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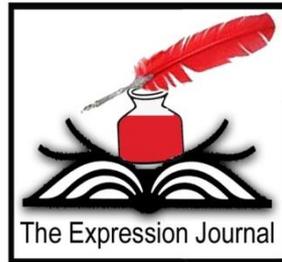
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**MULK RAJ ANAND'S "PICUTURIZATION OF REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHTS AND
EXPLORATION OF CASTE CONFLICT INTERRELATED TO CAPITALISM
AND IMPERIALISM": AN APPRAISAL**

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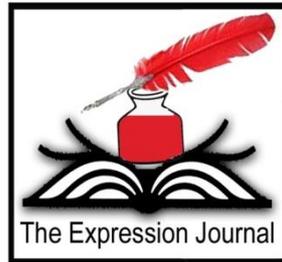
Abstract

This paper is an attempt to picturize the revolutionary thoughts and explore caste conflicts interrelated to capitalism and imperialism with reference to Mulk Raj Anand's novels. Anand was so much desperate and was relentlessly advocating the need to help to raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies and the oppressed and the suppressed sections of society to human dignity and self-awareness and to shake them off from the ignorance, apathy and despair they are sunk in. Anand, through the characters of Bakha from *Untouchable*, Munoo from *Coolie* and Gandu from *Two Leaves and a Bud*, explores the caste conflict interrelated to capitalism and imperialism. Anand always speaks about the poverty, untouchability, conciliation of women, labour problems, hunger, religious and narrow fanaticism, exploitation and economic insecurities in society. Thus, this paper brings out how Anand explored the social inequalities that creates hazards of social evils and the miserable unspoken life of poor outskates in Indian society.

Keywords

Untouchability, Social Inequality, Casteism, Poverty, Suppression, Struggles.

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In Indian social fabric, the caste is an important factor particularly in the Hindu social system. It is beyond thought to think of Hindu society without caste has been so deep and pervasive that man is known by his caste only and not by his quality, action and capability or vocation. A man has to be a member of his caste and community till he breathes his last. The caste system, in various forms, does continue to play a major role in Indian society. A number of writers have made efforts to give a genuine picture of this and people of various classes and castes, their grievances, but no Indian writer of fiction in English has ever given a picture of the low caste people untouchables, coolies and the downtrodden people and their grievances.

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium, language, a social creation, representing life and social reality in large measure. The artist himself is a member of the human society and has his being in the midst of people who have respect for moral and human values in life. As no individual can reject his society, he accepts its moral standards—conscious or unconscious and on realization of the bare actualities, find cause for lamentation, satire and fear. A writer is not only an artist but also a human being. He should not neglect the social and economic conditions of his age but should legitimately use his talents to help in improving the lot of the neglected who have no one else to fight for their cause. This is possible when the writers is a humanist and a social realist. Since the artist is born "with a wide open eyes" (Anand's *Apology for Heroism* 94), he stands one step near to things and shows men all things in their right proportion.

The problem of caste is indigenous and rooted in the social. This problem is universal and it has come to remain with us as a parasite. It is not altogether right to say that the class system has replaced the insidious native caste system. They rather co-exist and coalesce in India. According to Marx, "a society is divided into two classes the poor and rich, also called the rule and the ruling classes or the dominated and the dominant classes" (Gupta 34). Anand has been richly influenced by Mar's writings and was fascinated by Marxist theory of social change and revolution. He is the one who exposes through his writings the evils of a capitalist society

divided into two classes. As a novelist, he is from East-West complex. He does not write about the glories of the past or the spiritual heritage of India. His themes center round socio-economic problems of contemporary India. The subjects of his novels are poverty, untouchability, exploitation, labour problems, hunger, religious and narrow fanaticism, conciliation of women, economic insecurity, etc. Each of his novels deals with a social problem.

Anand in humanist terms attempts to focus attention on the prevailing class tyranny. He elucidates how a weak individual in a class ridden society struggles against the system that was the cause of his misery. He fights for the underdogs and the coolies. His obsession with the problem of class system is traceable to his liberal humanism and his passionate espousal of the cause of the dispossessed. "The problem is posed in such a way as to perspective those aspect of the class structure of Indian society which spells needless misery, hardship and unhappiness—aspects which need to be interpreted in terms of the conflict between pragmatic egoism and socio-political necessity" (Paul 9). Anand has been relentlessly advocating for the need to help to raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the Coolies and the oppressed and the suppressed sections of society to human dignity and self-awareness, to shake them off from ignorance, apathy and despair they are sunk. He does not seem to be satisfied with an understanding of the society in its exterior aspects, its institutions and problems. He seems to be possessed by a desire to seize and express the deeper spiritual reality beneath the flux of bourgeois living. He, therefore, criticizes social maladies, human hypocrisies and individual idiosyncrasies.

Anand is an expositor, a humanist novelist and one can see his characters and their actions in relation to largely social upheavals of time. He is much attracted toward his humanist attitude and social concern for the poor and the downtrodden. No other contemporary writer portrays the characters from the lower strata of the society and presents before readers their pathos and sufferings. Though Anand is born in one of eth high castes of Hindus, he shows regards for Coolies, untouchables, labourers and low caste people and presents beautifully in his writings their miseries and difficulties of their leading lives. What is also unequal about his works is that he abstains from romance and sticks to realistic picture of social evils and caste related issues and oppression of the downtrodden at the hands of the upper caste mighty people.

Anand's novels generate revolutionary thoughts for there has been a social protest in them. In *Coolie* (1936), he shows his concern for the savagely neglected, despised and maltreated poor. Munoo, a poor orphan hill-boy, verdant and innocent, underfed and ill-treated by his aunt, leaves the native village to find work and see the world. The very first encounter with reality shatters his dreams. Employed in the house of Bank Clerk, Munoo with his in born naïve griety amuses and entertains the employer's daughter by dancing like a monkey for her, but is interfered by the shrewish and vindictive house wife ruthlessly destroys his happiness by making him realizes his position in the world; "he had no right to join the laughter of his superiors. He was to be a slave, a servant who should do the work, all the odd jobs, someone to be abused, even beaten (*Coolie* 34). The novel is a fortnight condemnation of a system which has, for ages, killed human dignity and warped the man, hideous monster called caste that has seized India life in its strangling group. The charm of the book lies in Munoo's innocent in his native naïve warm heartedness, his love and comradeship, his irrepressive curiosity and zest for life. He has an instinctive urge to live, to go on doing something in order to avoid starving. The Bombay scene with toiling, suffering, struggling, starving masses is at once vivid and realistic, where Munoo, an insignificant part of the millions of half-bread and half-clad workers

is, “no more than a speck in this tide of humanity;” and it is precisely for this reason that the story does not end here and the author transports him to the holiday resort where he regains his identity. *Coolie* is “a cosmic painting of the lives of thousands of orphans, their health running down through the hour-glass time. The novel is a treatise on social evil at its sundry levels and phases” (Triveni 61).

Anand’s *Untouchable* picturizes Bhaka as a prototype of millions of untouchables in India, because he represents the agony and anguish, the misery and frustration of the innumerable low caste people. In the words of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, “The problem of caste and poverty, squalor and backwardness, ignorance and superstitions admits of no easy solution” (338). In both *Coolie* and *Untouchable*, Anand protest against social evils. In *Untouchable*, the novelist deals with the caste system. The message of the novel is: “a man - and he is born equal to all other men”. Bakha should not be considered dirt because he cleans dirt. In *Coolie*, Anand’s canvas expands and through Munoo, he draws our attention to poverty – stricken and neglected people. Munoo wants to live decently, but in the scheme of things, he has no place. In defiance, he cries out: “I want to live, I want to know, I want to know”. The novel *Coolie* speaks of the socio-economic exploitation and the tribulation of an individual in class-ridden society.

No doubt, Anand’s *Untouchable* is a social novel which is concerned with the injustice and exploitation to which the other section enjoying a higher status in the social hierarchy subjects one large section of the Hindu society. The novel is simply about the life of untouchables who have been the victims of social injustice, oppression and exploitation. It deals with merely with the life and suffering of one individual untouchable, Bakha. But through Bakha, it presents before a gigantic attempt of Anand’s habit of studying the particular through the general. This novel reveals the concurrent of two contradictory tendencies in Anand’s humanism as proletarian’s humanist passion for the liberation of the down-trodden with its genesis in the European leftism of the thirties’, and a manifest unwillingness to part with the broad pattern of the Hindu social order arising from the nationalism of Indian Renaissance as well as Gandhian view of Indian Society.

In *Coolie*, Munoo represents a class and not an individual. He is an archetype of the class for whom poverty is a matter of everyday life. In it, the Coolies live and breathe and die. The Coolie is underpaid, over worked and over ill-treated. They are not mindful of the unjust social order which suppresses them. The unfair gradation of the society destroys Munoo’s dream of a happy future. He wishes to become a medical man like the Chota Babu or atleast a bank employee like the Burra Babu of Sham Naagar. But poverty shatters all those unrealized dreams. He wonders whether it is education or dress. It is money that matters. He understands that there were many more poor people in the world then the rich. Anand shows the reaction of the “haves” towards the “have-nots” and the cause. Poverty makes Munoo undergo oppression, humiliation and degradation at the hands of his vindictive mistress in the Sham Nagar household. Money bars the common understanding between human beings. Bibi Uttamkaur is not able to understand that her servant boy too has dignity of his own.

In *Untouchable*, Anand describes one day in Bakha’s life in Autumn. It beings in the early hours of the day and by the time dusk approaches, the author has been able to create round in hero (an eighteen year old boy) a spiritual crisis in such a proportion that it seem to seize the whole Indian subcontinent. Anand “exemplifies the problem of ‘untouchability’ the treatment of the latrine—cleaning class condemned to isolation and deprivation as handlers of excrement, he exposes this as a social evil and suggests its remedy” (Williams 31). Bakha, the

protagonist of the novel, is a dedicated worker who brings his duty even before dawn at the rude command of his father. The most beautiful aspect of Bakha is that he is very dutiful. While his father has often fabricated some sickness for himself to escape doing his seeping work, Bakha avoids all such alibis accompanying idleness and goes about with strength and vitality. His reverence for work makes him a Gandhian disciple without knowing it. But the society pays no credit to his devotion to duty. Commenting on the treatment of issues on these two novels, Saros Cowasjee writes:

“In treatment, few novels could be more dissimilar. *Untouchable* is confined to depicting a day in the life of a sweeper in a cantonment town, with the various episodes judiciously selected and organized with a view to exploring the mind of hero; and the prose chiseled and maintaining an even pace throughout. *Coolie*, on the other hand, covers vast expanses and the action spreads over several months. The novel relates a series of adventures in the picaresque manner, except that the hero is no rogue but himself a victim of the world's roguery.”

Written in 1937, *Two Leaves and a Bud* is Anand's one more memorable piece of work. In this novel also, he continues in the Indian society. This novel is a heart rending saga of the labourer, barbarically exploited in the tea plantation and finally killed by the British officer. Every corner of the garden, the two leaves and the bud of the tea tress, the shade shrubs are the silent witnesses of this oppression and agony of the Punjabi labourer who stands as the insignia of the oppressed class. With an apt little, therefore, the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* stands as a breathing document of the sufferings of the tea labourers.

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand by narrating the life story and sufferings of the characters like Bakha, Munoo and Gandu and many others in fictional world explores caste conflict interrelated to capitalism and Imperialism. In a nutshell, Anand deals with the hazards of social evils and the miserable lives of the poor outcastes in India.

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