



## **A PRAGMATIC REVIEW ON THE LITERARY STYLE OF MULKRAJ ANAND – A PROMINENT NOVELIST IN ENGLISH PROSE**

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Mulk Raj Anand, a socially committed novelist, has produced a good deal of literature. He has written more than a dozen novels and about seventy short stories and a host of essays and articles on a number of subjects. His novels fall into two categories namely social and autobiographical novels. He focused his attention on the sufferings, misery and wretchedness of the poor as a result of the exploitation of the downtrodden class of the Indian society. Religious hypocrisy, feudal system, East-West encounter, the place of woman in the society, superstitions, poverty, hunger and exploitation are his common themes.

**International Journal of Reviews, Surveys and Research (IJRSR)****International Refereed and Indexed Journal for Research Scholars and Practitioners***International Manuscript ID : ISSN23194618-V2I1M14-012013***Novels of Mulk Raj Anand****Untouchable**

Mulk Raj Anand's first novel *Untouchable*, published on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1935, was welcomed by a few but criticized by many. Several news-papers in London criticized it as 'a dirty work'. E.M. Forster anticipated such criticism in his preface to *Untouchable*. He says;

It seems to me indescribably clean and I hesitate for words in which this can be conveyed. Avoiding the rhetoric and circumlocution, it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it (*Untouchable* 9).

The novel gained popularity among the Western readers slowly but surely. The Preface written by E. M. Forster made them perceive its aesthetic value. Later it became so popular that it was translated into more than twenty languages. Saros Cowasjee in his book *So Many Freedoms* rightly observes:

The book however quickly cut its way through supercilious criticism and established for itself a popularity that remains unrivalled for work of fiction by any Indian author.(Cowasjee 45)

The novel covers the span from 1930 to 1940 when poverty, slavery and the inhuman exploitation of the masses were at the peak. It was Gandhi who had waged a war against the forces behind these evils.

The novel describes a single day in the life of the protagonist Bakha, a scavenger boy. The entire action takes place within a period of less than twenty four hours. Though the scene of the novel belongs to a small, interior town of the Punjab, the happenings are

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pan Indian in character. Bulandshehar, a small town with an outcaste colony on the outskirts represents a normal Indian town found anywhere in India. Most of the action of the novel takes place at an outcaste colony and in the streets of the small town.

### Coolie

Mulk Raj Anand's second novel *Coolie* is written within three months and got it published without much difficulty in 1936, within a year after the publication of *Untouchable*. It was widely praised by the readers and the critics alike. The popularity of the novel can be judged by the fact that the novel has been translated into more than thirty eight languages. Some call it an 'epic of misery,' others call it an 'odyssey' of a coolie. Anand himself calls it a Whitman poem 'Passage to India' V.S. Pritchett praises it as a political novel of high order.

Anand calls this novel a Whitman's poem, 'A Passage to India' not for its poetic quality but for its picaresque nature. It moves from hills to the plain, village to city from the north to the west and again to the north. Anand wants to show in all its varied nuances, that exploitation is same everywhere. It is not the religion, race or caste but only cash and class that matter. They all exploit the poor.

Anand is concerned with the capitalist nature of the white characters that belong to the class of oppressors. Edward Burra, a well known critic says,

The English occur only as minor characters and are described mostly with an inclination to caricature in fact precisely as they must appear to Indian eyes. It would have been false to Anand's purpose to describe them otherwise. (Dhawan ed.82)

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A. S. Desan, in his essay, “Anand’s Art of Fiction: A Journey into existential Humanism” analyses the cause of Munoo’s exploitation. He says,

Munoo’s plight in *Coolie* is a symbol of societal negation of life, love and natural affection. Death versus life is the predominant emotion of the artist in the novel. The reader is given to understand how terrible and tragic the divide between the rich and the poor is. The reiterated emotion is that the poor belong to suffering by virtue of the divide created by the power of money which, Munoo comes to realize as everything on life. (97, 98)

The realistic picture of poverty can be seen in Anand’s depiction of the sordid life of the labourers living in the slums of Bombay:

The bodies of numberless coolies lay strewn in tattered garbs. Some were curled up in knots, other lay face downwards on folded arms, others were flat on their chests... He had hardly gone three yards when he stumbled on a heap of patched quilt that half enclosed the rotting flesh of a leper.

### **Two Leaves and a Bud**

Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud* is based on a factual report of the racial or imperial exploitation perpetrated by the British rulers in the early period of their regime. The bitterness with which he does it is worth noticing. Mulk Raj Anand in one of his letters to J.F. Brown says “I conceived *Two Leaves and a Bud* as a poem in suffering. I admit that it is the most bitter of my novels, but it is poetic. Were it a literary reportage, it would be hundred times bitterer.” (qtd in Sinha 36) In the preface to the second edition of *Two Leaves and a Bud* Anand recalls;

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What I to say in it was deep in me from the days when I lived for a while near a plantation in Assam and visited Ceylon and saw the inhumanity and barbarism prevalent there with the consequent dehumanization of the colonials involved in the process..... I would say that the descriptions in *Two Leaves and a Bud* are comparative under estimates. Only the decent Englishmen at home will not easily believe that their representatives in the empire could be guilty of such excesses as are familiar to most of the subject races. (qtd in Geroge 71)

The title of the novel is taken from the refrain sung by the coolies while they work on tea plantation.

I will make a good sheaf

Plucking, plucking, plucking

Two leaves and a Bud

Two leaves and a Bud (Two Leaves and a Bud 110)

It is both crisp and suggestive and though the workers find a tilt and swing in it, it throws light on the monotonous routine of the work. They sing it for relaxation, but they uncover their own drabness. "The little hands clipped the leaves more eagerly and more nervously, two leaves and a bud" (50).

The novel is set in one of the tea-estates, a symbol of colonial exploitation in the British Empire situated on Assam hills in the northeast India. The entire drama takes place on the tea- estate. The protagonist Gangu who is from a small village near Amritsar is taken horizontally from Punjab to Assam. He is compelled to leave his native place on account of the loan his brother had taken against their ancestral land and the house,

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from the money- lender. The tea estate agent Buta takes him to the tea estate by creating an encouraging picture of the future.

On the tea estate De-la-Harve, the doctor visits the house of the planter Charles-Craft Crook. He talks ironically about the British rule in India and expresses his view that the British should allow the Indians to run their own country. Gangu and his family are given a tiny tin hut to live in. They start working under the supervision of Reggie Hunt, the assistant planter, a symbol of evil and lust. Narian, a coolie, describes him rightly when he says “He is a very Badmash sahib and he has no consideration for any one’s mother or sister. He is openly living with three coolie women!” (42).

### **The Sword and the Sickle**

The novel *The Sword and the Sickle* deals with the exploitation of the Indian peasants by the British Colonialist and the Indian landlords. Anand announced the title of the novel as *All Men Are Brothers* but on the suggestion of George Orwell, he named it *The Sword and the Sickle*. It is adapted from a stanza by William Blake in ‘*Poems from a Note-Book, 1773*’:

The sword sung on the barren heath,

The Sickle in the fruitful field,

The Sword he sung a song of death,

But could not make the sickle yield. (qtd in Cowasjee, 112)

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The sword is a symbol of force, born to suppress and defeat, whereas the sickle is a symbol of the suppressed, defeated peasants.

As the novel deals with the theme of exploitation, the title is in concord with the theme of the novel.

There are two plots running parallel to each other throughout the novel. On one hand it is a struggle of Lal Singh a revolutionary who fights for the rights of the peasants and on the other it is a love story of Lalu and Maya. The story of Lal Singh as a revolutionary develops through four phases. The first period is the war-period which deals with Lal Singh's participation in the war, his capture by the enemy and his release. The second phase deals with Lalu's return to his native place. The third phase, which forms the major bulk of the story, deals with Lalu's role in the agrarian agitation. The last phase is Lalu's imprisonment, when he starts dreaming about his future with his wife and his son.

Considering the reflection of reality in the novel, it can be observed that the characters and events in this novel are related to the persons alive and the events occurred in early twenties in one of the provinces of India. The major incident is based on Jawaharlal Nehru's An Autobiography (1936) which Anand has reviewed such as Kissan's march towards Allahabad to make the politicians aware of the inhuman treatment to the peasants by the landlord and Nehru's approval to visit the place to make an enquiry form the core of the plot. The arrest of Lalu and his comrades and their trial are historically true. The period at the background of the novel is a transition period in the history of India both politically and socially. Anand observes the changing political and social scenario and comments on them.

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Regarding the theme of the novel Krishna Nandan Sinha in his book *Mulk Raj Anand* calls it a novel of social protest. He says,

It is, an emphatic document of peasant life caught in the phase of national regeneration. It seeks to achieve its purpose by dramatizing the class struggle and by offering social criticism. (Sinha 52)

Some of the critics call it “an intimate picture of Indian rural life” and others call it ‘a novel written with burning sincerity.’ The attempt is sincere but turns out a monotonous doctrinal writing. He succeeds in making his point through the novel but fails to achieve success as a writer. He gives a realistic picture of the Indian peasants after the First World War.

### **The Road**

The theme of *Untouchable* (1936) recurred twenty five years later in *The Road*. Though the setting and characters are changed, the theme of exploitation of the low caste by the high caste is the same.

Bulandsheher of Uttar Pradesh is replaced by Govardhan of Haryana. Bhakha is replaced by Bhikhu. Pandit Kalinath is replaced by Pandit Suraj Mani. Mala and Rukmani replaced by Sohini of *Untouchable*. When Saros Cowasjee asked him why he wrote this novel since he had covered much the same ground in *Untouchable*, Anand replied;

Well it was a kind of shock to me when I went to live in Haryana, twenty miles from Delhi, in the human empire of Jawaharlal Nehru, to find that the outcastes not only

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in South India, but in the mixed north were still consigned to the limbs of oblivion. There was something tragic coming to me in the fact that the caste Hindus would not touch the stones carried by the untouchables to make the road, because the stones had been touched by the untouchables. I mentioned this to the great Nehru. He did not believe me. He was quite angry at my mentioning this awkward fact. I said I would prove it him by showing it to him in the 'enchanted mirror'. (qtd. in Cowasjee 161)

Anand wants to point out that attainment of independence has not made any significant change in the misfortune of the untouchables. The low caste people turn a little rebellious but the high caste also turn more rigid in their attitude towards them. Anand suggests that it is necessary for the high caste Hindus to get down from the camel of their conservative attitude to achieve prosperity. Dhooli Singh says "No one can enter the little door sitting on a camel" (23).

### **Exploitation of Teenagers as Reflected in Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable and Coolie**

Our Indian society is far better than the rest of the universe from the point of view of culture as well as conventions and ways of living but on the other side, if we glance into our society, it has many social and political and economical evils such as bride burning, dowry system and dowry death, corruption in educational system, problem of illiteracy in India, domestic violence, communalism, injustice, crime against children, unemployment in India, suppression of human rights, poverty. Some of the problems have been cast off from its core by the social propaganda and awareness and education and there are still

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such unanswerable problems which must be removed from the society only through the individual consciousness.

Literature is an echo or reflection of the society and that is why authors have a direct association with the society and its values. They have always been successful in the vivid portrayal of the colourful and well cultured society. At the same time they never hesitate to show a dirty and filthy image of the society of the particular era or age. One of the major themes in all genres of literature is social issues or problems.

All the family members. This age of a child or teenager is of enjoying the naughtiness and also the time of learning and making career. If the teenagers work taking the whole family's responsibility instead of learning what will be the future of the nation? The issues relating to the exploitation of teenagers should be high on any Government's agenda. Children should be on the first call on agenda of human resource development not only because young children or teenagers are the most helpless but because this age is the institution of lifelong learning and human development is totally dependent on these crucial early years. The constitution of any teenager's social, emotional, mental background is depended on the primary stage of childhood. Children or teenagers are considered as the future of any nation and as the power and muscle of the nation lies in a healthy, protected, educated and well developed child population. Child abuse is covered in secrecy and there is a great conspiracy of silence among all the administrative power around the entire subject. Existing socio- economic conditions also render some children vulnerable and more at risk to abuse, exploitation and neglect. All the major or minor problems have their root causes from which it stems out.

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## **The Concept of Exploitation**

The awareness of this new phenomenon first emerged several years ago in Latin America, and more particularly in Asia. But the complete understanding of the term exploitation came into existence after many decades of the people's slumber in the form of Karl Marx, the first revolutionary against capitalism and industrialism which are the basic factors of exploitation. He was a revolutionary by nature. He strongly believes:

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion to the devaluation of the world of men (Kreis 1).

## **Exploitation of Teenagers as Reflected in Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable and Coolie**

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand's two Novels Untouchable and Coolie have been considered as the graphical representation of the untouchability and deprivation of the lower classes of India. However with the deep insights one can observe that the phenomenon of exploitation of teenagers has been fully flourished by the author's skillful hands. Mulk Raj Anand was a man of realism. The characters of his Novels are more real and universal rather than subjective i.e. individual. Most of his writings are directly or indirectly investigating deeply the social process. Untouchable and Coolie are not only literary pieces became well known talk about the behavioral pattern of untouchability and the people deprived of social, cultural, religious rights but also because of several exploitations of people including innocent children of that period.

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Undoubtedly *Untouchable* is Anand's modern work which is the image of his society's trodden and exploited class. This piece is considered to be an autobiographical note which came out as a form of his experiences. When Anand was a child, his father was employed as a Subedar in the Indian Army. During those days Anand mixed with the children of leather-workers, washer men and sweepers and came across their real daily life and its realities. This association and attachment continued till the days of his youth.

Hence this Novel is the authentic document of his life's incidents. *Untouchable* is the story of the devaluation of outcaste people and at the same time of the exploitation of teenagers. It basically deals with the different teenagers' problems like Bakha, his sister Sohini and his brother Rakha and some other his outcastes friends like Chota and Ramcharan we come across during their a day's activities.

*Coolie* is also a masterpiece depicting the reality of life. The title is very apt, suitable and reasonable as the story of the Novel revolves round a boy named Munoo, a son of a porter who comes from his village to come out his poverty and works at various places. The peak of darkness of exploitation is expertly described by the author. The Novel also shows the highest level of inhumanity when poor Munoo works at socially, economically, and politically higher classes of Indian society. The Novel shows his adventurous journey of exploitation from servant, factory worker, rickshaw driver to a child labourer.

Mulk Raj Anand is considered to be God or Messiah in backward castes and exploited class just because of his brilliant works which describe down-trodden and poor India's social, political, and cultural conditions. The Novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, which communicate the abuses of an exploited class an untouchable boy in *Untouchable* and a waif, Munoo in *Coolie*. *Untouchable* and *Coolie* are the only Novels in which Anand has

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presented the realistic picture especially problems and exploitations of teenagers of the early decades of 20th century in India to reveal the social background with the unique observation of social reformer. Anand has not presented the teenage character in particularly but in a general way. The writer has not only painted his works with the idea of keeping his literary pieces mirror up to the Indian society but also made it mandatory to think about the masses, about the sufferers and abused people and provided ideal solutions.

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