is there a Contemporary Indian Civilization* states:

“By integrating his personal satisfactions and continuous creative self-development through significant creative work with the hand, the heart and the brain such as may contribute to man’s renewal, to the welfare of community and express the love of life, the awareness of death, and thus balance the essentially unstable and the maladjusted human personality, involved in the inevitable conflicts of existence in this universe.” (pp.160)

Through this novel 'Untouchable', Anand has thrown light on the sufferings of the outcastes done by the caste Hindus. Anand portrays his character Bakha who is a man of dignity and nobility though he is connected with the filthy profession. He chooses his character Bakha from the lowest stratum of the society to establish his firm faith in the dignity of man which was the principle to his humanism. He is extremely sensitive, tender and wishes to be treated as a human being. All he received was humiliation and injury from the society. He realizes his place in the world from the several experiences. The vulgarity of the priest, crowd's inhumanity, and his self-less act of saving a child made him clear that he is not the part of the society.

"In the middle of the crowd, his first impulse was to run [...] but then he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier not a physical barrier but the moral one". (pp.39)

Between him and the crowd, there was a barrier of caste which was an inseparable. This barrier was far to understand for Bakha. Bakha has to listen the comments quite often. He was humiliated and assaulted just by touching them. He has to make announcement on his arrival in thorough fares. The oppression and exploitation was done by one caste to another. Anand was very much concerned for this Casteism and he want to practice love and compassion for the weaker society. Bakha was deprived from his basic human rights in freedom, honor and dignity. Anand believed in humanism and not in god or fate. For Bakha's suffering, he was giving blame to cruelties of mankind and not to fate. The caste Hindu treats him as an inferior without creating any brotherhood affection. The two contrasting attitude of lady can be seen on whose doorstep Bakha was for the rest;

" I am bringing the food sadhu ji shouted the lady[...]But she stopped[...]You eater of your masters' she shouted 'may the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you perish and die! You have defiled my house! Go! Get up! You eater of yours masters! Why didn't you shout if you wanted food? Is this your father's house that you come and rest here? (pp. 62-63)

Anand towards the end of the novel suggested the three solutions for untouchability. Anand depicts the incident of Bakha's exposure with Colonel Hutchinson, chief of the Christian Missionary who persuades Bakha to join the Christianity towards the end of the novel. But Bakha had deep faith in Hindu gods and values. Also he had fear of losing his caste and expulsion from his community. All these notions prevented him from replacing Hindu with Christian. Bakha was an ardent follower of Hinduism so he refused to leave saying that, "the religion which was good enough for his forefathers was good enough for him" (pp.114). So, the missionary was failed to convince Bakha to change his religion.

The second solution was given in the speech of Mahatma Gandhi. He wants to share the sorrows with untouchables but at the same they were negates by him for their bad habits. Bakha feels very bad for being blamed by Gandhi for their habits. Mahatma's last speech made him impressed saying, "All public wells, temples, roads, schools, sanatoriums must be declared open to the untouchables."(pp.139) In terms of practicality, it was less satisfying for Bakha as he has to play nominal role for his own release. And the third solution was modernization. Bakha comes to know about some machine that clear latrines without using hands and it made him thrill. He feels that the machine is the only solution for his all problems. Finally, he accepts that the machine is the solution to his problem and he returns home. Anand's writings are clearly urged by his love for man.

II Conclusion

To sum up, if one wants to open Anand's heart, consciousness and philosophy, humanism and humanitarianism are the keys. He emphasizes on human values and human rights. The sincerity of work can be seen in his powerful writings. The kindness and mercy are in his heart. Anand has given the freedom to his characters to grow in their creative choices. His characters are flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood due to his compassionate heart.

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