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MULK RAJ ANAND: A MAN OF EXPERIMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an account of Mulk Raj Anand's experimentation in the field of Indian English fiction. Although he wrote in a foreign language, yet his themes and concerns remain chiefly Indian. Regarding experimentation, Anand experimented with language, stylistic techniques and in subjects as well. Anand denies the notion of art for art's sake. He asserts that art should portray situations in a realistic way. It should deal with man and his situations, his related concerns rather than with enjoyment or pleasure.Anand is ascribed to be an Indo-Anglian writer who did numerous experiments in his works to make them entirely Indian. Experimentation of language is not an easy task, but Anand took up that challenge with a frank bracing. In the field of language he mingles Punjabi and Hindustani idioms and phrases, thereby making a fine use of them in his works. He depicts such symbols, images, metaphors that are deeply rooted in Indian society. The words and phrases employed by Anand in his works are solely from Indian traditional society that once was colonized by the British government. All these stylistic devices create an authentic scenario and cast the social evils in one way and unveil Indianness in Anand's works in another way. Characterization is an integral part of any work of literature. Anand chooses those persons as his protagonist who were marginalised and underprivileged. Casting child as a hero in fictional works is a fine experiment by Anand. According to his convenience he exploited Indian English language and used it without losing the authenticity of the regional language of Indian society. He is perhaps, the first ever Indian writer to depictthe themes hardly ever touched by previous Indian English writers.

Keywords: Experimentation, Realism, Indo-Anglian, Stylistic devices, Characterization, Child hero.

Introduction

The chief goal of a writer's work is to command the attention of the reader and this purpose will be successful only when his work directly strikes the right chord with the reader. The writer conveys his point of view through the medium of literature. The literature contains poetry, prose, novel, drama, non-fiction, articles etc. and a writer is at liberty to chooseany of them to mould his ideas. Doing an experiment on literary genre is one of the artistic necessities through which a writer can give a distinct meaning to his writing and add new dimensions to it. Indian writers in English literature have successfully carried out various experiments, especially in language. During the British rule in India new voices emerged. At that time English language was being used in official work, newspapers, schools

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etc. Due to this influence Indian writers adopted English language with Indian themes and concerns. While dealing with an alien language, it becomes almost a kind of double challenge for a writer. On the one side, the writer has to use that language effectively, on the other side it has to justify with the socio-cultural values, norms beliefs and practices. The Indo- Anglian writers took up that challenge daringly.

Most of the earlier Indian English literature was directly an imitation of Western models, but still it was a fine step towards the growth of Indian literature in English language. During the mid-nineteenth century Mulk Raja Anand, R. K. Narayan andRaja Rao by using their excellence and experimentation flavoured Indian English writing with Indianness. Indian writers in English literature did not sever the connection from their mother tongue. By using their own mother tongue, they have done various experiments that show their love and sincerity for Indian soil as 'Ketaki Goswami' observes. "Anand impregnates with such anecdotes that generate familiarity with the mode of perception of the Indians. He assimilates the flavour of North Indian, especially the dialect of Punjabi, whereas Narayan, Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya bring in the taste of Tamil, Kannada and Bengali tongues with their innotations."[i]Writers like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand have skilfully used Indian English in their work. They twisted and manipulated language to fulfil their needs. In this context, Meenakshi Mukherjee in '*The Twice Born Fiction'* observes, "English is a pliant language which each writer has to fashion a new to serve his particular purpose."[ii]

Mulk Raj Anand is such a writer who has made various experiments on language. While doing so he used language in such a way that the portrayal of character and situation immediately capture the reader's attention. Anand depicts his characters from all sections of Indian society. These characters are drawn from higher, middle and lower class in the society. They are the parts of contemporary Indian society which embedded with the problems like untouchability, exploitation and discrimination based on caste and class system. The indifferent way the upper caste people treat marginalized people, is

so awful that it has filled the reader's heart with shock, surprise and fear. All these elements are successfully presented by Anand through several linguistic expressions. Anand as a man and novelist inspired many other writers and in this regard his two novels, *Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud*, were highly appreciated by Permila,"the two novels had done their job as neatly as an assassin's knife... Mulk Raj Anand had changed me from romantic steeped in a world of fantasy to a realist"[iii].

Mulk Raj Anand is believed to be the first Indian writerwho blended Punjabi and Hindustani idioms in the English language. Although Anand's mother tongue was Punjabi yet he wrote in English, for the reason that the English language publishers did not refuse to publish his books. Anand's novels are the reflection of the social, cultural and political affairs of the era in which Anand himself live. In order to cast this scenario Anand deliberately used typical idioms and phrases to suits the linguistic situation. In addition to this, it arouses sympathy and sorrow and adds authenticity in the piece of work. Anand's valuable contribution in Indian English literature and the way he inspired others is well described by C.B. Christesen "He (Anand) is one of the most stimulating men I have ever met. Mulk possesses that special kind of talent which helps to fertilize the living mind and gives it the sense of a base on which to build. Such men are rare, in any country. Standing in his own permanence, professional, dedicated, he has sought to interpret in terms of art, the 'mores' of his own people. Above all, he has insisted on the need for 'values' – the civilizing values, which help nourish and enlightened and human society. This has been an essential part of Mulk's characters: and the aspirations to which help he has given expression are now part of India's cultural and intellectual history. His work stands as a nobly proportioned edifice." [iv]

Sociolinguistic approach is used to study the influence of society in the way language is used. This study is an expression of every aspect of society, including cultural norms, values, social, cultural background. It has been asserted that the way people used language tells much about their social, cultural background. In the field of literature, language proves to be a vital tool as it is a mode,

through which a writer can communicate his opinion to the reader. The mode of language used by Anand is familiar with Indian traditional society. To be specific Anand's language presents an authentic picture of Indian society that has been witness of colonial and post-colonial period. It is through language that Anand sheds light on the major issues such as untouchability, poverty, exploitation, humiliation, discrimination.

Mulk Raj Anand's experimentation is like tornado which swept the Indian writing in English literature at its peak, whereby acquiring its real status. Anand has transferred adjectives into English language such as 'swadeshi', 'dharmic' and 'kala'. In his first novel 'Untouchable', Anand painted the scene of 'outcast colony' of 'Bulandshahr', "The outcast colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate, from them. There lived the scavenger, the leather workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutter and other outcaste from Hindu society." By using such words like 'outcast-colony', 'scavengers', 'leather workers', 'washer men', 'barber' etc. , Anand presented the realistic description of Indian society. This is all about the word play through which Anand shows the caste-class based discrimination by giving them Indian flavour.

Anand continued to do such linguistic experiments. He received both praise and criticism for his written works for focussing the harsh realities of Indian society and the long but crushing spell of British rule in India. In his second novel 'Coolie' Anand has applied words such as 'Babus' (p 3). 'Bura Sahib' (p 3), 'Bada Babu' (p 3), 'Lallas', 'phat-phaties' (p 6), 'Bibiji' (p 12), 'Chota Babu' (13), 'Angrezi Sarkar' (p 3) 'mai-bap (mother and father)' (p 4) which helped in grabbing reader's attentions. Anand has also had experiments on some Hindi words, for instance 'don't buk buk (p28), 'Mehrbani' (p 98), 'Salaam Babuji'. Anand's most colourful and interesting experiment can be traced in his use of foul and abusive words like, 'wanton', 'bitch', 'prostitute', 'offspring of a pig', 'son of bitch', etc.

Along with linguistic experimentation Anand has also done various experiments on stylistic devices. Stylistic devices are used by a writer to add more depth and meaning to his piece of writing, moreover as they help to create an even stronger image in a reader's mind. The adoption of stylistic elements such as, similes, symbols, metaphors legends and myths enhances the beauty of Anand's fictional writing. These elements are barely Indian based and they serve to throw light on the social, cultural, religious, and situational facts of Indian society. In order to describe poverty, discrimination or other religious beliefs, Anand brings in examples from the Indian life which is subjected to caste-class based discrimination for instance, 'steaming earthen saucepan, tumlerful of tea '(P. 16, it symbolizes the stark poverty), 'sacred thread twisted around their left ear' (P. 20, among Brahmins, it has a ritualistic belief), 'Brahmini Bull' (P. 60 as an ox is offered in the memory of someone dead in India), 'two-bricks-with-a-space-in between fireplace'(P. 16 it creates an image of utter poverty of the outcasts and downtrodden.

Mulk Raj Anand earned for himself the status of India's Charles Dickens. His experimentation on characterization proves this fact very well.Like Charles Dickens, Mulk Raj Anand is a writer of social realism and a spokesman of the underprivileged and the poor. Most of the major issues that prevailed in colonial Indian society such as caste-class based discrimination, exploitation, poverty, child labour are presented through the child heroes. As a child, Anand himself was the witness of the bloodshed in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Once as a boy he was even apprehended by the British police for breaking the laws of curfew of which he hardly knew the meaning. All these incidents instilled a deep sense of protest against Britishers. Mulk Raj Anand's works chiefly deal with the sufferings and agonies of child protagonists. As a writer he experimented with child psyche. What makes his writings distinct is the fact that dealing with the adult psyche is an easy task, but the portrayal of a child's psyche is surely a daunting duty. Anand's depiction of child hero is vivid because he himself lived with them a lot during his childhood. "Mulk Raj Anand's characterization is not meant for

characterization only, it is meant to give a new turn or direction to the Indian society."[v]

In his very first novel *Untouchable,* Anand assigned eighteen years old boy Bakha the onerous task of being the protagonist. Being born in a lower cast he was forced to do the things he never wanted to do. Through the character of Bakha, Anand shows the rigid caste system of Indian society. Untouchability in an Indian society is like a curse that forces a boy to go against his grain. In his second novel *coolie* Anand again decidesto choose a fourteen year old boy Munoo who wandered from village to city and encountered problems aplenty during his journey. Elsewhere, there are also some major and minor characters who are children and the whole story revolves around them. Anand would be the first ever Indian writer in English literature who preferred to convey his story through child protagonist. He painted a very poignant image of a child's psyche. India, being a colonized country faced the trauma of exploitation at the hands of the British government and this has been well described by Anand through his child heroes.

Characterization is the major part of any piece of work in literature. It is through the characters from which the writer speaks. Mulk Raj Anand's characters come from every class of the society. These characters occupy the high, middle, and lower status in the society. The portrayal of the characters by Anand sheds ample light on the social, cultural, and religious background of the characters. Anand used technique charactomy. Charactomy stands for the name of a fictional character that tells much about him.

Anand in his fictions introduced his characters in such a way that it creates a solid picture in our mind. Instead of giving them the real names he addressed them with symbolic names. In his highly appreciated novel *coolie* there are some symbolic names of some characters much about their nature, class, caste. Names such as, Bura Sahib, Mr England, Bibiji etc. are highly symbolic and suggestive. The name Bura Sahib rightly indicates the fact this character is filled with vicious thoughts, blandishment, selfish and has no mercy. The other name Mr England, suggests that the man has come from England and acquires the superior status in the

bank. Bibiji is also one of the major characters in the novel *coolie*, through her name Anand trying to show that people who have shifted from the town or city get mixed up the milieu in which they lived. They consider that people from the village have no respect in the society. In the novel when Bibiji called by her real name Uttam Kaur, she felt embarrassed and warned not to call her by her real name. It shows that she doesn't like if someone addresses her by her so called village name. This is the beauty of Anand's writing that he painted his character in such a way that they remain imprinted in the reader's mind. This is an excellent experiment on the names of characters.

As far as the theme in the Anand's work is concerned, it is also a fine experimentation. As Anand is a writer who is the eyewitness of colonial, post-colonial period. He depicts issues like exploitation by Britishers, poverty, impoverishment etc., before him no Indian writer in English did dare to choose them in his work as subjects. Regarding Anand's theme and subjects of writing Anjaneyulu observes, "Mulk Raj Anand is perhaps first Indian novelist in English who writes realistically in his fiction about the doomed lives of the downtrodden and the oppressed. In his novels he portrays the lives of a sweeper, a coolie, a peasant etc., who are the victims of capitalistic exploitation, poverty, squalor, class-hatred, race hatred and inhuman cruelty".[vi]

Narrative technique in any piece of work is a way through which the story is told. The narrative technique used by Anand presented not only the outwards of the characters, but inwards of characters as well. Anand honestly accepted that, "Another coincidence was my introduction to James Joyce's Ulysses, through a borrowed copy of his banned book which I got from the library of my friend and literary mentor at that time, Bonamy Dobree. The fascination of this novel for my generation is absolute. We accepted Joyce's defects of obscurity, overwriting and formalist imposition of the Homeric symbolism on contemporary reality"[vii]

Anand makes an extensive use of stream of consciousness, soliloquy, interior monologue and plot construction in his very first novels*Untouchable* and *Coolie.* The plots of the novels *Untouchable, Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*are set in the

colonial period of India. By the use of these excellent narrative techniques, he presented the situation in an effective way. Through the use of stream of consciousness Anand explore the inner self of his character. In stream of consciousness flashback technique is one of the major aspects. This technique is applied to portray the feelings, memories of the characters. Through the character of Bakha Anand uses a soliloquy to show the inward thoughts of him, "Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him! And tothink that I was so eager to come to the town this morning. Why don't I shout to warn thepeople of my approach? That comes of not looking after one's work. I should have seenthe high-caste people in the street. That man! That he should have hit me! My poorjalebis! I should have eaten them. But why couldn't I say something? Couldn't I have joined my hands to him and then go away? The slap on my face! The liar! Let me comeacross him one day. He know I was being abused. Not one of them spoke for me. The cruel crowd! All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused?" [viii]

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Anand is thought to be a writer who instead of imitating the Western style and models invented his own styles and techniques with an Indian flavour. The fine use of Indian English, portrayal of the characters, child heroes and the themes makes Anand works distinct and prominent one. These strategies immediately capture reader's attention and leave the reader with imprinted picture in his head. Moreover, all these experimentations set up the platform for the coming writers in Indian English literature.

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