



A study of Mulk Raj Anand's novels towards humanistic approach of socio discord

Sonam Narayan

Research Scholar, UGC, CBSE Net/Uttarakhand Set, Uttarakhand, India

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand has comparatively eased himself of the reformist zeal, which has been a major obsession with him and had turned his attention to remythicise contemporary reality. But curiously, accepting the first short novel, the old woman and the cow, the accepting the first short novel, the deficient in gravitas and lack the sustained vital of myth. Anand becomes resented the charge that he is a committed writer, and rightly so. He feels that he is realist, defining the body soul drama in terms of a real drama of individuals and in their fictional enactment. This, however, does not make him absolved of the charge of commitment, but rather confirms his left wing affiliations. A closer of Anand fictional corpus, reveals that Anand commitment comes out unobtrusively by the very nature of his themes he has set on hand. A lack of control or a proper restraint over his material mars Anand fiction, though one concedes that he remains a consummate artist in spite of these minor blemishes. Anand's fictional world i.e. peopled by the individuals who have obvious choice of their own; they grope for identity in a world of pitiless cynicism, and social regimentation. Mulk Raj Anand was one of "the founding fathers" of Indian English fiction for whom the art of fiction was as important as the communication it sought to convey. This was a form which soon established itself as best suited to the Indian sensibility and as one to which Indian writers have made amazing contributions. In her essay, 'Mulk Raj Anand and the Thirties Movement in England' Gillian Packham perceptively notes that Anand became an essentially 'thirties' man in thought and sensibility and was markedly influenced by Marxism. Anand, Confining himself to Indian social ground, he makes a case in an indignant reformist way for those subjected to inhumanities perpetrated by grinding poverty, discriminating caste and class assertions and injustices meted out to women, orphans, urban labourers and the so-called "Untouchables." It is the predicament of such characters that Anand seeks to depict in his novels. Anna Rutherford categorizes Anand's characters in his novels into three classes, namely the victims, oppressors who oppose change and progress, and the good. It is the "victims" who are generally the protagonists in his novels and in fighting for them, despite his perceptible propagandist inclinations, he often proves to be a writer of considerable power.

Keywords: Mulk Raj Anand, power, social regimentation, communication, Indian sensibility, contributions

1. Introduction

Anand's pre-Independence novel deal with the problems of industrial labour and with several aspects of social reform, including the pathetic conditions of the Untouchables who were cruelly discriminated against [2-4]. A novel approach to the works of Anand is that of Dieter Riemenschnider, who, in his essay, 'The Function of Labour in Mulk Raj Anand's novels' explores the socio-literary implications of human labour as presented in literary works may provide an important insight into the ideological as well as the aesthetic aspects of such works. Labour, according to the author, is a free activity of man because its objectives are determined by man himself. Thus, as Riemenschnider puts it, "labour means self-realization of man, an act of real freedom," but labour, as it is always performed in society, is necessarily a social activity as well. In literature, when man is considered as a member of a particular species, what defines him fully by presenting his essential nature is the totality of His social activities and relations [1]. In Anand's novels the problem of labour is aesthetically presented through character and event. All the main characters in his major works are 'forced to sell their labour in order to survive.' By portraying these characters, not only does Anand demonstrate his interest in

their individual lives but also conveys the economic and social changes taking place in India under colonial rule and depicts the gradual transformation of a feudal society into a capitalistic one [5].



Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004)

He believes that evil forces have to be identified and contained---eradicated if possible---and obscurantism has to be resolutely uprooted if the individual has to grow and progress [6]. His denunciation of violence arising from caste/class politics could be related to the entire humanity in the context of the World War in which his character, Lalu

Singh, appearing in more than one novel, goes to fight in Europe. He was convinced that the Imperialistic policies of the British. He said, in 1973: I meant much more than writing a novel of the war. I meant to condemn civilization the way it was drifting towards violence and bloodshed and world pain. Anand presents an indictment of the British rule which apparently upheld the ideals of liberty and equality but perpetrated unmistakable racial discrimination. He had written private life of an Indian prince with an intention to cure himself of several anathemas and the novel seems to have attracted very little critical attention, though it is powerful in parts ^[7]. The realism in his works touches the heart but his humanistic persuasions are so overpowering that they often colour his narratives to an extent that corrodes the principal artistic values in his fiction. And yet, we cannot but appreciate Anand as a writer with a mission, a mission which seeks to uphold the centrality of human beings in any community of men for he regards all mankind as one, with no viable and justifiable barriers to vindicate the ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor, between the “haves” and the “have notes.” His purpose is undoubtedly a sympathetic consideration of the plight of the “have-notes” and a focused series of efforts to improve the lot of the deprived. He displays a tenacious dramatic power which, in conformity with social and psychological realism demonstrates moral issues through the counter pointing of good and evil.

Review of Literature

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. The only flaw in the novel Anand's resort to occasional direct statements and homilies through the poet. Even then the poet is more lifelike than Dr Havre or Dr Mahindra. He is not incredibly virtuous. He has his own infirmities like the other saviour hero, Ananta. He does not overtly sermonize Ananta or other coppersmiths; he only guides them. Ananta is one of suffers but better than them because of the wisdom that experience has imparted to him. Because the sufferer-saviour gap is eliminated in the novel, it makes for a more effective conveyance of the author's message. Anand's obsession with casteism is again in evidence as he weaves the theme of rigidity of caste with the economic problem of unemployment because of the complex of the victims of those evils themselves ^[8]. Murli after their partnership with Gokul Chand in the setting up of the factory, they want to be regarded as higher than the coppersmiths because they have joined hands with a Kshatriya in the enterprise of the factory. They do not invite Ananta and other members of their brotherhood on the betrothal of Nikka but they are ready to put their turbans at the feet of Gokul Chand. No doubt, Anand has a dig at the false ego of those who want to excommunicate Gokul Chand because he has attended the

ceremony at the house of Murli Dhar, but the bigger targets of Anand's ridicule are the son during the ceremony effectively conveys how caste considerations get indistinguishably entangled with class complexes. It is with the help of powerful situations and befitting characters that Anand hammers his point home. He does not have to depend on any savior hero to preach his sermon. The novel, in this way, is a powerful exposure of socio-economic and political problems facing the pre-Independence India ^[9].

Humanism in the work of Mulk Aaj Anand

A novel approach to the works of Anand is that of Dieter Riemenschneider, who, in his essay, ‘The Function of Labour in Mulk Raj Anand's novels’ explores the socio-literary implications of human labour as presented in literary works may provide an important insight into the ideological as well as the aesthetic aspects of such works. Labour, according to the author, is a free activity of man because its objectives are determined by man himself. Thus, as Riemenschneider puts it, “labour means self-realization of man, an act of real freedom,” but labour, as it is always performed in society, is necessarily a social activity as well. In literature, when man is considered as a member of a particular species, what defines him fully by presenting his essential nature is the totality of His social activities and relations ^[11]. In Anand's novels the problem of labour is aesthetically presented through character and event. All the main characters in his major works are ‘forced to sell their labour in order to survive.’ By portraying these characters, not only does Anand demonstrate his interest in their individual lives but also conveys the economic and social changes taking place in India under colonial rule and depicts the gradual transformation of a feudal society into a capitalistic one. Mulk Raj Anand was one of “the founding fathers” of Indian English fiction for whom the art of fiction was as important as the communication it sought to convey. This was a form which soon established itself as best suited to the Indian sensibility and as one to which Indian writers have made amazing contributions. In her essay, ‘Mulk Raj Anand and the Thirties Movement in England’ Gillian Packham perceptively notes that Anand became an essentially ‘thirties’ man in thought and sensibility and was markedly influenced by Marxism. Anand, Confining himself to Indian social ground, he makes a case in an indignant reformist way for those subjected to inhumanities perpetrated by grinding poverty, discriminating caste and class assertions and injustices meted out to women, orphans, urban labourers and the so-called “Untouchables.” It is the predicament of such characters that Anand seeks to depict in his novels. Anna Rutherford categorizes Anand's characters in his novels into three classes, namely the victims, oppressors who oppose change and progress, and the good ^[10]. It is the “victims “who are generally the protagonists in his novels and in fighting for them, despite his perceptible propagandist inclinations, he often proves to be a writer of considerable power.

Socio Discord in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

The relationship between specialization and alienation is indeed important in the Bakhtinian thought also wherein “the image of man” is crucially important. Be it scientific specialization and/or any other micro-level expertise, it is

important to mark that they lead towards alienation. Anand is highly conscious of the factors operating behind the small, micro level specialization leading towards atomization of society and his concern is to explore those possibilities, which may not thwart the human voice and the humanity.

Anand's humanism being of a special authentic awareness, shorn of sentimental humanism, is certainly a clear pointer towards a new social awareness. For Anand, man is indeed the mover of all social changes. Lukács thinks that the conceptual and historical foundation for this change concretely lies in the problem of economics, as he asserts that "by dissolving the fetishistic objects into processes that take place among men and are objectified in concrete relations between them; by deriving the indissoluble fetishistic forms from the primary forms of human relations" within which the "conflicts between man and nature, man and man (in the class struggle, etc.) are fought out". Seen in the historical perspective, Lukács says that an illusion is degenerative created: "*history is the history of unceasing overthrow of the objective forms that shape the life of man*". He further elaborates that this kind of illusion cannot be always assumed with respect to social formations, though change is the basic focus when concrete historical processes are propelled by the knowledge that man gathers. Knowing that "capitalism violates and destroys everything human" and so humanism or humanistic understanding of people and their behaviour of social development has to be seen in concrete, authentic terms to avoid the solutions, termed 'humanistic' which may become self-refuting". Anand's humanism has been looked at by many critics as determinist; whereas, the historical understanding of the various social developments is dialectical in his novels. Lukács says:

Reification is, then, the necessary immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society. It can be overcome only by constant and constantly renewed efforts to disrupt the reified structure of existence by concretely relating to the concretely manifested contradictions of the total development, by becoming conscious of the immanent meanings of these contradictions for the total development. A little while ago, we discussed the prospects of developing revolutionary consciousness, to which we may further add "the structure can be disrupted only if the immanent contradictions of the process are made conscious" through the dialectical consciousness of the proletariat. How it is historically perceived? Lukács says: "Historical thought perceives the correspondence of thought and existence in their – immediate, but no more than immediate – rigid, reified structure" (202). This vulgar view is contradicted by the way philosophy is transformed into praxis, which underlines the vital process of becoming. This process is marked by those social developments, which point towards non/anti-bourgeoisie culture. "Any transformation can only come about as the product of the – free – action of the proletariat itself".

Similarly, the list of critical secondary sources on his works is never-ending. Among the first full-fledged studies of Anand's novels, Jack Lindsay's *The Elephant and the Lotus* (1965) is generally considered to be the earliest monograph that undertakes to study the social protest theme in his novels primarily as an impact of 1930s movement on Anand, the man and the writer. Dieter Riemenschneider in *The Ideal of Man in*

Mulk Raj Anand's Novels (1967) analyses the novels of Anand thematically, particularly his concept of man and thus paving way for establishing him as a chief advocate of humanism. Margaret Berry in his *Mulk Raj Anand: the Man and the Novelist* (1971) studies his thirteen novels and attempts to analyse and assess Anand the man and the writer, and calls him a revolutionary writer because of his assault on social institutions.

Among the recent critical studies of Mulk Raj Anand's novels is S.R. Khan's *Mulk Raj Anand: The Novel of Commitment* (2000) wherein he undertakes to analyse the Marxist orientations as embedded in novel of Mulk Raj Anand. He traces the influence of Marxist principles on Anand and declares Anand as a fine example of fiction writer committed to social transformation required for creation of a better society. Neena Arora has made a very extensive, comprehensive study of the protagonists in Anand's novels in her book *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of His Hero* (2005). She eulogises Anand for giving a new concept of anti-hero/ negative hero as most of his protagonists hail from very humble, unheroic backgrounds. She is of the opinion that in almost all Anand's novels, the sufferer-saviour combine can be seen at work. She is all praise for Anand for an objective, authentic delineation of characters though at times, she complains, this delineation suffers because of Anand's overzealous, reformatory vigour taking precedence over his artistic integrity. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A New Critical Spectrum* (2005) is a collection of essays edited by T.M.J. Inder Mohan. The twelve essays compiled in the book chiefly make a traditional thematic analysis of various novels of Mulk Raj Anand.

Tom Bottom ore in his *Political Sociology* links up the study of sociology with power structures: "Political sociology is concerned with power in its social context" [12]. The concept of power is linked with the ability of social group to take political decisions. The power structures have historically been shaped as hierarchies in feudalism, capitalism, imperialism, and also high capitalism. The exercise of power through the hierarchies is to establish what Bakhtin calls "authoritative discourse". This form of discourse, as already analyzed above, is authoritarian, rigid, calcified and has no place for playfulness and above all it rejects the recognition of the otherness of the other being and is, therefore, monological. On the other hand, the forces of "persuasive discourse" tend to dehierarchise the social system, introduce internally persuasive discourse in order to show the understanding of the otherness of the other being and is thus dialogical. While studying the "theory of social classes", one takes into account "consequences of changes in society", to explain democracy. Interestingly, capitalism and industrial capitalism threw up a new class, which is called by Marx as "the bourgeoisie" which has historically contributed to the emergence of democracy. Even within a democratic structure, the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie continues to remain tension-ridden and so the powerful suggestion to look at it as a "social question". Democracy cannot be conceived as "the rule of bourgeoisie" which has the huge potential to be exploitative which may finally also lead to de-democratization as it will lack in full participation of the citizenry. Bottom ore says:

“For Marx, democracy is a historical phenomenon which is far from having unfolded all its possibilities, and the principal agent of its further development is the working-class movement”. Anand’s ideological novelizations are a clear pointer towards developing all the possibilities of democracy through the working class movement; it is another matter whether the sturdy working class movement emerges and leads the people towards the goal of emancipation.

The bourgeoisie may have worked assiduously for political democracy to unshackle itself and capitalistic economy from the clutches of fundamentalist ecclesiastical powers and the feudal lords, yet it has never desired the strengthening of the democracy at the grass root level. “Movements for industrial democracy have been similarly discouraged, and even socialist governments, whether reformist or revolutionary, have shown little enthusiasm for a devolution of their powers which would permit a greater involvement of ordinary people in the direction of their everyday economic activities”. Bottom ore also cites Max Weber’s *Economy and Society*, to see whether “direct democracy is possible only in small and relatively simple societies”; however he does not go with Weber. Similarly, the democratic institutional arrangement as a “means of competitive struggle for the people’s vote” advocated by J.A. Schumpeter does not find favour with bottom ore. Just as Bakhtin and Anand visualize the power of democracy in its huge sweep; it does find favour with bottom ore also. He does not support *laissez-faire* in the management of economy and the social structures. bottom ore says that the issues like preservation of environment through the adequate use of natural resources and the empowerment of women may seem to have “little connection with class politics”, yet these issues have great power to bring in social change. Anand’s vision is close to political sociology and so his sweep is wide and deep as he endeavours to explore the avant-garde role of the working class, the peasantry and the organized youth movement. The typology of social, economic, political voices that Anand encompasses in his novels is a vital theme and phenomenon which has to be factored in our study of Anand’s novels in the Bakhtinian mode.

A profound idea is taken up for research by H.Gustave Klaus in 1985 publication *The Literature of Labour: Two Hundred Years of Working Class Writing*. That idea is to develop stimulating insights of the literary and social implications of the literature of labour, and in this context, he insists: “Nothing less than a reconstruction of the origins and growth, the breakdowns and weaknesses of literature is the task of this still new field of research”(IX). Klaus knows the fact, the fact that remains true even today that the working-class writers and even readers have been in minority, “The fighter and the writer” have been one. However, the poet, the novelist, the pamphleteer, the auto/biographer is certainly not a-political or a-historical when he or she grapples with the social crises born of inequitable exploitative systems. The historian of this form of literature has to collect and “examine the forgotten volume of poetry by the obscure artisan and often-quoted memoir of the well-known radical, the anonymous militant pamphlet and the ‘quiet’ novel of working class life”. The perspective set forth by Klaus is indeed significant as it recognizes the minority character/figure of the working class people/writers/readers; and yet he knows the profound work

done by the artisans and the nearly-finished product brought out by mature craftsman/women. He includes the different categories/forms of this literature: “The literature of labour as a global term thus covers plebeian, working-class, proto-socialist and socialist literature, as they emerge and unfold alongside the making and re-making of the working class”.

The socio-literary-cultural movements of 1930s, especially in Britain have a special bearing on the emergence of a new valid consciousness; therefore, it is essential and meaningful to explore as to how the 1930s particularly shaped the mind of Anand. The philosophical ideas of Marx, Engels and many Marxists had been the focus of interest and concern among intellectuals in Britain and the World. The scientific study of man in history, in society; the study of history as historical materialism and Marxist dialects as dialectical criticism powerfully unravelled many a hidden truth behind the rampant poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, shelterlessness of the vast majority of the people. This new ideologically progressive awareness got a major boost by the Bolshevik October 1917 revolution in Russia led by Valadimir Ilyich Lenin. In spite of the Industrial Revolution and the earlier establishment of companies like East India Company in India and many other parts of the world, Britain and other European countries which had embarked on colonial exploitation and Capitalism had entered imperialism, since it had achieved its highest form of development in their own countries, in the words of Lenin large number of people suffered from penury. They looked towards their social emancipation through the change in the economic and political system. The economists like Keynes only helped the capitalists to grow fatter and marginalized the working people. The impact of Marxist ideas and of the socialist revolution in Russia influenced the toiling masses in the countries of origin of Imperialism and also those who were fighting revolutionary freedom struggles.

Mulk Raj Anand is indeed the storm-petrel of new novelizations that encompass versatility of profound experiences and articulate expressions. His intellection of social reality is deeply imbedded in the materialist, historicized poetics and aesthetics as he unravels the resurgent multilayered social relations suppressed under the domineering impact of traditional, orthodox society; conservative approach and consciousness of colonisation. Novel as an art form is eminently suitable for his intellectual profundity. To bring into interaction the varied social voices is his forte. Thus, Anand’s novels have been recognised and appreciated the world over. Mulk Raj Anand occupies a unique position among the important signatures of Indo-English fiction. He is, perhaps, the most prolific of all the Indo-English writers with seventeen novels, about over a dozen collection of short stories along with a large number of individual articles to his credit “on subjects ranging from art to cosmetics and literary criticism to cookery” (M.K.Naik). Having been born and brought up in the colonial India; having lived in the country of the colonizers, Anand has a rich treasure of the ‘felt-experience’ which he expresses through his writings. His uniqueness as an Indo English writer also stems from the fact that unlike R.K. Narayan or Raj Rao, he doesn’t feel shy of speaking about his works or the mechanics of his art. He, again, happens to be the only author who has very frankly and extensively spoken about his art, his artistic

creation directly and through a large number of dialogic conversations during personal and public interviews in and outside India.

Conclusion

The Novel, as Mukherjee reminds us in the historical chapters of Realism and Reality, does stagger a bit as a genre when setting its formal encoding of individualism in relation to a communally defined social body like Indian society. We've seen the effects of three distinct waves in which this tension was articulated. In the colonial past, communities were strategically manipulated factions of a potentially mutinous colonized population, the lower orders dosed with liberally inspired aspirations that set them against a traditional elite itself dosed with carefully measured degrees of partial authority and moderate material rewards. An examination of the Coolie manuscripts confirms Anand's ambition to appeal to Anglophone audiences. Anand scrawled a list of English-language newspapers including *The Times of India*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Sentinel*, and *The People*. It's fair to speculate that these were publications that Anand hoped might review and promote his novel once it was completed and published. The typed version, as well, bears evidence of Anand's networking with British literary and political communities. A hand-printed note to the right side of the cover page reads, "typed 1935 by Celia Strachey." Celia was the wife of the former British Labour Party politician John Strachey; that she typed the manuscript indicates Anand's proximity to and engagement with British Labour and Marxist circles. A novel approach to the works of Anand is that of Dieter Riemenschneider, who, in his essay, 'The Function of Labour in Mulk Raj Anand's novels' explores the socio-literary implications of human labour as presented in literary works may provide an important insight into the ideological as well as the aesthetic aspects of such works. Labour, according to the author, is a free activity of man because its objectives are determined by man himself. Thus, as Riemenschneider puts it, "labour means self-realization of man, an act of real freedom," but labour, as it is always performed in society, is necessarily a social activity as well. In literature, when man is considered as a member of a particular species, what defines him fully by presenting his essential nature is the totality of His social activities and relations. In Anand's novels the problem of labour is aesthetically presented through character and event. All the main characters in his major works are 'forced to sell their labour in order to survive.' By portraying these characters, not only does Anand demonstrate his interest in their individual lives but also conveys the economic and social changes taking place in India under colonial rule and depicts the gradual transformation of a feudal society into a capitalistic one. Mulk Raj Anand was one of "the founding fathers" of Indian English fiction for whom the art of fiction was as important as the communication it sought to convey. This was a form which soon established itself as best suited to the Indian sensibility and as one to which Indian writers have made amazing contributions. In her essay, 'Mulk Raj Anand and the Thirties Movement in England' Gillian Packham perceptively notes that Anand became an essentially 'thirties' man in thought and sensibility and was markedly influenced by Marxism. Anand, Confining himself to Indian social

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