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Reflection of Social Evils and Humanism in the Major Novels of Mulk Raj Anand

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Abstract: A writer does not come from the alien but he or she is a product of contemporary society. In the works of a particular author, the reflection of contemporary life can be seen. Mulk Raj Anand is not an exception of it. In the works of the writer, a reflection of contemporary social and political life, a reflection of true human emotion and feeling and love for humanity can be seen easily. The writer considered art should be for life's sake. There should be a reflection of contemporary society. As a true reformist as well as a humanist, he wanted to bring radical change to society. He attacked the contemporary social evils namely untouchability, casteism, capitalism, feudalism, imperialism, colonialism, century-old conventions, and religious orthodoxy which hamper the overall development of Indian people. He not only attacked but also inculcated in them human values and made the people aware of the suffering and exploitation of untouchables, the poor, the women, and the common masses. He tried to inculcate the feeling of love and friendship in the mind of the people. Human dignity is the highest among all the fundamental rights. The writer has fought for the liberty, equality, justice, and basic human needs of the people. Bakha, Munoo, and other major characters of different novels are only metaphors to present human miseries and solutions for same and send a message to the people to be aware of the human miseries and in our action, such activity should not come which can hurt the feeling of the others. Complete abolition of social evils is the demand of the present time.

Keywords: Metaphor, Untouchability, Casteism, Capitalism, Imperialism, Colonialism, Religious Orthodoxy, Humanism.

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Introduction

The journey of Indian English literature began in the nineteenth century with the publication of Raj Mohan's Wife by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya but the real journey began with the big three namely Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narain and Raja Rao. They depicted the real and the true picture of Indian society. There is no role of idealism, imagination and fancy can be seen in their novels. They presented the true picture of the society as it is and they brought revolutionary change in the society. Mulk Raj Anand is pioneer in this regard and he attacked on several social evils like casteism, untouchability, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and religious orthodoxy in their novels and he also suggested solutions to remove these evils from the society. He gave a message for the society not to apply these evils in our day to day life, so that human dignity can be maintained. He gave the message of love and friendship to the people. He tried to inculcate the feeling of love and tenderness among the people and

inspired the people to live the life peacefully without any kind of social discrimination.

The writer had the view that untouchability was the one of the worst social evils of the Indian society. All the western theories are unable to theorize or define this model. They are fail to theorize the issue of caste and untouchability. The issue of caste and untouchability are raised by the novelist in the novels like *Untouchable*, *the Road* and in many short stories. In the western model of criticism, there is a space and at least one can rebel. All the western models of criticism are unable to define the tragedy of Bakha because He can't rebel against the Varnashram. The effect of caste is more powerful than class. In another excellent novel, *Coolie*, the suffering of Munoo lies not in Varnashram but in class system. The writer has tried to show that in the class system, there is a space; Munoo can rebel against inhuman behavior of the people. Munoo and Bakha are the universal metaphors of suffering, the exploitation of fellow human being which happens in the novels due to the caste and class issues, the same thing happens with laborers as well as with the lower castes people day to day life even in the modern age. The writer has tried to depict the real condition of the poor and untouchables in the novels, so that people can be aware of the problem and can adopt the philosophy of humanism in their lives.

All the novels of the writer which published before the independence had the central theme of casteism, untouchability, women's oppression and exploitation of the poor as well as the children. The writer had the view that a slave can change his master but an untouchable can't change his caste as well as profession because the society was structured like that. The writer was the master of depicting the plight of the underdogs. In his "Forward" to G.S Balarama Gupta's *Mulk Raj Anand*, K.R

Srinivasa Iyengar writes

There are novelists 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. Each new study adds a little to our understanding of Anand and his work, yet leaves the subject unexhausted. (Iyengar, V) The writer has dealt with the evils of every kind in his novels. He has resisted against the any kind of exploitation, the exploitation of the poor by anyone, such as the village money lenders, the unscrupulous traders, the imperial masters, the native rulers, and the priest and tea planters. He spoke against all kinds of in justice. Once a letter was written by the novelist to Saros Cowasjee in which he expressed his true feelings about the Indian social system:

There is no avoiding the disgust one feels at the breakdown of decencies in present day India. Perhaps I ought to write more novels because, certainly, nowhere is the drama of meanness, hypocrisy and double

dealing in the interest of power and money and privilege being more actively played, every hour than it is our country today. (Anand, 78) The novelist has written the novels to raise the sub lumbering conscience of man. The evil which is first attacked by the novelists is casteism and the writer considered it one of the greatest evils of Indian society. The writer knew it very well that India is emerging country and after the colonial rule it could be a powerful nation if it is go away with the poison of caste system. Casteism is really a social evil because if it was not so, it would not be opposed by the others social thinkers like Swami Vivekanand and he wrote, "The caste system is opposed to the religion of Vedanta. Caste is a social custom and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached against caste and every time it has only riveted the chains." (Vivekanand, 31), Upanishads have preached the people against it. Lord Buddha preached the people in 2500 years ago. Apart from it, many social reform movements were launched to abolish it. They were Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Movements and the Theosophical Movement. These movements created a lot of awareness among the people about the social evils of caste system.

The biggest attack on the caste system was when Dr. Ambedkar demanded for separate electorates for the untouchables and Gandhi ji went on fast till death if untouchables are separated from the Hinduism.

Mulk Raj Anand has written in this regard

Untouchable was in its sources a ballad born of the freedom I had tried to win for truth against the age- old lies of the Hindus by which they upheld discrimination. The profound thoughts of the upper orders in ancient India about caste were often noble. Someone in the great Mahabharata had cried "Caste, caste- There is no caste!" And I wanted to repeat this truth to the "dead souls" from the compassion of myself explanation in the various Hindu hells, in the hope that I would myself come clean after I had been through sewer, as it were." (Anand, 11)

The writer has observed that the caste system is created by some powerful wicked people because it provides unfair advantages to others completely and it damages the social cohesion of the society. It is like contagious disease of small pox and it poisons and destroys the dignity of man. The writer has shown the evils of caste system in the following novels namely *Untouchable* (1935), *The Road* (1961), and *The Big Heart* (1945) and in his some other works.

The other social evil attacked was exploitation of the poor by the capitalists. When we go through the novels like *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1942), we see that the writer attacked the capitalism and imperialism. In the above novels, we see caste discrimination but here in these two novels, we see class discrimination. The imperialists have exploited the Indians lots to make maximum profits. Munoo and Gangu are the example of it. They were exploited by the capitalists like

people. They were sucking the blood of Indian labors. G.B Shaw has rightly commented on English men nature:

There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find English men doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles.” (Lewis, 68)

The lives of Indian peasants and tenants were worst at that time to live the life was a challenge. The poor and the peasants had to face lots of exploitations for bread and butter. The lives of English dogs were better than poor Indians. The British, the money lenders, the landlords and the lawyers were blood suckers of the poor and the peasants. Most of the productions of the peasants were taken as rent or in the name of the debt and them always lived in the fear of losing their lands, lives and even the chastity of their daughters and wives. At the time, there were many feudal lords who were like demi- gods who were exploiting the tenants for many direct and indirect taxes. As true humanists, the writer could not see the injustice as a mute spectators and he attacked against the evils of feudalism. This can be found many of his novels but particularly, it is found in *The Village* (1942), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953).

Mulk Raj Anand has also criticized war and because of it he had to live in England during 1939 to 1945. For him, the glory of war was nothing. Honor in war was like bubble for him. He has talked about the war in his work *Across the Black Waters*. In this novel, there is a character Kirpu who is like Shakespeare’s Falstaff and honor in war is unreal and unsubstantial for him. As a humanist, he always opposed the philosophy of war and it was deadly evil, the greatest plague on humanity. He appealed to the people that they should avoid the war from their lives. In the war, the suffering of the soldiers and villagers has been shown by the novelists. When the soldiers return from the war to their native land, the suffering which they face, that is untold misery. The villagers also face the burden of the heavy taxes. This has been nicely depicted in the novel, *The sword and the Sickle*. The writer has requested to the British crown not to make the prey of Indian soldiers in their petty quarrels. He has also appealed that if they don’t pay attention to his appeal, then at least they must be compassionate to their families during and after the war. In the novel, *The Big Heart*, the writer rejected the ideology of Gandhi’s rejection of machine and he also rejected the concept of complete industrialization but he focused on the controlled industrialization. He believes that for the development of the country as well as for the development of human being machine is considered as a powerful tool.

Really, the writer had a versatile personality and almost he depicted every kind of social evils in his novels. The result of it that he did not forget to depict the misery of Indian women, who were considered puppet in the hands of their husbands, did not get equal status like men. India women always suffer from their pleasure seeking husbands, from their mother-

in-law and sister-in-law. In this male dominated society, rare women are leading a happy life. They are often burned to death and offer them for the prostitution was common. They were mercilessly beaten by their husbands. As the champion of the underdog, he did not forget to depict the misery of the women. In the novel, *The Old Woman and the Cow* or *Gauri*, is considers for depicting the plight of women. The writer had the view that the nation which gives inferior status to women can't be considered free nation.

Mulk Raj Anand also vehemently attacked on the poor infrastructure of education system of the country. He was the visiting professor of many universities had the view that education system of our country needs reformation and that is matter of the big concern. He wrote a number of articles, books and essays on education system and he emotionally appealed to the people that there is a big need to reform education system of the country. His autobiographical novels *The Seven Summers*, *Morning Face*, *Confessions of a Lover* and *Lament on the death of a Master of Arts* depicted the pitiable and worst condition of the present education system.

India is a country of many religious beliefs and the country of many religions. We have Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Buddhism etc and they have different beliefs regarding their religions. They argue for it, fight for it and even die for it. They can do anything for the sake of their religions. We have seen many quarrels in the name of religions and floods the streets with blood and this has disturbed the unity and solidarity of the country. Any quarrel in the name of the religion is foolish for him. The writer wanted to free the country from the darkness of religious fanaticism and nationalism based on it to the luminescence of the secularism. He presented this view in his novel *Death of a Hero*. He criticized the wrong practices of all the religions. He thinks that religion is the opium of the people and it protects capitalist's institutions. According to him humanism is the true religion of the masses. He does not write the novel for art's sake as he expressed it in one of his letters written to Saros Cowasjee, "Writing novels for the sake of writing novels was, as you know, never my intention. I felt compelled to answer challenges and tried to get out of my own confusion". (Anand, 100) Thus the writer had the view that the aim of the literature is to educate the public and to tell them about the meaning of the life. He appealed to the public that if anyone who believes in human dignity must try to eliminate the feeling of caste from his or her heart and motivates the others to eliminate this from their hearts. Religious fanaticism, superstitions, belief in fate are the enemies of healthy social life of progressive thinking, country's prosperity and as well as for the overall development of the people. Social, political and economic freedom is the birth right of all the human being and to ensure it we must be far away from our enemies like imperialism and capitalism. Thus Mulk Raj Anand is a novelist who was born to set everything right and he is the writer who is known for the welfare of the humanity.

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