

## Mulk Raj Anand : A Messenger of Hamane Sensibility

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Famous Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand was born on December 12, 1905 in Peshawar in present day Pakistan. He used to say that his novels closely reflected the slowly changing social system of his times. And it was the impressions he gained and experiences he underwent that shaped the narrative.

Anand was widely known for his humanistic writing as the characters of his novels reflect Anand's humanistic approach for mankind. His works reflect the realities of Indian society and Indian culture. In all his novels, Anand stressed the need for a humanistic approach to life. Like most Indian novelists writing in English, he was inevitably concerned with man in society. He was an artist saturated with a moral understanding of Indian masses. He understood their mute anguish and always succeeded in bringing out their insulted humanity. His novels exposed the silent passions that burst in the hearts of the people who are forbidden to rise up and express themselves. His aim was to evoke generosity and compassion in the minds of the privileged sections of the society, to which the bulk of his readers belong.

Anand was known for his realistic and sympathetic portrayal of the Indian poor. Anand portrayed the trials and tribulations of the down-trodden, dispossessed and the poor with compassion. He felt the pain of the poor people, who belonged to lower class and weaved the thread of his novels around them. He made the people of India realize that the lower class, down-trodden and poor people are also human beings; they also have the right to live. In the Indian society when one is worshiping the animals like cows and bulls, the poor people are living in pitiable condition. Showing the worst condition of poor, Anand criticized the upper class, aristocratic people who had no care for humanity.

Everything has a reason behind it in this world. Anand's love and the feeling of compassion also had some certain reasons that lay in his past and in his surrounding. Mulk Raj Anand was the son of a coppersmith turned soldier, Lal Chand who was head clerk in 38th Dogras regiment. He had moved with his father as his regiment was transferred from place to place. Thus he saw many sections of Indian life and European life, the life of officers and the men of the army. His mother was a peasant woman through whom he was nourished on the songs, tales, myths, and epics of the village community. He had known and seen and felt the rural life of Punjab and the North West frontier provinces of those days. He had seen villages, groaning under poverty; he had seen village life sucked dry by parasites and religious priests. He closely observed the pitiable condition of untouchables and down-trodden people living around cantonment area. Anand's heart cried when he saw the injustice with the poor. All these had cast a spell on his mind and he decided to write about those people who were continually being insulted and injured by the British officers, the seminars, the money lenders, and the businessmen. He decided to be the mouthpiece of the underdog. Anand treated his characters, not patronizingly, but with the sympathy and gave them a status of the respectable human beings. The sweeper, the peasant, the plantation labourer, the city drudge, the sepoy, all emerge alive from his novels-anguished and hungry, yet human superstitious and self divided, vividly realized in spite of their thwarted purposings. Anand portrayed the poor peasant, labourers, coolies, untouchables and uneducated people, fighting the desperate and loosing the battle of survival, in all his works whether it is a short story or a novel.

Anand was so much focused on the poor people that he did not write more about the orthodox and superior people of high caste, class and status in the town and villages where he had grown up. Anand's heroes are the down-trodden sweepers, coolies, the unemployed coppersmiths, the debt-ridden farmers and poor simple soldiers. Poverty and sufferance are the badge of their class. In his novels latrines, dirt, cuss-pools, poverty, beggary, prostitution and disease-everything is there, beautifully expressed. Anand led this caravan of less miserable, and tells the west the story of the true India-not the India of bejeweled Maharajas, polo-playing European officers and club and drinks, but the real India of the majority of Indians. His purpose was not to draw sentimental tears but to show his readers the true dignity that is hidden behind poverty and disease.

Anand was aware of the weaknesses, folly, dissipation and ignorance of his pet

characters but he wanted to show that these characters are good human beings in spite of their defects.

Anand's feeling of sympathy for the downtrodden was so intense that he started his career as a novelist with the novel 'Untouchable' which presents the miserable condition of an untouchable in the Indian society. Anand had no faith in social norms. When he observed that even animals are better placed on the earth of India than untouchables, he felt sympathy for such people and he decided to be the mouth piece of underdog and did pain-staking effort to realize the reluctant people that untouchables were also human beings and they must be allowed to live with dignity. That's why in his very first novel 'untouchable' he portrayed the character of Bakha, the protagonist, with sympathy and attracted people's attention towards the problems of untouchables. With a remarkable skill, Anand entered into Bakha's soul and exposed Bakha's helplessness, frustration, anxiety and agony to the degree that he had become an embodiment of Bakha himself.

Bakha was not just an imaginary character in fact he was a living person whom Anand knew. Anand himself had seen his misery that made Anand aware with the problems of untouchables. This observation created a great impact on his mind as well as on his writings. Such kind of experiences made Anand a true humanist who cried with the cry of untouchables and other down-trodden people of society.

Anand always felt the pain and suffering of untouchables and always tried to make people aware about the seriousness of the problems of untouchables. That's why he again tried his hand on the same theme of 'Untouchable', after 25 years, in 'The Road'. This novel is based on the sufferings of untouchables during the construction of a road. Like 'Untouchable', The Road is also a mirror of society of that time when the evil of untouchability had become a curse for the untouchables. Anand's coming back again to the same social evil in this novel reveals his emotional involvement with the problems of untouchables. The poor and untouchables were dear to him and he endeavored for their upliftment through his writings.

On the one hand Mulk Raj Anand's characters show orthodoxy and inhumanity for the lower class people, on the other some of his characters give the message of humanity and friendship. Through such characters Anand said that social norms are completely man made things, which makes a human being's life bad to worse. Through Dhooli Singh's character in 'The Road', Anand presented his humane approach for the oppressed untouchables.

Through some of his novels Anand brought forth the problems of upper class people who are poor and suffer because of lack of money. In 'Coolie' Anand sympathetically portrayed the character of Munoo who in spite of being an upper class, strives for a place in society because he is not well off. In this novel, Anand threw light on the problem of child labour also. Anand's regret at the condition of down trodden and poor people is clearly visible in this novel. The novel becomes more touchy at the end when Munno dies of tuberculosis. Through this novel Anand mourned not only for Munno but also for thousands of Munnoos who died untimely because of being the victims of this materialistic society. Through elephant trainer, Anand presented the reality of the big cities where people are so materialistic that they had no care for humanity. Anand has vividly described the life of the laborers in a cotton mill, their exploitation, their over crowded dwellings and their dirty latrines etc. The description is quite realistic and Anand's portrayal of the deplorable condition of poor laborers present Anand's humane approach for mankind.

Anand believed that poverty was amongst the main cause of human beings sufferings. It affects not only a person's life but also the life of his whole family.

In 'Two leaves and a Bud', Anand depicted the widening gap between the haves and the have notes, the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled. In this novel, Anand presented the story of an exploited peasant, Gangu who is killed while trying to protect his daughter from being raped by a British colonial official and his wife dies of a disease. Through Gangu, Anand portrayed the mental state of the laborers of tea-plantation who feel jeopardized while working under the ruthless masters. They are destined to suffer because they are deprived of money. In 'Two leaves and a Bud', Gangu tried hard but could not get a loan for the cremation of his wife. Anand's portrayal of Gangu's miserable condition is quite realistic. He successfully drew sympathy of the readers for Gangu who was roaming in the whirlpool of his destiny.

Anand's novels evoke the human sensibility and make the readers feel the pain and sorrow of the characters. In many of his novels Anand's concern for downtrodden

and poor people has found ample expression. He wrote a 'Village Trilogy' to vindicate his concern for the peasantry. The Trilogy is not just the story of a peasant lad Lalu's spiritual journey in quest of identity. It is also a chronicle of Indian peasantry in the throes of exploitation during the British colonial rule in India, immediately before and after the outbreak of World War I. In his hopes and fear, Lalu, the central character, reflects the image of common Indian peasant who is compelled to suffer sometimes because of circum-stances and sometimes because of exploiters like Sahukars and British officers. In all the three novels of the trilogy, Anand presented Lalu's problems in completely different way but his portrayal always remained sympathetic whether he portrayed Lalu struggling against conventions or struggling against Germans or fighting for freedom.

In 'The sword and the Sickle' Lalu keeps Maya with him without caring for the society. Anand was carefree about the social conventions and traditions. By showing this fact Anand made the people realize that first it is important to be a good human being. Social conventions and traditions are not above humanity. Such was the philosophy of Mulk Raj Anand and it underlies everything he wrote.

In most of his novels, Anand condemned social evils. The evil of untouchability, people's orthodoxy and narrow-mindedness, their conservative thinking likewise. Most of the time when his hero was suffering, Anand sympathises with him but his feeling of sympathy becomes more intense when he portrayed the character of Gauri, a simple housewife who is helpless against the ill treatment of her husband. In Gauri, Anand threw light on the pitiable condition of peasant women in India. Through Gauri's character Anand presented the picture of the helpless Indian woman who in spite of having the ability to give birth to a man, is oppressed by the male dominating society. In this novel, Anand adored Gauri with a number of virtues like tenderness and patience but still she is destined to suffer because of her husband. Anand exposed the helpless low status of woman in traditional Hindu society. It draws sympathy for Gauri. Anand has presented her pitiable condition in a very touchy manner. Anand wanted to see the improved condition of Indian peasant woman around himself and thus wrote a novel on Indian woman fighting for her dignity. No doubt, the way Anand depicted the sorrow, helplessness and struggle of the downtrodden or peasant woman of India is remarkable and Anand's humane portrayal of Gauri is worthy of all praise.

In his novel 'The Big Heart', Anand sympathetically portrayed the miserable condition of the copper-smiths of Amritsar, who suddenly come face to face with machine civilization when a small factory is planted in their midst. In this novel, Anand supported the demand for industrialization made by the progressive social and political groups in India but he was aware of the disastrous consequences of industrialization if it ignored the welfare of the traditional village artisans. Anand made the readers realise that industrialization is must but humaneness is the most important thing, which one should not forget. Through 'The Big Heart' Anand presented his perception that although tradition gives customs and conventions which are so necessary for a well knit social order and basic social values but controlled modernization is necessary to give a proper direction to these values to be utilized for a proper human cause and development within already defined social boundaries. Anand believed that machines are necessary for human development and then this would naturally usher in happiness and prosperity but this development should not mar human emotions. Anand made the people realize that a control is needed in the transformation of the society from traditional to modern so that the basic values of the social governance are not lost out. Thus Anand's concern for humanity and human beings has found good expression in 'The Big Heart'.

Anand wrote his novels taking entirely different themes. Whether he wrote about poor and untouchables or about rich people, the sorrow and pain is clearly visible in his every novel that came out directly from his heart and through his every protagonist, he gave expression to his own feelings.

Anand not only wrote about the poor and downtrodden people with sympathy but also he attracted reader's attention towards the pain and sorrow of so-called aristocratic people. Anand's humanistic approach was not reserved just for untouchables or down trodden people. His sympathy was for all who were oppressed or suppressed or who had pain in their hearts. Anand equally sympathized with the high-class people who were striving for their rights in their lives. According to Anand "the poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one kind of outcasts. The middle section and the nawabs and the rajas are also to be included as a species of

untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show the poor rich of our country, who deserve pity more than contempt."

For showing the real picture of this class of poor rich, Anand presented the psychological study of a prince who loses both his throne and his mistress and consequently his sanity. In spite of showing so many weaknesses in his hero's character, Anand successfully created sympathy for his hero in the readers mind.

Through 'Private Life of an Indian Prince' Anand brought out the dilemma, the pain, the stress of Indian Princes who were caught in between their ambitions to establish independent states on the one hand and to avert clashes on the other. They were like outcastes who felt thrown out of their royal class but could not adjust to democratic society. In this novel, the psychological study of the prince is concerned not merely with the vagaries of the princely class and the dilemma, which the princes faced before Indian Independence, but with the intriguing relationship among the princes and their subjects and the new Government of India after the independence. In this novel, Anand portrayed the character of prince Victor sympathetically and he showed that in spite of having many vices, Victor deserved sympathy as he was torn between the problems of his personal life and the problem related to his state. In spite of having all the objects of luxury, he was in need of emotional support. Anand's humane approach became more human when he portrayed the character of prince Victor.

Along with the poor and rich people who were suffering because of some reasons, Anand moved his attention towards those people also who were suffering because of some fanatic people or system or by the other classes of society.

Anand's 'Death of a Hero' is the story of Maqbool Sherwani, who sacrificed his life for his motherland. Maqbool becomes the victim of conservative thinking of fanatic people who do not know the real meaning of religion and patriotism. In 'Death of a hero' Anand sympathetically portrayed the character of Maqbool Sherwani and he made Maqbool's sacrifice memorable. In this novel, Anand presented Maqbool's character as a missionary of the religion of humaneness who willingly accepts martyrdom for the propagation of that religion. Through Maqbool's character Anand portrayed a real patriot who instead of fighting with people for religion, believes in peace and wants harmony for his people. Anand's memorable portrayal for Maqbool is his salute to humanity.

Anand focused on those people also who were the victims of dissatisfactory education system in India. In 'Laments on the Death of a Master of Arts' Anand's portrayal of Noor, an unemployed M.A. who is suffering from consumption is touchy. Noor's childhood, his harsh teachers, his friend Gama, his college life, his failure to get a suitable job, his marriage with a girl named Iqbal are all described as passing scenes before the eyes of the dying young man. The slow creeping death of Noor and his dissatisfaction with life arose sympathy not only for Noor but also forced the people to think about the thousands of Noors who are victims of poor education system. Anand himself suffered a lot due to ill education system so he was aware with the pain of the jobless educated people. Thus his sympathies for such people inspired him to write about the agony of jobless youth.

Anand always remained sensitive about relationships. The death of his cousin Kaushalya broke him so much that he could not forget that incident throughout his life. He presented that painful experience in a every touchy manner in 'Morning face'.

In 'Confession of a Lover', Anand has described Krishan's state of mind when his aunt Devaki died. In the novel, Devaki's death shatters Krishan and he loses another link in the weakening chain that ties him to his home. The pain and sympathy, which Anand felt in his heart, he put in his characters. Anand adored his characters with his humane approach and portrayed them with reality. Dr. Mulk Raj Anand showed his human beings with profound insight into the souls of his character, he presented the innermost emotions of his people.

Two things were prominently responsible for Anand's humanely writings. The first was his own bitter experiences about life which made him sensitive, which gave him a sensible and sympathetic outlook to see other problems and the second was his sensitivity which made him cry for other's misery. Whenever Anand saw people in deplorable condition, his heart wept and he made his novels a medium to present his anguish. With his creations Anand proved himself a humane writer who not only portrayed the characters but also gave life to them.

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SHODH SANCHAYAN

ISSN 2249-9180 (Online)

ISSN 0975-1254 (Print)

RNI No.: DELBIL/2010/31292

**Bilingual journal  
of Humanities &  
Social Sciences**

**Half Yearly**

**Vol. 1, Issue 2,  
15 July, 2010**

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