



## Mulk Raj Anand's Treatment of History in His Novels

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### Abstract

Varnashram System of India has driven the society towards the direction of bitter differences among the people and it has also taken unugly form of ancestral base. Owing to this life system became coarse and majority among them accepted this livelihood as their destiny. Some of them struggled hard whereas some of others succumbed to the tortures in society. Buddhism became a great revolution to root out the system by reconstructing the whole society on the principles of equality. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar led drastic changes in society and they tried to revolutionize the mind of the people. Mulk Raj Anand and Indo-Anglian novelist has put his novels on a solid footing in a purposeful direction. He became a responsive public figure in modern era. This paper is an attempt to focus how Mulk Raj Anand has treated History in his novels to rain his voice against the deep-rooted hatred to the out-castes of the Indian society.

Keywords: Social and Political Issues, Sources of Change, Double-layered History, Passive Protagonist and Dalit Journey for Social Equality.

### Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand is regarded as the father of the Indo-English Literature whose novels depict Indian society and its complex issues in our age. His novels deal with the theme of social features and realism. He has included the suffering of the low caste the ignored people like 'Bakha' of *Untouchable* and 'Munoo' of *Coolie*. Hence, K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger has rightly remarked:

It was Anand's aim to stray lower still than ever Sarat Chandra or Premchand to show to the west that there was more in the orient than could be inferred from Omar Khayyam, Tagore or Kipling and so he described a waif like Munoo in *Coolie* and *Untouchable* like Bakha, and indentured labourer like Ganga and set them right at the centre of the scheme of cruelty and exploitation that India held in its vicious grip. (Iyengar, 264).

Anand's novel *Untouchable* (1935) reveals the horrible living conditions of the dalits in India during the Pre-independence and post-independence period. Bakha, the central character of the novel intimates us that he has to clean the latrines used by the White Sahebs and the men of the small town of Bulandshahar in the North-west Punjab. Here the novelist has tried to explain to Bakha, the sweepers boy, that for all his hapless plight in the four-fold caste system. He also hopes that 'a change is at hand? In *Coolie* (1936), the nightmares of Munoo dominates the narrative, but Englishmen confirm that they are in charge of the country. In this way, the novel provides a brief glimpse of the corrupt and unscrupulous Britishers who exploit the poor textile workers in Bombay. His *The Big Heart* (1945) deals with revolution. The central thrust of the novel is to discuss about political change as with the problem of social change. The relation between the two was at the heart of the intellectual debate during the pre-independence times. The main thrust of the novelist's concern with the colonial situation in India. This tends him to uncover the attitude of the people to history. In the case of Ganga in *Two Leaves and a Bud* 'resigned indifference' is visible. His visions of liberation are snuffed out by the brute British force. He tries to understand his situation only in divine terms. Lalu thinks of George Panjim as the incarnation of God.

### Social and Political Issues

Anand's interest connects with his larger involvement with the social and political issues of his time. In this regard he examines the political and social scenes of India and he tries to understand these relating to India's past. He delves into its distant and remote past.

Anand transforms his novels into a powerful medium of consciousness raising among his people. This stabilizes it as a dominant mode of fiction-writing in India. In this way, his novels provide a rich store of novelized historiography. To him, freedom is not just from British domination, but freedom as

an informing principle of human existence. His attitude towards the lower rungs of Indian society. Therefore, Bakha, the protagonist of *Untouchable* is levelled as his actual childhood companion and he has to suffer. The novelist finds himself uncomfortable with the Hindu religion into which he was born. In the connection of Vedantic Absolutism, the universe shrinks.

Bakha becomes the victim of the caste conscious society. His birth offers lower class and the lives of the lower class are fun on suffering. They are treated worse than animals in society. They have to wait for long hours near the well as Anand has described :

The out castes were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the were, because of if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindu of these upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the nearby brook as their use of it would contaminate the stream. They had no well of their own ... (Anand, 26)

Like Bakha, Velutha in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has to suffer in society. He is a technical expert but the agony of his heart has no end. He is born at Ayemenem in Kerala. He makes beautiful toys and brings stem for Ammu. He is a great revolutionary and he is not satisfied with his extant position in society. Ammu is made instrumental to show how a lady can be progressive in her practice. Lalu's rejection of God-oriented view of history collides with Gandhi's belief. Here the novelist endorses a view of history which rejects religion. The novel, *Untouchable* accounts for a day in the life of Bakha, based on an untouchable boy.

### Sources of Change

Having understood the reasons of India's political and social degradation, Anand realizes that any change is possible only through and effective intervention. So, he envisaged a massive transformational programme and his

ideas changes. He embraces social, religious and political reality following humanism. But his humanism distinguishes from that of others. As T.N. Dhar describes his humanism :

... the humanism I put forward is against all organised faiths, though I feel that, by relegating religion to private conscience, the tasks of social reconstruction are more easily possible. Freedom of conscience is, however, itself a touch-stone of humanism. (T.N. Dhar, 92)

### Double-layered History

Anand's novel, *Untouchable* has a double-layered history. He doesn't focus as an individual consciousness, but a kind of figural consciousness in the novel. The situation in Bakha's presently the aura of reenactments of situations that have recurred for countless generations. We have to share Bakha's pain because he is a part of our own time. Bakha has to seek forgiveness for his actions. To Anand, the evil of untouchability has its roots in religion. In this context the novelist moves to writer another novel *The Road* (1961). Here he locates several leading men and women who work for the betterment of the untouchables. Thus, his novel performs this function successfully. In *Gauri*, the novelist exposes the hypocrisy of our society. In one hand, Anand voices a strong protest against ill treatment of women but on the other he suggests that a woman in India should do for her emancipation. *Gauri* is subjected to a sale in the hands of a Sahukar.

### Passive Protagonist

Bakha's struggle over a single day, and he gets a heightened awareness. He has also inward resistance because his rebellion is internal. He is a symbolic figure in the novel 'untouchable' and his reactions highlighten the system. His outward actions appear very passive whelming social forces and hop for change.

### Dalit Journey for social Equality

The word 'Dalit' has a special meaning in Indian society. It is used for people who are exploited in various shapes-social, physical and psychological. Bakha is lost in thought of Gandhi and the flush machine. The novel *Untouchable* concludes with a highly optimistic note and it appears that he gained enlightenment like that of Lord Buddha. A panacea for all suffering comes with great enthusiasm :

As the brief Indian twilight came and went, a sudden impulse shot through the transformation of space and time... I shall go and tell father all that Gandhi said about us, he whispered to himself, and what that clever poet said (Anand, 175-76)

In this way Ammu gives her hand to Velutha to lift him to the upper caste level. He has to succumb and meet his tragic end. Ammu also suffers a lot of social humiliation. Her brother Chacko hires a van to transport Ammu's body to the electric crematorium where,

Nobody expect beggars, derelicts and the police-custody dead were cremated these (Roy, Arundhanti, 162)

### Conclusion

Mulk Raj Anand's novels are set on the lives of India's lowest classes and he achieves international recognition. He brings Indian stories and social concerns to a global readership through the English language. Social Realism, Internal Acclaim, Narrative Innovation and Humanistic Theme are key aspects of his writing. As a pioneering Indian English novelist, he has renowned for him sympathetic and realistic portrayals of the marginalized in India. His characters struggle between tradition and modernity. They develop awareness of the new world. His women characters play minor and subordinate part in his novels. Therefore, Jack Lindsay remarks :

Anand can depict all the fine, gentle, self-sacrificial qualities of the Indian wife and her dilemmas in the new epoch. Not that he romantically falsifies; he shows the ragging, petty, demanding types as well as the self-denying and brings out well here the strains of the new situation ... (Lindsay, 30)

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