

Humanity in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

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Abstract

This paper discusses about the humanity appeared in the Mulk Raj Anand's novels specially Untouchable and Coolie. Mulk Raj Anand is extremely outstanding as an Indian novelist, reformer, recognized essayist, craftsmanship commentator, editorial manager, a short story author, columnist, and political lobbyist. Anand is accepted by several critics along with Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Ahmed Ali, as one of the India's best writers. A writer's views and attitudes are floored by a number of ways which work upon him since the childhood to funeral. In this sense, Mulk Raj Anand has no exception to it at all. His cultural, social, academic heritage altogether shapes his art, culture and personality as well. A champion of the poor classes in India, Mulk Raj Anand attacks religious bigotry and established institutions in his numerous novels and short stories. This basic philosophy mixed humanism and socialism into the concept of "bhakti". Anand's devotion to socialism and humanism has had a dual effect on his writing. His humanism lends more artistry to the value of his work, while his belief in socialism tends to reduce from their literacy worth. Anand's earlier novels show a sense of horror and disgust against social and economic ills, the novels of the middle period show a greater concern for and with the human heart. It is, however, in the later novels that a healthy combination of the social and personal concerns is achieved. Thus, the art of Anand, gradually gains much in confidence. While the later novels keep the passion for social justice, they sound greater emotional depths. Anand's short stories suffer from problems. Similar to those in his novel. For his realistic portrayals of the social and economic problems suffered by Indians at the hands of British, as well those of other richer and powerful Indians. In exposing the limitations of tradition, Anand's mood is in fact ruthless, resentful, ironical and satirical, as the subject and the condition demand. Common themes in the Anand's novels are religious bigotry, hypocrisy, feudal system, east-west encounter, the place of woman in the society, superstitions, poverty, sufferings, misery, hunger and exploitation.

Keywords: Socialism, Humanism, Alienation, Labour, Capitalism, Feudalism

Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in Indian traditional society. Of all the Indian novelists in English, Mulk Raj Anand is regarded as the most controversial novelist. In English to gain an

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international readership, one of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction, he, together with R. K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers. Mulk Raj Anand was a socially engaged writer who has produced much literature. He has written more than a dozen novels and about seventy novels, as well as numerous essays and articles on a variety of topics. His novels can be divided into two categories, namely social and autobiographical novels. He concentrated his focus on the suffering, misery, and misery of the poor resulting from the exploitation of the oppressed class of Indian society.

Anand is famous for his novels and short stories, which have acquired the status of being classic works of modern Indian English literature. He noted for their perceptive insight into the lives of the oppressed and their analyses of impoverishment, exploitation and misfortune. Anand is the most conspicuously committed writer... Perhaps the best word for it is propaganda writing (Pradhan 1). For Anand: Literature is not merely a mode of personal expression, but an instrument of social change. His main contribution to literature has been his realistic depiction of Indian life. In his major novels as it was done by Premchand in Hindi novels acted as a bridge between the national independence movement and the literary movement of the time. In a perspective note on Anand's fiction Anna Rutherford writes: "Anand's character invariably fall into three classes the victims who are usually the protagonist, the oppressions, those who oppose change and progress and the good men" (Walsh 64). Under the last category fall the social workers, the labour leaders, all those who believe in progress. and can see how modern science can improve the lot of the sufferers and help bring about the equality of all men (Walsh 64).

Mulk Raj Anand's the first five novels appeared in the following sequence, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939) and *Across the Black Waters* (1940). His first novel, *Untouchable*, was a chilling expose of the day-to-day life of a member of India's untouchable caste: "Charat Singh was feeling kind, though he did not relax the grin which symbolized six thousand years of racial and class superiority" (67). It is the story of a single day in the life of Bakha, a toilet-cleaner, who accidentally bumps into a member of a higher caste This book captured the puissance of the Punjabi and Hindi idiom in English which was widely acclaimed and Anand won the reputation of being India's Charles Dickens. *Coolie* is the second work of Anand written immediately after his first novel *Untouchable*. In size it is twice as long as the *Untouchable*. Its action is not confined to any particular place, and moves from village to city: "How queer, the Hindus don't feed their cows although they call the cow "mother"! Bakha thought" (*Untouchable* 43). Like *Untouchable*, *Coolie* is also marked by its protagonist remaining simple and passive in his encounters with the society. Munoo, the protagonist of *Coolie*, like Bakha of the previous novel, appears as resigned to accepting his suffering with Slavish Submission, and does not take a conscious and creative role in changing his destiny which is expected from a revolutionary character in any protest novel.

Coolie is a proletarian novel as it focuses on the predicament of the poor; it narrates

the miserable life or a labourer of a coolie. It was written at a time when writer all over the world were turning their attention to the evils which the phenomenal rise of the nineteenth century industrial capitalism had produced. Munoo has been presented fully as a victim of capitalism and feudalism without showing his effort for a better life.

Munoo's beginning is typical of the underprivileged class. His father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment because he could not pay the interest due to his landlord on the money he had borrowed from him. Munoo could never forget the utter helplessness and tragic destiny of his mother consequent to the death of her husband. Despite the sad memories and the ill-treatment meted out to him by his aunt and uncle, Munoo is happy and contented.

Coolie is what Edwin Muir would call a character novel, for it extends primarily in space: with the hero, the hill-boy Munoo, we move to and follow his fortune or rather misfortune first with his uncle and aunt in his village Bilaspuri; then with the Bank. Sub-Accountant's family at Sham Nagar, where Munoo works as a servant; then with Munoo's benefactor, Prabha and his wife in the old feudal city, Dalatpur; we are presently lost with Munoo in Bombay's slums and claws and noise and madness and general fifth and Oases of glory; lastly with Mr. Mainwaring at Simla as her page and rickshaw-puller, where he dies of consumption. As a worker in a cotton mill in Bombay, Munoo is ceaselessly, unflinching tripped up by Destiny.

Leaving his hills in North west India, Munoo descends to the plains and becomes a servant in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram, a sub accountant. The village boy's delight at having come to a colorful city soon vanishes. Babiji makes his life a hell; she is always ready to hurl filthiest abuses on the innocent boy. He is a mere servant; he has no right to play with other children. He undergoes a dreadful routine of domestic servility; he is made to servant along from early morning till late in the evening. Once he burst out weeping before his Uncle, complaining about the hard bitter life he was had since he arrived. Daya Ram silences him by reminding him that he is their servant so he must not mind what they say.

Munoo's miserable life at the eternally painful. Bibiji's house often akes him contemplate his position in the world. He realized that money deed is everything and his suffering is due to poverty. Munoo's sojourn in Bombay as a factory worker provide Anand with an opportunity to describe the pathetic condition of the workers and their plight in society. A fortuitous eating with Hari gets Munoo employment in a large British-owned cotton Mill Bombay, far from being the land of his heart's desire, prove nightmarish. He is totally disappointed; the poverty and suffering in the city. Streets frighten him. He comes to realize the truth of the statement: "The bigger a city is; the more cruel it is to the son's of Adam . . . You have to pay even for the breath your breath" (Dhawan 62). The small and dirty room in which Munoo puts up with eight of his colleagues is nothing short a living hell.

Anand is the first writer to give the Indian novel in English a definite tone and clear texture. His novels belong to the category of socially conscious and realistic novel. His novels depict the realistic picture of the society. In his novel *loolie*, Munoo and Hari are forced to sell their labour. *Coolie* is Anand's second best novel. It was written in three months. The novel is dexterously divided into five chapters, each of which tells of Munoo's life in a different place. Munoo the protagonist of the novel is typical figure representing the miseries of the poor and downtrodden, the under dogs.

The tragedy of the novel is centered on Munoo, an orphan, who moves from place to place in search of livelihood. It is a really tragic story that a fifteen years old orphan, a hill boy, is driven by hunger till he finally falls into the couch of death. His uncle Daya Ram and aunt Gujri show inhuman treatment to him before he is forced out of his village by them considering him old enough to earn his living. First, he is exploited in Sham Nagar town at the house of a minor bank clerk, Nathoo Ram, at the rate of rupees three per month, to be paid to his uncle who had taken him there for job. He, however escapes, from there, being unable to bear the ill-treatment meted out to him by the family members of the bank clerk, except, of course, the clerk's brother called Chota Babu by Munoo. It is only after his dreams are shattered that he is employed in a pickle factory in Danlatpur. But there also, as if his cup of misery were still not full, very soon, his benefactor, Prabhu, turns bankrupt due to having been deceived by his partner, Ganpat, resulting in the closing down of the factory. Now, Munoo finds himself literally on the street and becomes a coolie in the grain market and a porter at the station. Later, he is rescued from that harsh life by an elephant driver in a circus, and he manages to reach Bombay, where he gets work in a cotton mill. Munoo works in an appalling condition for his livelihood. It is here that he makes friendship with Hari and Lakshmi, among others, and acquires the first hand experiences regarding the factory owner's resorting to instigating Hindu Muslim fends with a view to breaking an impending strike.

Munoo himself handily escapes from the turmoil and fraction between the mill-owners and the workers. But his escape proves to be a futile act as he, while running up the Malabar hill, comes under a car which knocks him down. the car owner, Mrs. Mainwarning, decides to take him to Simla, where she makes him her rickshaw puller and domestic servant. She is not fully considerate to the plight of Munoo. Due to overwork, he is worn out and dies of tuberculosis. His death in his prime of life is very painful, tragic and symbolic of the misery and sufferings of the downtrodden people in India.

In the counsel of coolie, we across a large number of persons all of whom have been made to live in the pages of the novel. The novel is full of portraits and vignettes of character showing. Anand's wide ranging observation of the life and the people of this country in the thirties of the twentieth century. The characterization in *Coolie* is conventional. Anand not only reveals his characters through other characters but he himself begins to describe them. For example, we have an elaborate description of Mis. Mainwarnings parentage, her

romantic complex and split personality. Other characters, such as Munoo and Daya Ram, are also introduced almost in the same manner.

The characters in *Coolie* are not complex and round. They are flat and simple. They are static Munoo does not change, he is the same old Munoo throughout the novel and is therefore, not a dynamic character. Characters in this novel are generally static consequently they do not have any complexity of life *Coolie* is devoid of any remarkable, immortal, literary characters except that of Munoo. The Eurasian and Anglo Indian Characters in the novel also lack full of development and portraiture. They are quite sketchy.

Coolie is a much more complicated work. It is epic in dimension and includes an immense variety of heterogeneous material. Its action is not confined to one place but moves from Bilaspur to sham Nagar, to Daulatpur to Bombay and then to Simla. The novel is epic in its sweep, range and variety. It is an epic of modern India, an epic of misery.

Munoo is a hill boy who is forced to leave his village, in the Kangra valley so that he may work and see the world. The first contact with reality shatters his dream of bettering his life (Cowasjee 50-51). Arriving in the house of a minor bank clerk he falls foul of a shrewish and vindictive housewife and before he flees from his employers' frenzied rage he has relieved himself near their doorstep and thereby lowered their social prestige. He next finds himself at a primitive pickle and jam factory, hidden away among the reeking lanes and dark alleys of the feudal town of Daulatpur. The proprietor who has befriended him is bankrupted by the thievery of his partner, and hurled back into the ranks of the labourers from whence he had sought to rise. Out on the streets again, Munoo becomes a coolie, facing desperate competition from other coolies for a chance to serve as the best of burden. From this struggle he is rescued by a circus elephant-trainer, with whose help he reaches Bombay. In Bombay he attaches himself to a vagrant family and becomes one of the workers in a cotton mill. He sweats to earn as bread in appalling working conditions, living in leaky straw hats and, when these are washed away by the Monsoon, in dilapidated and insanitary tenement houses. He makes new friends, has his first glimpse of the life in the red-light district, and witnesses a Hindu-Muslim feud instigated by the factory bosses to break an impending strike. Finally, he is knocked down by the car of an Anglo-Indian woman who takes him to Simla as her servant. Here he dies of tuberculosis (which is aggravated by his having to pull rickshaw for his mistress), watching the peaceful hills and valleys he had abandoned for the plains.

Munoo is a waif hero in the novel *Coolie*. He thoroughly a novel and innocent boy. He doesn't harm anybody but is himself harmed, ill-treated and exploited till death comes to him as a well come release and puts an end to his suffering.

There are lots of people in the world. They have to face many difficulties as Munoo is facing. Through Munoo, Anand describes the misery, wretchedness and degradation of the poor in this modern age. The poor are hungry and sick, weak and helpless at all places whether small towns and villages like Bilaspur and sham Nagar, or in a city like Daulatpur

or in a Cosmopolitan city like Bombay (Sigh 29). They have no sense of self-respect, no dignity, they are incapable of holding their own, or asserting themselves, and they cringe and falter to get their right to live. They are beaten from pillar to post and are compelled to live like animals in the most unhygienic surroundings. They are constantly exploited and ill-treated.

The novel *Coolie* is written in modern age Munoo is the hero of this novel. So his predicament is the predicament of modern man. If Munoo is wing the difficulties, modern man is also facing. Poor people are suppressed by rich people; this is still existing in the society. At this is the cause of the present day problems. Answering his own question as to why he is in this house he replies: "because my uncle brought me here to earn my living. On his return Bibiji gave him two chapatis and a spoonful of lentils and vegetables. He had to eat low on his hands, being considered too low in status to be allowed to eat off the utensils. The insult stung him. He could hardly swallow his food" (*Coolie* 129).

The modern industrial working class grew up in the country after the advent of large-scale industries in the middle of the last century. One important feature of the introduction of industrialization was the eagerness of the employers for quick returns and easy profits. The temptation of cheap, helpless and submissive labour, used to long hours of work and a low standard of living, proved too strong for many who secured enormous profits by terrible sweating of men, women and children. Many efforts were made to improve the conditions by organizing the workers and the Government interfered by passing various labour laws. Now the industrial development of the country is going ahead and many industries have been established on a sound footing and have become a means of livelihood for millions of workers. The magnitude of labour problems has increased with this tempo of industrialization. It has lunched a programmer of planned economic development and have also to meet the challenge of foreign aggression and safeguard our freedom. The importance of labour in this contest can hardly be over emphasized.

In *Untouchable*, Anand used the stream of consciousness technique to tell the story of Bakha. The incidents of 'touching' repeated in varying circumstances in the novel, keep up the rhythm of the novel. The insults and humiliations Bakha, suffers reach their climax when he realizes that improper suggestions have been made to his sister Sohini, by a priest who seeing, him cries out 'defiled, defiled'. Bakha comes back home and declares to his father: they think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt: "Why, why is anyone superior to another? Why are we all sinners?" (*Untouchable* 125). The intolerable position of his caste is brought home to him still future when his farther tells him how he was unable to go to a Chemist's shop for fear of defiling the place when as a child Bakha lay ill with a fever. So far Bakha's revolt against his lot has not gone beyond flaunting the old cast off clothes and boots that he has been able to get from the barracks.

Unlike *Untouchable*, *Coolie* lacks compactness the character of Munoo unlike that of Bakha is not precise and sharp. Also Anand seems to betray a lack of sense of proportion

in the description of the other characters in the novel. The most striking illustration of this is the detailed life sketch of Mrs. Mainwaring, the lady who brings Munoo to Simla after he has been knocked down by her car in Bombay. Such descriptions do not serve any useful purpose in the development of the story. The account of Mrs. Mainwaring's life is given in great detail in the novel so that the novelist gets an opportunity to show the Eurasians who ape the Westerners at a disadvantage. Another defect of *Coolie* which we have already noted in *Untouchable* arises from the novelist's predilection for propaganda. For the sake of getting an opportunity to do this, Anand often contrives situations. In *Untouchable* this is done a little subtly, but this is done a little subtly, but in *Coolie* it is open and blatant.

Coolie where Anand shows himself to be one of the first of Indian minters to look on the savagely neglected, despised and maltreated Indian labourer with an angry lack of resignation. The novel combines an acid indignation at the condition of the poor with a Dickensian vivacity in physical resignation and a delicate sense of the psychology of Munoo, the Waif hero, in particular of the rhythms of his growth from child to adolescent. His story resembles with "Charter Dicken's Oliver twist."

Oliver Twist is the protagonist of the novel. This novel deals with the life of a boy called Oliver Twist from the time of his birth to the years of his early youth. He is born in a workhouse, and is the illegitimate son of a man, having the name of Edwin Leeford, by a girl called Agnes Fleming with whom he had developed a love-affair but who had not been able to marry. Oliver Twist faces many difficulties in his childhood, first in the workhouse and later as an apprentice to an undertaker as Moo was facing. He then runs away to the city of London in search of a hoer life. There he falls into the hands of certain criminals, but is rescued from them first by a man of the name of Mr. Brownlow, and later by Mrs. Maylie, Miss Rose, and Dr. Losberne. He has a half-brother who becomes his enemy and would like to get him out of his way altogether. From the evil designs of this half-brother also Oliver is saved by those very persons who had rescued him from the professional criminals.

Munoo is the protagonist or the hero of the novel. "*Coolie*". the whole gory of the novel centers round him. His condition is like of Oliver Twist. Munoo is fourteen years old when we first meet him in the opening chapter; and we then follow him through fortunes or misfortunes as he struggles to survive. From his village, he is taken to the town of sham Nagar where he Best a job as a domestic servant, in a middle class family. Ill-treated there, he runs away and arrives in the town of Daulatpur in the company of two rich businessmen, Prabha Dyal and Ganpat, who own a pickle and jam factory there and who employ him as a servant in their factory. Here Munoo receives great kindness and affection from Prabha and his wife Parbati but is most cruelly treated by Ganpat who subsequently plays a foul game even mash his partner Prabha and he haves most treacherously towards him, when Ptabha is reduced to a state of penury and has to leave Danlatpur, Munoo loth himself absolutely alone in the world. He then travels to Bombay by a coops train and there he goes through more ordeals. Ultimately he is taken to Simla by a kind hearted Anglo-Indian woman who

treats him well enough lit who does not realize his plight as a rickshaw-puller Munoo contracts the dreadful disease of tuberculosis as a consequence of the excessive physical sz-Ln which he has to undergo, and though well looked after by Mrs. Main warning, dies in hospital. Munoo is portrayed in this novel as a highly intelligent, sensitive, and genial young man who feels most grateful to those who do him any kindness or show him any affection. Apart from having constantly to look for a job or for a source of livelihood, he is also always socking sympathy from his fellow human beings and desiring companionship or comradeship with them. His premature death comes as a climax to the painful recital of his experiences.

Anand's novels are based on his own experiences and observations of the lives of the outcastes and peasants and soldiers and working people (Khan 19). His novels depict some outstanding social problems. The *Coolie* describes the life of Munoo, a peasant boy, who leaves his home in the hills and becomes a domestic servant. He passes through many vicissitudes in his life he works as a coolie in the vegetable market and then is employed in a mill where he has to tolerate the inhuman and harsh behaviour of Jimmie, the foreman and at last works as Mrs. Mainwarning's rickshaw puller in Simla and dies of tuberculosis. In this novel, Anand brings to light the class conflict between the rich and the poor. The edifice of the opulence and magnificence of the rich is based on graft, robbery, theft and exploitation of the poor whom no body respects.

Mulk Raj Anand's two famous novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, he deals with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for a better life *Coolie* is politically conscious novel (Arora 56). It tells the story of the experiences of Munoo, an orphan from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab till he dies of consumption in Simla. The novel thus comprehends the whole of India spatially. *Untouchable* is concerned with the feelings of Bakha, a sweeper boy and his experiences in the course of a single day in the town of bulashah. Both novels, focus on certain very important social and political problems affecting life in India. So the world of the novel is a microcosm of India. These two novels, it cannot be denied, have served the useful purpose of arousing the conscience of the educated Indian to the problems of Untouchability and economic and social injustice in India.

Anand's next novel resemble with *Coolie* is the *Big Heart* (1945). Like the *Untouchable* it is a "stream of consciousness" novel and has the concentration, compactness and intensity of the earlier novel. It records the events of a single day in the life of Ananta, the coppersmith, the man with the big heart like Ratan in *Coolie*. Like *Coolie* its hero also dies hence it is also a tragic novel. There is a conflict between tradition and modern machine. Ananta favours machine but Ralia hates it and there is a tragedy.

The Big Heart presents the conflict between the machine and a small community of coppersmiths and mineworkers. "The coppersmiths and mineworkers are rendered jobless by a factory. . ." (Anand 46). Ananta, the turbulent giant, defends the machine and dreams

of using it as a means of bringing happiness and prosperity in his community, Ralia, a drunkard frustrated by despair, rushes into factory and smashes up the machines Ananta tries to check him but he is killed by Ralia. Ananta's consumptive mistress Janki remains true to him after his death.

In 1963, he has written the novel *The Road*. The protagonist in this novel is Bhikhu, a young out caste who, however, is not passive like the sweeper Bakha in *Untouchable*, but an active rebel and campaigner (Arora 73). Bhikhu is a dynamic young man who enlists the co-operation of his fellows in building a road to connect their village with the town in order to make the transport of milk easier. However, the road here has a symbolic significance also it is essentially the way to salvation. Bhikhu wins our sympathy and admiration by his initiative and his daring. It is the social conflict between those wanting to build the road and those Opposing it that constitutes the real substance of the novel. This novel is a brilliant piece of wanting, standing out as a fresh landmark in Anand's art in view of the distance. Anand has travelled since the publication of *Untouchable*, especially with regard to the artistry and the symbolism of his art.

Charles Dickens novels had been prompted by his sympathy for the down-trodden members of society. Almost all the novels of Dickens contain a criticism of some social evil or the other of his time. The malfunctioning of schools, the malpractices rampant in the legal system and in die prisons of time, the exploitation of child-labour, the prevalence of crime, and the evils resulting from poverty all these were exposed and castigated by Dickens: and Dickens's exposure of all these evils led to a lot of reform and improvement in English social conditions. Anand is definitely a novelist in Dicken's tradition although Anand has had the benefit of certain progressive movements which had not been dreamed of in Dicken's day. In this way the story of *Coolie* and *Olive Twist* resemble to each other. Both the protagonist Munoo and *Oliver Twist* get more suffering in their life. But all said, the fact remains that *Coolie* basically falls far short of a revolutionary novel. It is a classic of Indo-Anglian fiction and would be read rod enjoyed as long as English is read and its literature continues to be enjoyed. Munoo is one of the immortals of literature. He is the passion not of India but of mankind. Anand is a novelist whose province is human nature. His novels embrace human experiences and convey a sense of life and character like a coloured glass. "For, although he didn't know it, to him work was a sort of intoxication which gave him a glowing health and plenty of easy sleep. . ." (Anand 76).

Conclusion

From the discussion in Mulk Raj Anand's novels, it can be said that his main concern is social justice. All his key persons are victims of the age-old customs and traditions in Indian society. Sympathy which compels us to think for a change in society and at the same time guarantee justice to all the sections of people living in this society is generated for their passive suffering persons which is the hearts of the reader. Thus, the idea of Anand

is fully served when his key person compels readers to think for their social justice. With special attention, the present study of Anand's works to the various themes on which his novels are based has given us to certain conclusion. Of all creative writers working in English, probably, Anand is the most concerned with the minute observation of society and literature. His ideas are spread over many prose and articles in the related subjects. The main mission of his life has become to find out the truth of human relations.

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