

Socio-cultural aspects in the short stories of M.K.Anand

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Abstract:

This Survey Shows Mulk Raj Anand has exposed Socio Cultural Aspects which was in practice in the Indian society and its culture. Mulk Raj Anand was the most prolific of all Indian writers of his age. Even though he was born in a Hindu family, he never hesitated to expose how poor and downtrodden people are suppressed and treated badly in the society. This paper deals With the characters suffering and misery, the individual's difficulties in facing them with the illustrations from two novels. This study shows Mulk Raj Anand's success in his intention of exposing social injustice.

Key Words:

Social injustice, treated badly, Misery Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand was born on 12 December 1905 in an ordinary Hindu family. He had completed his studies in India and in the United Kingdom. He was awarded Doctor of Philosophy by London University in the UK in 1928. He became associated with T.S.Eliot's Literary periodical 'The Criterion'. He returned to India in 1932 and lived in Sabarmati Ashram with Mahatma Gandhi and that was the inspiration for him for his first draft of 'Untouchable'. It had been rejected by as many as nineteen publishers in England and at last it was published by an English firm in 1935. Then four other novels came from him in quick succession and one among the four is 'Coolie'.

Anand was awarded International Peace Prize for promoting peace among the nations through his literary work, in 1952 of an Indian delegation. He visited Australia in 1961 and attended Australian Peace Conference in Melbourne. He went to Egypt in 1962 as the leader of the Indian delegation to the Afro-Asian writer's conference. He was awarded Padma Bhushan for his distinguished services to Art and literature in 1967. He was awarded 'Sahitya Academy' for his novel 'Morning Face' in 1972.

Indo – English fiction was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi's movement for the upliftment of the Harijans, the emancipation of women, the awakening of

the masses and the freedom of the country inspired many novelists. His writing career spread almost 50 years in which he had produced more than 12 novels and 70 short stories. His novels are very big contribution to Indian English literature. Mulk Raj Anand was a humanist and socialist in many aspects. He hate superstition, tyranny, colonialism, fascism, class, caste, genocide, war and history. According to Anand, most of our problems are created by man himself and can also be solved by man. Mulk Raj Anand was well known as one of the key founders of the Indian Progressive writers movement which was started by a group of Indian students with literary aspirations in 1930's. Anand strongly believed that literature had a social purpose. Anand saw his characters and their actions in relation to the social and political upheavals of his time.

In the words of Saros Cowasjee,

“No Indian writer of fiction in English comes anywhere near Mulk Raj Anand in providing a social and political portrait of India from the time of the Delhi durbar of 1911 to the demise of the Indian princess following Indian Independence in 1947”.

Mulk Raj Anand and Manohar Malgonkar, both the Indian novelists pay attention to historical facts and the political background and distort truth for literary effect.

Saros Cowasjee says

“Mulk Raj Anand and Manohar Malgonkar portray the princess in all their complexity against the backdrop of Indian Independence

Mulk Raj Anand does not like to write merely for the sake of art. According to him, Art should have some purpose. He handles novel as a weapon of social reform and tries to expose the weaknesses and evils of Indian society like Bernard Shaw, Charles Dickens and Galsworthy. Sympathy as well as pity form part of Anand's humanism and it is on this theme that all his stories and novels are built. As a writer, Anand's distinction lies in his themes both in their choice and in their treatment. The themes which Mulk Raj Anand has chosen are based on such problems as castes and human suffering caused by a variety of factors like political, economic, social and cultural. His novels have been translated into many languages and this reflects the admiration which the world has for Anand's approach to the problem that he has tackled in them.

No one in India had yet written the epic of suffering adequately because the realities were too crude for a writer. Further it was not easy to write an epic in India while all the intricate problems of the individual in the new world had yet to be solved. Mulk Raj Anand touches new themes. His first novel 'Untouchable'. It tells about a day's event in the life of Bakha, a sweeper boy. The novel 'Untouchable' indeed offers a telling comment on what might be regarded as a running sore in the Indian body politics. The novel tells about the conflict between two classes

of society; though the conflict there is not between untouchables and the caste hindus; it is between a class of artisans and a class of capitalists. Though 'Untouchable' was the shortest of all his novels, it has made the most effective impact on Indian readers. The novelist shows the real condition of the bottom dogs with a remarkable objectivity. It exposes the sorrows and sufferings that the caste Hindus inflicted on the scavengers, the leather workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutters etc. The sweeper is the worst and the most miserable creature among the low castes. He stands in the lowest rung even in the hierarchy of the castes among the low castes.

In the words of E. M. Forster;

"The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound forever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others when he touches them. They have to purify themselves, and to rearrange their plans"for the day. Thus he is a disgusting object to call out and warn them that he is coming"

The novel 'Untouchable' realistically narrates a day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper, the son of Lakha. He goes to clean the three rows of public latrines situated in the outcaste's colony. Even though he does the job of cleaning latrines, he struggles hard to lead a better life. He has a sister named Sohine who is chaste. Pandit Kalinath, the in charge of the temple, has an eye on her, tries to molest her but she protest. He then hypocritically cries of pollution. On the other side, Bakha goes to the city to clean the streets on behalf of his father, Bakha goes to the city to clean the streets on behalf of his father, and accidentally touches a caste Hindu. This starts a series of abuses, humiliation and indignity. In this novel, Gandhi appears in person to speak on the evil of untouchability.

Mulk Raj Anand borrowed the theme for his first novel not from others, but from his own circumstance and incidents which he experienced in his life. The novel 'Untouchable' opens with a description of the outcaste's colony. The outcastes, the lowest stratum of indian Society, suffer extreme economic and physical deprivation. Anand does not make an abstract statement to this effect or lament the fact of this deprivation. He simply paints a startling picture of conditions in which these people live. The colony consists of a group of mud walled houses clustered together in two rows along a single lane.

Mulk Raj Anand says,

" A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal clear water now soiled by dirt and filth of the public latrines situated above it, the odor of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left

to dry on its banks, the dung of the donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes and the biting, choking pungent fumes that oozed from its sides”

Bakha, as a young man of eighteen, doing the job of cleaning latrines- has a well built physique that has imparted dignity to him. Even though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean. While the other scavengers remained unclean and uncouth, Bakha looked intelligent, even sensitive with a sort of dignity that does not belong to the ordinary scavenger. Sweepers and latrine cleaners depend on the people for food for whom they work. It is part of their wages, but is given to them virtually as alms. When Bakha, after day's work of sweeping in the town, goes to a house to get the food that is his due, the woman of the house, after yelling at him, throws down a chappathi. It falls on the pavement and Bakha picks it up and wraps it in his cluster. The outcastes often get only the leavings of their employers, the caste Hindus. As a young boy, he wept and cried to be allowed to go to school. But his father told him that schools were meant for rich and Caste Hindus and not the outcastes. Later he realizes why his father had not sent him to school. He is a sweeper's son and can never be a babu. Bakha wants to protest against the insults and abuses of the caste Hindus but his courage fails him due to the social convention and forbearance comes across his path.

In the words of Saros Cowasjee:

“he is like a tiger in cage, securely imprisoned by the conventions his superiors have built upto protect themselves against the fury of those whom they exploit”

Sohini, sister of Bakha was also a victim of Untouchability. When she smiles, that even irritates a wash woman

Gulabo and she explodes as,

“You annoy me with your silence. Eater of dung and drinker of urine. Bitch of a sweeper woman. I will show you how to insult one old enough to be your mother”.

Sohini is innocent, bashful, economical of speech and dearest to preserve her chastity. Sohini is overworked. She is a victim of caste and class system and she struggled hard to preserve her.

Mulk Raj Anand had truly shared the feelings of untouchables. Premila Paul in her thematic study says;

“ In several novel of his, whether woman occupies the center stage or not,

her object condition serves as a metaphor for suppression, sacrifice, enslavement and servility which inform the dramatic action”

His second novel ‘Coolie’ portrays the class distinction between the haves and the have not’s. The novel depicts the sad and the pathetic life of a young boy called Munoo. Mulk Raj Anand presents the picture of an orphan boy Munoo who is despised by the society, rejected by his relatives and oppressed by his masters.

M.K.Naik rightly observes;

“The author’s compassion for the exploited and downtrodden is pure and Intense but does not degenerate into blind hysterics or dull preaching, one aspect of exploitation is presented in coolie. This exploitation of the Indian by the white man and poor by the rich”

Munoo is an orphan boy. His father died of shock because he couldn’t pay the debt to his landlord. Munoo couldn’t forget the way in which his father suffered and his mother worked hard every day. He is a victim of poverty, exploitation, man’s greed and selfishness. The root cause of Munoo’s tragedy is poverty. When the novel begins Munoo was fourteen and when the novel ends he died at the age of sixteen.

In the words of G.S.Balarama Gupta;

“ Anand believes that poverty is the cruel evil and cruelty itself a deadly evil. We see in Coolie how these evils of poverty and cruelty crush a bud of youth before it could bloom to any extent. Dayaram, Mr and Mrs. Nathooram, Ganapath, Chintasahib and Mrs. Mainwaring too, have only contempt for Munoo. They slap him, kick him and abuse him as if he were a leper, an untouchable; all because he is poor”.

Mulk Raj Anand clearly realized that as a writer he must devote himself to the cause of the poor and the disadvantaged. Anand was the only realist writer in English of his enthralled by the movements of the human soul. He depicted human emotions from the point of view of the way they were affected by a developing and strengthening society. His attention was attracted by the different ways in which people adapted to it, the way in which social order changed man. He was interested in human passions first and foremost from the social and psychological point of view. Thus Mulk Raj Anand undoubtedly has succeeded in his intention of exposing Socio Cultural Aspects through his first two novels.

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