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**Cover:** Mulk Raj Anand (1905 - 2004) the noted Indo-English novelist.

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## Readers' Response

..... There is hardly anyone in India now who would do such a painful labour to publish such a high quality Journal. Infact, crores of Indian find no alternative before them except getting everything for himself and herself only.... I have kept the special issue on Manoj Das edited by you before me during writing this letter to you. It is something divine.... Hope you are well though it has become growingly difficult to keep oneself well particularly if one is honest and sensitive. Yet I have faith on MAN .....

- Sri Gopal Roy, Birbhum, W.B.

..... I have read your magazine. Really it is creative and encompassing, all the works of literature in an artistic and beautiful way .....

- Prof. S.B. Desai, Bijapur, Karnataka

..... Going through the last three issues of "Rock Pebbles" I found that it is a worthy international journal for the lovers of English literature who want to know, explore and exploit more and more about the ever-flourishing and never-ceasing critical and creative world. It is really a boon and blessing to the teachers, students, research scholars and above all to the literary horizon of India and abroad.

- Dr. Bijay Ketan Pattanayak,  
R.I.H.S., College, Balasore, Odisha.

..... At the very outset, let me privilege to congratulate you for running such a wide-ranging and qualitative international literary journal .....

- Shri R.D. Gholap  
Nashik, Maharashtra State

..... Thank you for taking pains to publish the Journal. I am always with Rock Pebbles. I am sure, oneday it will be like *The Heritage* highlighting the culture of Odisha and India .....

- Namita Nayak  
Jagatsinghpur, Odisha.

## Editor Speaks

On the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Day celebrated at Balasore, Odisha on dt. 13.02.2012 we had given a declaration that our Journal *Rock Pebbles*, on the demands of our esteemed readers & contributors, will be a quarterly journal by 2015. We are very happy that our words turned into action much earlier.

This special issue (Jan. – March 2013) on Mulk Raj Anand is the 1<sup>st</sup> quarterly issue of our peer-reviewed Literary Journal *Rock Pebbles* which was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1987 as a bi-annual (half-yearly) and continued as such till the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. Previously we have published two special issues, one on the noted-Indian English Poet Jayant Mahapatra and the other on the noted Indian English story-teller Manoj Das, and we received a good number of positive response which inspired us to bring out another special issue on another noted Indian English writer Mulk Raj Anand. In fact, these special issues are being very much useful to the researchers on Indian English writings, as expressed by them at different times. That is also another reason for bringing out this special issue. We have also planned to publish one special issue on one Indian English writer every year. This special issue contains many useful papers on the works of Mulk Raj Anand. Most of the papers are written on the most celebrated and much discussed work of Mulk Raj, i.e. *Untouchable*. There are articles on his works, i.e. *Coolie*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, and his short-stories. We hope this issue must cater to the needs of the English teachers and researchers on Indian English Literature.

- Chief-Editor -

## Revolutionary Peasants in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*

T. Ramakrishnan

Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle* has several striking evidences for the poor peasants' life and their revolution. With peasant life as his subject matter, the novel provides a convincing picture of the millions of poor peasants in India. He depicts the struggles of the peasants in the contemporary society and their real strength, their heroic march towards freedom throwing off all the social forces that restrict them. He has been at his best in the treatment of the subject matter. His chief concern has been with the problem of the superfluous people in rural India, people without land or with little land loaded with debt or disease or exploited by a handful of the privileged.

Anand has chosen the theme of *The Sword and the Sickle* from his home town. The words of Saros Cowasjee is apt in this regard, "In the Punjab most of peasants owned their land, while in the United Provinces many of them were landless labourers" (114). Anand knows his native places very well. In *The Sword and the Sickle*, Lal Singh, shortly called as Lalu, comes back to India after completing his term of five years as a prisoner of war in Germany. On his return he finds a lot of change in India. Lalu's contemplation on how the British rule has brought about a change in the rural scene, disrupting the peasant life in the Indian villages is an indication of the breakdown of the old social order and the revolutionary spirits of them are well brought out:

The English broke up the villages and handed the land over to rob-

bers like my ancestors, who have reduced the peasants to tenants, with fragmentary holdings, or to labourers without a chunk of soil to wipe their bottoms with!...Now, the only thing to end this madness is to throw the corpses of the landlords into the Ganga and give the peasants their land to till. (155)

To him, "Everything seems to have changed in his village for better or for worse" (54).

Lalu hears everywhere the harrowing tales of poverty and ruthless exploitation. He comes to realise the evil forces which are bent upon squeezing the poor peasants through the words of his uncle, Harnam Singh:

This country is like a lean bullock that has been reduced to the bone by the Angrezi lion, son. Each day the lion awoke and gnawed a chunk of flesh off the bullock's body and left it weaker but still standing. And then the other beasts of the jungle came, and the local jackals and the foxes took their toll!...There have been bad times before in this country, but surely no time so bad as the present. (64)

Lalu warns his father and brothers against the dangers of borrowing money from the money-lender. He loses all patience when the money-lender, Chaman Lal tries to deceive his father and brother with his treacherous talk. A number of poor farmers of the middle class like Lalu, his father and uncle have lost their land under the pressure of the prevailing economic system.

The reason behind the portrayal of the tragic social situation is to expose the economic conditions and the hostile forces responsible for the existence of such a situation. Such specific settings and situations are also meant to provoke anger and moral indignation, leading to the rise of revolutionary spirit in people. Apart from its disastrous effects on the lives of poor peasants, the changed situation is shown to generate a sense of justice in them and to sow the seed of revolt against their oppressors. Anand observes, "The oppression of the weak by the strong is only injustice, while the insulting of the strong by the weak is not only injustice but dishonour!"(57). Lalu notices signs of some great revolutionary changes taking place in the society:

What ever the changes, and however disastrous they were to his own interests, a vague new life seemed to him to be creeping among the doomed. Something was rising, some new force was rushing towards the light and, whether willingly or inadvertently, he was part of it. (71)

Anand presents his central theme of social revolution mainly through the portrayal of his hero as a revolutionary. The revolutionary change that occurs in the hero's response to the prevailing socio-economic conditions reflects in miniature one which occurs in society at large.



Saros Cawasjee refers to those circumstances that effect such a change in his hero, "Rebellious by nature and having had some education in a mission school, Lalu reacts sharply to the injustices to which the village folk are exposed" (100). Lalu possesses a mind and spirit of a revolutionary. He defends himself and others against the tyrannies of the landlords. Lalu is smart, intelligent and strong-willed. From the very beginning, he appears to be rebellious by nature and temperament.

Lalu realises that it is money rather than caste that divides the society into classes. Lalu thinks:

There were no black or white people, no yellow or brown people, not even Francis and Germans, and English and Hindustanis, and Chinis and Japanis, but there were only two races and two religions in the world, the rich and the poor. (83)

Lalu and his comrades Ram Din, Nandu, Gupta and one-eyed Sukhua along with twenty evicted peasants begin their procession carrying the dead body of the boy, Chandra, who was mercilessly flogged and killed. In order to open the eyes of the national leaders to the cruelty of landlordism they march towards Allahabad. The Manager of the estate, Sheikh Hadayat Ullah, tries to stop the procession by shooting. One of the bullets hits Nandu on the head and he dies. The peasants and comrades realise that they cannot carry the bodies upto Allahabad and so they offer them to the Ganga. They have "thrown the dead bodies into the Ganges without much ceremony" (182).

In Lalu Anand has struck a fine blend of strength and weakness, a true picture of an Indian peasant, both sturdy and infirm. Lalu feels that in order to achieve this aim he has to first perfect himself and find out the right method of making a revolution. Lalu knows very well in the process of becoming a revolutionary, he finds it difficult to in adapt himself to the work he has to do. He feels, "he needed the strength of a more enlightened will to approximate himself to the work for the noble ideal of Revolution" (102). In the jail, he declares his new perceptions, "For Revolution is a need of togetherness, comradeship, the need to curb malice among men, the need for men to stand together as brothers" (385).

In *The Sword and the Sickle*, Anand traces the development of revolutionary changes in the people. In the beginning the people are:

stupid, insensate and cruel, concerned about their own little plots of land, ignorant of the forces which oppressed them and superstitiously invoking the gods, bounded on every side by fear, tottering and careworn and half-dead, they toiled and persevered and followed where their leaders led them (242).

They are completely transformed. They are shown to change gradually shedding their fear and abjectness, and hardening their attitude towards their oppressors. In the course of their struggle, “They had become different from the broken, demoralized, backboneless creatures...The new movement seemed to have given them a new faith. It was extraordinary how any organized action gave them a new sense of power” (274).

The peasants are aware of their rights and requirements. They are preparing themselves for a rebellion against exploitation by the cruel money-lenders and landlords. The revolutionaries here are a group of people with varying ideologies and approaches towards the goal of the liberation of landless farmers from the clutches of heartless landlords. Day by day the peasants have involved themselves to fight against the system.

Lalu notices the further growth of revolutionary ardour in the peasants, the members of the Kisan Sabha, when they express their views freely without any sign of submission. Mithu’s remark about the division of people into the rich and the poor and his reference reveal the growth of class consciousness in them: “there are two races and two religions in the world, the rich and the poor. That is so all over the world, for all the folk, who have gone to Vilayat tell the same tale; there are gora coolies and sweepers and there are rich sahibs”

In *The Sword and the Sickle* class struggle is evident from its title itself. The message conveyed through the portrayal of revolutionary peasants in *The Sword and the Sickle* is that the success of struggle and social revolution depends upon the workers’ unity. Anand insists that it is only through solidarity among workers and with a vigorous struggle that the existing social order can be destroyed and a new socialist society can be set up.

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## Humanism in Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*

S. Shanmugam

Mulk Raj Anand is a post independent Indo-Anglian fiction writer and his novels thrust is always on humanism based on the social realities. He is a social reformer and presents the problems of the downtrodden and tries to find a solution to them. The milieu is always an essential fictional element in Anand's novels and how effectively he has employed it for the development of action in fiction. The impact of various influences like Marxism, Humanism and Socialism brought about a great change in the Indian Literature. The writers wanted a medium to express their views and ideas of the realistic world. Anand, a humanist to the core has a great faith in humanism that perhaps made him love man with an infinite charm and myriad trust. Anand is a loyal friend, a tireless worker, an enthusiastic organizer, a prolific writer, an unceasing champion of the poor and the lower sect. He is a restless crusader against inequality and injustice and above all a staunch humanist with limited trust in man. He believes that all human beings deserve to be treated with equal footing. Anand's writing likes to awaken the people from their slumber to acquire the true vision and will reconstruct humanity in India and the world.

Anand's childhood bitter experiences of poverty, squalor death

of his cousin, uncle of amenity, his sufferings at the hands of the police during the Jalianwala Bagh also had to his future writings. Humanism is as he himself says a comprehensive historical humanism. Anand though his writing likes to awaken the people from their slumberiness to acquire the true vision and will reconstruct humanity in India and the world.

*Coolie* is considered to be an epic of misery, an epic of modern India and an odyssey of Munoo. *Coolie* is one of the most popular novels of Anand and it has been translated in twenty languages. The important theme of the novel is the exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the 'have-not' by the 'haves' of the society. It is also one of the great hunger novels, with hunger, starvation, suffering and wretchedness, sickness, disease and degradation, the hunger causes, as its theme. It is the first Indo-Anglian novel which has touched on the subject of the riot between Hindu and Muslim. Munoo serves as an illustration of the exploitation and suffering of the poor in a capitalistic society. The various characters are of the exploits as the Europeans. *Coolie* is a social tragedy and the hero of *Coolie* is the society itself.

In this novel, Munoo is posed that he is suffering although he belongs to one of the highest castes, and that another boy which he belongs to the higher-caste namely; the Brahmins are occupied on a higher position than that of a domestic servant. In spite of lack of humanity, Munoo finds capitalism, industrialism, and communalism that all adds to his misery: *Coolie* is also a novel dealing with personal human relationship. Being a humanitarian, Anand likes to see the world with equality but that is totally a mirage. The poor are the victims of the society.

*Coolie* not only represents one coolie but by all the coolies in India. The likes and dislikes, hopes and aspirations, frustrations and failures, disappointments and anxieties, exploitations and ill-treatment of Munoo are not of an individual alone but of the whole of the working class in British India. The portrayal of Munoo's character is typical and he is a class by himself.

Munoo is a universal figure represents as one of the Dickens' characters, namely David Copperfield. He is a hill boy with a taste for the joy of life which denied him again and again. He dreams that he shall one day grow up to be a big man, a strong man like a wrestler. But till the end he does not become so. Although we see his life as the hero

suffering not for his faults or any flaw that is in him. Yet he has been totally subjected to inhumanity by the society which brings out a tragic death to him shattering down all his high hopes and dreams within a few years.

The novelist has brought out the full horror by his realistic presentation. Munoo rushed up to Ratan and clung to him. He saw that a crowd rushing towards the people and Munoo was sent home by Ratan. On several occasions, Munoo saw men struck down with lathi blows and laying unconscious and bleeding blow on the head. He was also struck on his head and fell down. He was hospitalized but Munoo did not like the very stink and ran away that night without anybody's knowledge. "He ran as if he were a rocket of fire going to be quenched in the sea. He was not conscious of his body. He shot past across the Chaupati Bridge in a devastating whirl"(p.63).

Anand explains the exploitation of India in the name of religion, the poor, the pious and the innocent. Anand's power of portrayal of Indian reality reaches its Zenith in this milieu of the downtrodden. Anand's description of the dwelling place of the coolies makes most poignant passages in the book. Anand takes another opportunity to describe the pathetic conditions of the workers and their plight in society. Anand makes the readiness to realize the real condition though Munoo's true statement "The bigger a city is the more cruel, it is to sons of Adam You have to pay even for the breath your breathe"(p.112). Anand makes a depressed search in the relationship between rich and poor, the servant and the master and the Indians and the Europeans. East-West encounter is also under his analysis. Munoo's Bombay phase comes to an end with a beginning of the Shimla phase where he is taken away by Mrs. Mainwaring. Munoo was exploited physically and mentally. Later on he was exploited sexually also. Being a humanist, Anand has his own limitations of bearing the plight of this boy, Munoo.

We find the victory of the proletariat by self-sacrifice and suffering. The novel is also a study of worker-industrialist relationship. It also studies hunger, starvation, poverty, disease and degradation. According to Narasimahaiah, it is "a novel of human centrality". It studies the relationship between the rich and the poor, the servant and the master and the Indians and the Europeans. East-West encounter is also one of its

themes.

The title and theme of the novel are well established and the title is appropriate in all respects. Munoo, the coolie is not only a coolie but the representative of all the coolies in India. The novel is not entitled Munoo. In fact, it is not the story of Munoo alone but of the teaming millions of India. The coolies and workers, who have been made victims of poverty, ignorance and other forces of exploitation such as industrialism, feudalism and colonialism, the likes and dislikes, hopes and aspirations, frustrations and failures, disappointments and anxieties, exploitations and ill-treatment of Munoo are not of an individual alone but of the whole of the working class in British India. Not only the milieu of the proletarian but also the milieu of the British middle-class Anand portrays in this novel. The conflict in each fiction is developed consistently and the different milieus contribute to the development of the conflict, the action, in every novel. Similarly the milieus help in arriving at a solution to the conflict at the end. Thus, Mulk Raj Anand expresses his feelings of humanism through his novel *Coolie*.

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## Mulk Raj Anand : A Champion of Social Justice

Minati Pattnaik

Mulk Raj Ananda, an Indian novelist, short story writer and critic who drew a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor of his country, has been regarded as one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the Indian English Literature. Although Punjabi and Hindustani are Anand’s mother tongues, he wrote in English and began his career in England by publishing short reviews in T.S. Eliot’s magazine *Criterion*. His acquaintances from this time included such authors as E.M. Forster, Herbert Read, Henry Miller, and George Orwell who tried to get Anand a full time post at the BBC. He also came under the powerful influence of great writers like Gorki, Iqbal, Malrouse and Tolstoy. The most important influence upon Anand was Gandhiji, who shaped his social conscience.

Dr. Anand has been in critical limelight for more than half a century and has given his categorical and committed stance. His first literary work was published in 1930 and from that year till 2004 he has contributed more than one hundred literary works (about one hundred thirty five books) including novels, short stories, plays and essays. He has seven collections of short stories. His literary works have individually and collectively been taken up for scrutiny and evaluation in diverse quarters. But the evolving phenomenon that literary sensibility is a constant reappraisal of significant texts in the light of the newly emerging trends and works becomes mandatory for all living traditions, if they

are to find and rediscover themselves. Anand believes in the social significance of literature. He also believes that literature must serve society, solve their problems and guide them. He has reputation of being creative writer because of his realism, humanism and social protest.

Like Milton, Anand writes on the poor folk of India, whose poverty, misery and hunger are portrayed with the social anger, Anand was a social interpreter of our nation. His experience is deeply rooted in the social conditions of his time. Indian society is his prime concern and his characters, with all their authenticity, represent the most fundamental pattern of Indian society. He presents a society charged with the evil of untouchability, communal disharmony, caste compartmentalisations, and appalling economic differences. Anand is a committed writer, his sympathies lying with the untouchables, the outcaste and the starving multitude. In an interview, when Amarjit Chandan asked, so far Indian progressive literature has been on the underdogs but not for them, Did you choose to write on them out of pity, compassion or solidarity?

Anand replies:

The first theme of my novels is certainly about the miseries of Indian and the Punjabi people. In the subsequent novels you find there is a struggle not only against the politics of the times, oppression, but it is also a struggle against the inner resistances offered by religious and rituals against growth. Every novel which concerns a lonely or oppressed person is a story of protest against it, because a novel is not an essay against caste oppression. In my novel *Untouchable* there is a core of humanness, because Bakha's dignity is dishonored. Protest in itself becomes a very active part for the removal of oppression. You cannot say that dictionary falls on your head from the shelf and you suddenly become wiser. It is a question of how many insinuations, persuasions become possible from vibrations of poetry and the sound of words and the deeper feeling of tenderness come into conflict of good and evil, of night and day.

His first novel, *Untouchable* depicts the evils of caste system. It is a socially conscious novel whereas *Coolie* is a politically conscious one. In *Untouchable*, it is determined by birth, in *Coolie*, the economic group, which have become so rigid that a man of one group can hardly think of joining another, determines it. There is much similarity between Bakha of *Untouchable* and Munoo of



*Coolie*. In *Untouchable*, Anand culminates social evil that has run its course through Indian history, right from the time when all sorts of superstitions crept into Indian life to corrupt its tradition of philosophy and culture. Anand is shocked at the inhuman way the untouchables and coolies are treated by those who belong to superior caste. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the story is about the poor Indians suffering untold misery in the hands of the British. But the Indian life that it presents is subdivided and fragmented on account of caste and community divisions. Another novel *The Big Heart* is about the evil rivalry between business communities in an Indian town.

Like many other novelists Anand is not satisfied with India's spiritual culture and heritage, he also does not represent the exotic Indian through his fiction. Rather he is a novelist of the lower, down trodden, those are oppressed class. His novels depict the inhuman plight of the oppressed typical Indian people, a sweeper, a coolie, a peasant, a tea-plantation labourer, a village charmer who are all agonized victims of capitalistic exploitation, poverty, problems of untouchability, social injustice and cruelty. In novel after novel he took sincere attempt to exhibit the replica of the Indian society especially a degraded and a dehumanized one with an honest intention for bringing amelioration in their tragic wounds. He wants to bring a change, to rebuild a world filled with mercy, harmony and human kindness. Such aspiration is apparent in his all fifteen novels as well as in his many short stories. He is no doubt a social reformer. His attempt is simply to arouse the public conscience to these evils and induce practical social healthy reforms. Anand is not like a simple propagandist like George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, rather he achieves his aim by gentle persuasiveness and morality. He believes, reformation can be done by humanism, love, compassion, sympathy and human consideration of man as man. The people, those who are suffering, they are suffering because of the social forces not because of their fate or God's curse.

In another interview Lalji Mishra questioned, How do you use the spirit of Gandhi in your novels and in how many of your novels?

Dr. Anand replied:

The whole of my life was transformed from lies, half-lies and pretending to truth. Gandhi's humanity extended in me. I have become humble enough. I differ him in many ways but he built in me the integrity of purpose. One morning, Gandhi was unkind to Kasturba and he said

to her that she should not cause in the house as he was wrong. Ultimately, she admitted that she was wrong. So Gandhi cannot compromise against his principles, against truth because it has been the part of nature. He believes in the simple truth like sincerity, eating with hand, working in the kitchen, washing the utensils etc.

As a short story writer Anand's commitment to humanism and socialism is great. Satire, realism, comedy, pathos and humour are the keynotes of his short stories. He handles them with equal care, reality and fantasy, romance and naturalism. Anand's short stories are interspersed in between the writing of his novels. *The Barber's Trade Union and other stories* came out in 1994, *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other stories* in 1947, *The Power of Darkness and other stories* in 1959, *Lajwanti and other stories* in 1996 and so on. B. Vyaghreswarudu explores different facets of Anand's themes in a critical study. As a committed artist, Anand feels duty-bound to expose the ugly aspects of the ritual-obsessed Indian social life.

M.K. Naik says, "As a short story writer, Anand's forte is his versatility and range. His more than three-score stories exhibit an astonishing variety of theme and setting, mood and tone, character and personality. He knows his Indian city as well as he understands the village. He is at home with the aristocrat and the beggar".

When Anand is deeply moved by social injustice, leading to the misery of people, his narration attains a tragic intensity resulting in fine short stories like *The Cobbler and the Machine*, *The Rumour*, *The Hiccup*, *Boots*, *The Gold Watch*, *Lullaby*, *Duty and Old Bapu*, *Uncle Saudagar*. The Cobbler, in *The Cobbler and the Machine* who is tempted to buy a sewing machine, finds it difficult to repay the loan and as a result he has to die. In *The Rumour* and *The Old Bapu* written under the backdrop of unemployment and darker aspects of industrial India, present the plight of the poor. Dhandu who goes to the city in search of a job in a factory, is bewildered when he finds that the rumour he had heard of a vacancy was baseless and on his way back, is run over by a Lorry. *Old Bapu* presents the predicament of an untouchable *Old Babu* who runs seven miles to find no work to earn. The picture of old babu on his way to the town / the parching heat in search of some work creates a pathetic scene. Dr. Anand writes:

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The city was still a mile away and the flesh of his feet burnt where it

touched the new hot metalled road through the holes in the shoes. And the sweat poured down across the furrow in his face..... Like rivulets flooding a fallow field.

(Old Bapu)

In *Duty* a policeman's lapse on his duty enrages his officer. Mangal Singh receives bribe and he shows his anger on innocent villagers. This story is a satire on corrupt police system. *Duty*, written during the British Raj, is an attack on the Raj, while *Old Bapu* written after India got independence is a more straight forward criticism of the Indian Govt's failures.

The openings of his stories show a great variety. He builds his stories more through narration than through dialogue. He uses the 'stream of consciousness or point of view' method in some of his stories like *Lullaby*, *Eagles and Pigeons* etc. Sometimes he makes use of the technique of suspense for the sake of effect as in *The Prodigal son*. Sometimes he makes use of symbols to bring into relief the predicament of his protagonists. His contribution to the genre of Indian short story is truly impressive.

M.K. Naik writes:

He is a born story teller, who has at the same time thought deeply over his craft, drawing upon several sources in shaping it. He has an unerring sense of situation and a sure ability to visualize a scene clearly. His stories are a museum of human Nature and have a wide range and ample variety of mood and tone. Among the Indian writers of short story in English, he has few peers.

The stories of between *Tears and Laughter* are pretty much like novels. The theme he choosed to write that the practice of sati, where the young widow of a doctor with aspirations to become a nurse is burnt alive, the story that revolved around untouchability and the fate of the young characters after beaten till death, the stoning to death of a blind bard whose only crime was that he was blind and sang well and thereby earned more than the other beggars, of a young mother whose bowl is stolen for she cannot feed her young. In short stories, M.K. Anand lays bare all that the Indian society has been guilty of doing and perpetuating on its weakest and most vulnerable sections --- the women, children handicapped, the untouchables and even animals, as in how Moti the dog is killed and how a buffalo is left to die.

*Lost child* is one of the most memorable of his short stories. It is a parable in which the traumatic experiences of a child symbolizes the eternal varieties of human conditions. It reminds us of an aphorism of Guru Nanak that:

we are all children lost in the world fair. (The Lost Child)

It is an admirable study of the child mind, having for its theme the universally accepted fact that for a child, the highest need, in spite of many attractions, is its parents.

Some of his stories like *Lajwanti*, *The parrot in the cage*, *The gold watch*, *The cobbler and the Machine* are tales of pathos with full of overtones of social criticism. Some of his stories reveal his acute understanding of complex social forces at work in modern India. *The power of Darkness*, *The Tractor and the corn Goddess* etc. In the stories of social criticism, there is a clear under-current of comedy as in *A pair of moustaches*, *The signature and Two lady Rams*. Some of the stories like *The Tamarind Tree*, *the silver bangles and The Thief* are primarily studies in human psychology. *The priest and pigeons*, presents a funny picture of pandit Paramananda's plight at keeping the sanctum from being defiled by the birds in love while *the temple* itself is dedicated to Radhakrishna.

The story of *The Barber's Trade Union* shows how a village barber boy, Chandu with his dress up like a doctor, invites the anger of the people of the higher class. He is not allowed to shave. He convinces all the barbers of that area that

It is the time the elders of the village come to the barbers then they should dance attendance upon their masters.

(The Barbers Trade Union, p. 121)

The range and variety of Anand's short stories are evinced not only in mood, tone and spirit but also they are expressed in the most effective way. Anand is very much concerned with a type of characters who themselves are products of circumstances and situations and creates his characters from the author's omniscient angle. He has a habit of repeating names of his characters in different stories and picturing them with totally different qualities in different stories. So his characters lose their identity altogether in the minds of his readers. For his amazing variety of themes, Anand deserves a lasting place

among the Indian story writers in English.

However Mulk Raj Anand, a pioneer of Indian English literature left behind a prolific literary legacy. He was not only a writer but also a political and philosophical thinker and an active Humanist dedicated to the cause of world peace and universal brotherhood. His numerous literary works reveal his faith in 'Art for life sake and not for Art sake'.

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## The Strength of Mulk Raj Anand's Art Exemplified in *Untouchable*

Lily Arul Sharmila

Novel as a literary form unfolds a space for the communication of human experience. The parameter of the sport of writing operates through the might behind the expansion of the mental perception on the given human situations. While scrutinizing varied facets of Mulk Raj Anand's genius and insight, the question of association in which he posits himself with the plot arises. He generalizes the state of human affairs, the conditions under which the life of Bakha, the main protagonist is conducted by virtue of a fertile creature space. He describes the character from outside or from within. Anand has taken up the creation of the protagonist and summoned up himself to analyse his mind. Northrop Frye speaks of three main stages of a successful quest

The stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle usually some kind of battle in which the hero or his foe or both must die and the exaltation of the hero has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict (Anatomy of Criticism, 187)

A modern artistic exercise evolves as a distinct brand of humanism with Anand. His literary composition is endowed with the uncanny air of plainness making a selection of his hero from the society of underdogs. No single portrayal of event would suffice to bring to the masses, the effects desired and the impact targeted

at by the novelist. The plethora of his ideas and thoughts for certain reaches the wide horizon of the social system. He has exercised enormous potential and exerted huge creative urge by making the intrinsic subject appear meaningful and enduring. The mind receives myriad impressions. Anand remarks

Through the many adversities, trials and errors, heart rending experiences and several breakdowns, the characters from my long confession become a miscellany of novels. (Anand 15)

The suffering, a family tragedy in one's life leads to human wisdom that has constituted the subject in the artistic world of Anand. The caste system proved its rigidity triggered up the imaginative faculty of Anand. His first and the foremost work in fiction *Untouchable* brought out in 1923 is a scathing criticism on the poor social and economic system of India during the British Regime. The dark clouds gather over human life form the basis of the story course of life of the protagonist, Bakha, a toilet cleaner. A great sign of redemption from the sad predicament of having born into the family is aimed at through the newly introduced toilet, a boon of technological advancement. A technological mechanism and an incessant call to give growth reform must become the effective vehicle of social message to eliminate the necessity of a caste of toilet cleaner. The lack of progress situations and an inadequate reform in the life of the downtrodden must witness a paradigm shift in the developmental approaches. This accounts at a victory message with the images of execution promoting a strong democratic equilibrium.

In India, according to the ancient orthodox caste system, servants belonged to the Sudra Caste who were treated as aboriginals by the settler Aryans who had eventually evolved a blatantly casteist ideology in order to perpetuate a system in support of a man's inhumanity to man. (Ray 126)

A social amelioration has ever been an accomplished task of the literary writers down the ages. The betterment of society being one of the cherished ideals of the creative geniuses in India is primarily concentrated upon. The literary studies play a part of the scriptural texts and help to cultivate social consciousness in Mankind. Anand holds a firm fidelity in the concept of humanism and his novels provide a huge spectrum of the delineation on compassion for the underdogs. His major focus is on the portrayal of intricacy and complexity involved in the life of men and women, belonging to the lower economic strata. "Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian writer in English, notable for the depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society." (Cowajee, Saros 3)

Mulk Raj Anand having born into the Coppersmith's family, holds a mirror upto nature presenting the life of the working class society in India. He felt that the unique flavour of art is to make a subtle unification of simplicity and actuality. He wished that his creative art must make a new space and mark a difference from the convention of previous Indian fiction in which the Pariahs and the Bottomdogs are not the subjects of the novels in all their actuality. Thus, the contour of his creative art hinges upon the depiction of the Masses humiliated by the White Sahibs, Zamindars, the money lenders and the industrialists and Anand becomes a representative of Mankind – the untouchables, coolies, poor folk and illiterates voicing their feelings, desperate and suffocated for survival. He unveils a slew of measure to fight against the injustice wreaked on people. Anand's fictitious portrayals exemplify his compassion and phenomenal grit for the anguished, sweltering in the heat of injustice so common in earlier days.

The peripheral understanding of his novels has its genesis from the characters living in Punjab and North West Frontier. He writes with major objectives of analyzing the difficult situations in the life of workers introducing them to the social front to evoke social consciousness in the reading public. *Coolie* and *Untouchable* surface the hidden issues deep and subtle elucidating the fact that his art is not the concealment of facts but a revelation of truth. John Barth calls,

the effect of the regresses in infinitum produced by the story within a story and the process whereby characters in a novel become authors or readers within the fiction reminding us of the fictious aspect of our existence. (John Barth 70)

The manifestation of virtues and vices forms the dual phase in the creation of characters. The virtues embodied in the meek, humble and generous constitute one group with the constraints of the directives of impulses and instinctive emotions. The human hearts guided by vices like fraudulence, self-centeredness and miserly fall into next category.

Anand regards the institutions like temples, charity organizations, government concerns and religion as humbug and he believes that these bodies reflect only the hypocritical nature by attempting at the services of affectation and rendering seeming good. According to Anand the exercise of noble deed must spring up from the natural instinct spontaneously in the individual. "The quality of mercy is not strained, it drops like a gentle rain upon the earth" (*Merchant of Venice*).

Anand detested much of class discriminations and aristocratic feeling



of dissention, prejudices as they constrain the spontaneous upsurging of feeling of brotherhood among the fellow human beings. Such notions of scruples and directives are laid bare in his works *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. The wave of distress hits the plain and virtuous human souls that reel under the effect of industrialization and priest exploitation. An accountability devolves on Anand, a social artist to ensure change in the social sphere. Only faith and change pave a way to optimism. The evolving perception in Anand does not accord with the exploitation of the outcastes. The caste conflict provides ample dimension in the study of any literature text that exhibits a link between man and society.

Mulk Raj promulgates his thoughts on the gospel of equality, righteousness and justice. The protagonists in the novel of Mulk Raj Anand stand to represent boldly a universal truth in every compartment of man's life displaying the inborn virtues of man. The novels of Anand present a heart rending and smacking spectacle in the readers.

The vivid, lucid narration of specific details in the personal life of Bakha in *Untouchable* is very remarkable. The troubles in the multi front and heft kick backs experienced by Bakha on one single day evoke a sense of pity in the readers. *Untouchable* is a fine piece of composition through which Anand's technical skill, experimentation and felicity of expression are displayed to the largest extent. The fiction portrays a single day happenings in the life of Bakha, a sweeper boy of 18. His indolent father Lakha reminds him of his morning schedule, the routinized existence of cleaning the latrines. The painful memories, his mother's death, perturb Bakha and he yearns for the peaceful life with his mother. He expresses his remorseful feelings when he was shouted at by the priest for peering into temple through the window 'polluted polluted' (60). "Texts have deep moorings in social issues. There is no space outside power; texts of all kinds are vehicles of power..." (Brannigan John 425).

The atmosphere of the text is set in the outcastes' colony of the unnamed town at the time of British reign in India. The narration in the novel is Bakha's and he is portrayed to be a dexterous boy who nurtures hatred for his father due to his ill manners. The barracks of a British Regiment employed him and the British men's living status and style holds a fascination for Bakha. He could command respect from Tommies, the Whitemen whom Bakha observes with great sense of astonishment which triggered a desire in him for leading a life similar to that of the White men. He learns the art of wearing trousers, breeches, coats, puttees, boots, etc.(10). As he is suffocating in his present life

of uncertain directions, he wishes to imitate the life of the Westerners. The incitement to hatred and discrimination Bakha experiences is provoked by his friends for his dress.

Bhangis are the most backward community that they carry out the task of cleaning the latrines and sweeping the streets. They are labeled as dirty people because of the nature of their work. The discrimination which is negative does not allow them to use the local well and so they cannot maintain hygiene.

Anand develops the plot towards the conflict by revealing the feelings, thoughts and emotions of Bakha from the moment, he gets up on this specific day; Anand shows the latter's reaction both to humiliation and sympathy (Arora Neena 30).

The ability and the talent of the person are constrained and crippled by the caste of his job a malady in his life. Bakha's diligence is much evidenced in his work and many witness his still get astonished remarking "he is a bit superior to his job not the kind of man who ought to be doing this cleaning toilets (16)." But these certificates and good remarks do not set Bakha's feet on the ladder of upgradation. Though he is endowed with a quality of diligence in his work, he is destined and confined to this mean work. He strolls under the world of dreams whenever he sees the Brahmin boys going to school he longs to accompany them. "How nice it must be about read and write! One could read the papers after having been to school. One could talk to the Sahibs (38)." He entertains a predominant desire to be educated like Sahibs. The caste stigma alienates him from the rest of the human society. He loves to imitate the Westerners, yearning to obtain the status of literacy. He is embittered by the predicament of his lower economic strata in which the brother lives with filth. "The parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low caste man's son" (39).

Both transitional mechanism and an incessant call to growth reforms spring up in an illusory light. The reading of the novel brings to one's mind all that people take for granted. On the dusk Bakha joins the masses that proceed towards the town to attend Gandhi's powerful oration. Gandhi's speech creates an absorption into Bakha's being. Gandhi's visionary directive to check this treatment was appealing to Bakha when Gandhi wished untouchable to refuse the left overs of the upper class. The seeming way is unfolded for the untouchables to sanctify their living and keep them out of their vices. The Christian Missionary, Gandhi and the local poet present their views on the question. No way out emerges from these noble people to take measures against their sup-

pression. Another source of redemption aimed at by the Christian Missionary in conformity with the conversion of Bakha to Christianity. Bakha's reluctance to change in religion and accept the confounding messages of this Whiteman exemplified his firm attitude that replacing one's religion will not act as a transitional mechanism and the clarion call to growth reforms.

The human society must task to look into the reason to strengthen the social fabrics. The novel presents an agenda in a literary mode with a story of jolt and shock in the life of Bakha. The novel widens the probe in the people so as to take appropriate measures with structure that hits the root of feudalism. The multiple Indian traditional system must begin to come to light to gauge the intensity of the discrimination and caste clash. The novel presents a huge spectrum of a series of gullible people to fob off the victims. To silence the beleaguered power is the fitting response to the brutal force in the life of Bakha. The novel is introduced into the world to stabilize the unsteady patterns of the society by virtue of redemptive actions.

The diverse forms of undercover sabotage (treated as of less importance) are experienced by Bakha. When Bakha sleeps, he is chided by a local Hindu man who wants to use the toilet 'why aren't the latrine clean, you rogue, of Bakha! There is not one fit to go near...' (7) The hapless class undergoes depth of depravity and the novel attempts to seek solution for the problem of untouchable class asking a question how to alleviate the oppression of the under privileged. The book sets in its back ground the noble ideal of actualities of untouchable depicting tough phases, sordid scenes all the more humiliating in their life. He is compared to a slave many time the story tells. The local Hindu man appreciating his work gifts Bakha with a hockey stick. "The smile of a slave overjoyed at the condescension of his master more akin to pride than happiness...." (17).

The embarrassment remains as a scar in memory. Being dutiful, he is appreciated by the higher castes and he treats this as a pride. He never loved his duty though it is embedded into him. Bakha makes a fruitful search for purpose and meaning. Though Bakha abhors his nature of work serving the upper caste society fetches him contentment. He satisfies the need of the local Hindu man and Bakha is happy that he possesses a hockey stick. Huge blow for stability heaped upon Bakha from dawn to dusk. He yearned for glancing at the happening in the local temple which denies him accessibility. Bakha tolerates the most humiliating and disgusting of his youthful days. From dawn to dusk he is compelled to experience the sense of dissension and discrimination.

“Anand’s impassioned and indignant critique of the social economic situation appeared to have set a trend in a way for didactic literature with the crusading zeal...” (Naik 156).

Anand who was associated with the strategies of communism used his novels as vehicle to direct his anger against various aspects of India’s social structure and on British rule in India

It is remarkable that unique prolificacy, bold experimentation aesthetic sensibility with which Anand has produced his novel *Untouchable*. His selection of modern themes and personages are the determinants that introduce humanistic directives. His fictional phenomenon consists of characters from varied life style and status. The psychological penetration on human scale is his forte. *Untouchable* is characterized by reformistic vigour, aesthetic integrity, fictional narrative, and so on.

Hence out of ordeals and blows groping to understand the meaning of life and as if to escape from everyday drudgery Bakha attempts to clutch the strongest tutorship in the world namely serving the upper class every morning standing at the doorsteps and folding hands. What is so obvious is the novelist’s compassionate vision of life and sensibility. That is perhaps the most fitting criticism to be directed towards the current Indian scenario which enhances the artistic splendour and to intensify the magnitude of the creative material within the contour of the novel. The novel is characterized by the organic strength by the virtue of its structure and marvelous technicalities on the texture. The significance of the novel has not merely in the association with the subject attempted so skillfully and artistically but in the dexterous synthesis of humanism and religion as the grace of salvation of Mankind which steeped in social ills and anarchy of Indian history. Anand in search of novel subjects for his fiction has located a realm on the essence of human living.

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## *Untouchable* : Socio-Economic, Religious and Political Sensibility

S.B. Desai

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the famous leading contemporary Indian English novelists. As a writer he is deeply rooted in the Indian and Hindu tradition and culture. Like Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand has keen interest in Indian customs, rituals, religious faith, superstitions, conventional values of morality and spiritual ideas. As a literary writer Mulk Raj Anand tries to focus on ethical reality through a contemporary relevance of class consciousness in order to give it a universal significance. He also observes that conventional literature should become a background for modern writing with noted characters and various influences. With this idea, this paper throws light on different human faces in society.

*Untouchable* was written in 1930 and then at the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi was revised and modified several times, till it was published in 1935. Writing in the 1930s, no novelist could fail to reflect the sense of the age, the spirit of the times, and Anand was no exception in this respect. It was a tumultuous decade and no Indian could remain unaffected by the fire that raged through the country. Thanks to the national movement led by Gandhi, a movement which released the energies of men and women slumbering for centuries, and roused their conscience against our degrading social practices no less than our abject submission to imperialism, all of which to one like Gandhi was tantamount to

spiritual weakness, immorality and irreligion. One of the consequences of the upheaval caused by the Gandhian movement was that many of the traditional customs and beliefs began to crumble and the established order of society was shaken. In other words, in the thirties, Indian society was in a state of transition, there was clash between tradition and modernity.

*Untouchable* is a sociological novel, and it is concerned with the injustice and exploitation to which one large section of Hindu society is subjected by the other section enjoying a much higher status in the social hierarchy. It is concerned with the depiction of the life of the 'untouchables' who have been the victims of social injustice, who have been oppressed and ill-treated, since time immemorial and who are still being oppressed and ill-treated.

The novel is concerned not with the life and suffering of some particular individual, but with the life and suffering of untouchables as a class. Through the particular untouchable Bakha, the novelist has focused attention on the miserable plight of untouchables generally. In this way, the novel is another instance, as Jack Lindsay points out, of Anand's habit of studying, "the particular through the general". He begins with the particular here Bakha, the untouchable lad - but soon generalizes upon his life and suffering. By concentrating upon his inner anguish the novelist has raised his suffering to epic dimensions. In this way, Bakha becomes a symbolic figure, a larger than life figure, a true representative of the class to which he belongs to. It is to stress this universal, symbolic significance of Bakha that Anand has called the novel *Untouchable* and not 'The Untouchable'. The definite article 'the' has been rightly omitted to stress the fact that the novel is not concerned with any particular individual but with the whole class of untouchable, of which the particular individual is but representative.

The novel begins with a realistic description of the colony or locality where the untouchables live. It is situated at a distance both from the city where the upper caste Hindus live and also from the barracks in the cantonment area. It is a colony of mud-walled cottages huddled together in two rows. There live the scavengers, the leather workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass cutters and other outcasts from the Hindu society. A brook runs near the lane, once with crystal clear water, now soiled by the dirty and filth of the public latrines, situated about its bank, the odour of the hides and skins of the carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of the donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel makes, and the biting, choking, pungent, fumes that ooze from its sides. The absence of drainage system has made the quarter a marsh which gives out the most of-

fensive smell. The human and animal refuse that lies on the outskirts of this colony, the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lies within it, makes it an 'uncongenial' place to live in. Bakha lives with his father, brother and sister in a small roomed cottage, dark and dingy, and entirely unfit for human habitation. It is in this small room, that they all sleep, it is here they cook, and it is here they keep their baskets, brooms, and other tools of their occupation, than of cleaning latrines situated in the neighbourhood.

These outcasts of society live in filthy surroundings, and the environment in which they live has corrupted and polluted their souls, which are as dirty as their habitation. Bakha is an uncommon boy : he is conscious of the filth and dirt in which they live, and is nauseated by it. But not so are the other untouchables. In this respect, Rakha, Bakha's brother, is a true representative of the caste to which he belongs. He is dirty and like the French novelists of the naturalistic school. Anand gives pen-portrait of Rakha in all his filthiness: "His tattered flannel shirt, grimy with the blowing of his ever running nose, obstructed his walk slightly. The discomfort resulting from this, the fatigue, assumed or genuine, due to the work he had put in that morning, have a rather drawn, long-jawed look to his dirty face on which the flies congregated in abundance to taste the sweet delights of the saliva on the corners of his lips" He is so dirty that Kakha cannot bear to eat from the same bowl with him, and rises abruptly from the meal.

Anand has not idealized the untouchables. He has shown them as they are in all their filth and degradation, which however, he is quick to point, is the result of age-old exploitation and injustice. He has also shown that not only is the Hindu society divided into the untouchables and the upper caste Hindus, but the untouchables also have their own hierarchy with the untouchables in a higher social status refusing to mix up with those occupying a lower rung of the social ladder and even ill-treating them. This becomes clear from the way in which Gulabo, a washerwoman, ill-treats and avoids Sohini, Bakha's sister.

The suffering, misery and wretchedness of the untouchables has been realistically delineated, and this has been done by giving us a peep into the anguished soul of Bakha. There is the scene at the well where Sohini, along with other untouchables, has to wait for long hours for a pitcher of water, for she is not allowed to climb the well, and must wait till some kind hearted upper caste Hindu condescends to fill her pitcher. This is followed by the touching-scene in the market where Bakha is cruelly slapped, beaten and humiliated, and the jalebies in his hand are thrown down merely because he has accidentally touched a Hindu. He has to go through the bazaar crying 'Posh, Posh' so that



the accident may not happen again.

In the temple, Pt. Kali Nath tries to molest Sohini, and when he is exposed he raises the cry of 'Polluted! Polluted!'. It is shameful hypocrisy. Bakha is indignant, wants to beat the Brahmin, but cannot do so, for he lacks the moral courage. Centuries of exploitation and oppression have degraded and weakened him. As M.K. Naik puts it, "Weakness corrupts, and absolute weakness corrupts absolutely. He is caught in a vicious circle from which there is no escape. Compelled to clean dung and live near dung, he has to depend for water on the mercy of the caste Hindus and for food on left over given by them. Cleanliness can hardly be a value in a life led in this fashion, a fact which helps perpetuate the social ostracism to which the untouchable has already been condemned. But it is his mind and soul which have really suffered far greater damage. Eternal servility is the price of untouchability."

Bakha has a number of other traumatic experiences on his eventful day. An old woman throws a loaf of bread at him from the upper window of her house as if he were a dog sniffing round, and a shopkeeper throws a packet of cigarettes at him in the same manner. When in the evening, there is a free fight after the hockey match and little boy is hurt by a stone. Bakha takes him to his home. But instead of thanking him, his mother abuses him for having polluted her child and her home. *Bakha* turns back humiliated and crest-fallen like a kicked dog.

Mulk Raj Anand's Realism is again seen in his being conscious of the fact that not of cast. The Hindus are alike. There are good and gentle ones also among them. As M.K. Naik rightly points out, "Since he understands the psychology of both the untouchable and the caste Hindu, his picture of the relationship between them is objective and balanced. The obvious temptation for an author handling a social problem is to speak to a brief, to overstate his case and to divide his characters neatly into sheep and goats. Anand withstands this temptation ably here. His caste Hindus are not all bullies and tyrants; nor are all his untouchables admirable; not yet is the life of his untouchable hero a saga of unrelieved misery." In full contrast with the hypocritical priest, Pundit Kali Nath, stands Havildar Charat Singh, who is so far above caste prejudices as to ask Bakha to go and fetch pieces of coal from the kitchen for the hubble bubble, and who actually pours tea out of his own tumbler into the pan in Bakha's hand". "For this man", Bakha feels, "I would not mind being a sweeper all my life. I would do anything for him". Again, in contrast with the termagant who helps abuse on him for having defiled the wooden platform

outside her house, the other woman hands a chapatti to Bakha, adding kindly, "My child you should not sit on people's door-steps like this".

S.S. Prasad rightly analyses the contemporary socio-political reality in his critical framework. "Ambedkar's Leadership threatened to break the untouchables away as a separate force and further underlined the political necessity of winning their confidence. Western egalitarian ideologies had also been of work but the political dimension of the idea to the Harijan and had an urgency that could not be ignored"

The oppression, injustice, humiliation to which Bakha is subjected during the course of this eventful day, is not peculiar to him alone. It has been the fate of these social outcastes since times immemorial. Bakha is a universal figure who symbolizes the exploitation, and oppression which has been the fate of untouchables like him. His anguish and humiliation are not his alone but those of a whole class of people regarded as untouchables.

Anand tries to show the suffering of downtrodden, lower caste, peasants, coolies and untouchables and they are victims of the upper caste and capitalists. Anand has shown the naked reality and hypocrisy afflicting Hindu religion as well as the exploitation of a poor and downtrodden by the capitalists. Dr. Anand's description is real, comprehensive and subtle, and his gifts in all modes from force to comedy, pathos to tragedy, realistic to poetic are remarkable.

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## Mulk Raj Anand's Novel : A Comparative Study in the Prospective of Socio-moral Degeneration

Papari Kakati

“What is writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his own torments, urges exaltation by realizing the pains, frustrations, aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience— thus becoming the seer of a new vision in any given situation.” The ideal that the novelist is “the seer of a new vision” is something new in the development of the Indian English novel. The novelist, Mulk Raj Anand, like the seer, feels the pangs, sufferings and frustrations of the people. He, in fact, reaches the level of Mahatma, Buddha and envisions a society which is free from every kind of pain and misery- both material and spiritual.” (Anand, 1)

His view of life matches well with Amartya Sen's welfare economics. Both are humanists and both want the abolition of poverty and exploitation of the majority by a handful of minority endowed with apparently in exhaustible energies. Anand was an indefatigable traveler and was actively associated with numerous literary and cultural associations both in India and abroad, besides engaging himself in social work. Anand modernized the Indian novel and carried the tradition of Tagore, Premchand, Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra to new heights. His works reveal his social commitment, his belief in “Art for a life's sake” and his strong courage in exposing the exploiters— the imperial masters, the village money lenders, the unscrupulous traders, the native rulers,

priests, tea planters and male-chauvinists. His deep anguish against oppression, injustice and against the breakdown of decencies was clearly pronounced by him in one of his letters.

There is no avoiding the disgust one feels at the breakdown of decencies in present day India. Perhaps 'I thought to write more because certainly nowhere is the drama of meanness, hypocrisy and double dealing in the interest of power and money and privilege, being more actively played every hour than it is in our country.'

-Arnold had great faith that an artist can contribute immensely towards social change. Alike George Orwell, Anand too analyzed his commitment to writing in an essay of the same title as written by Orwell. Arnold's artistic vision encompasses all Indian culture, customs, rituals, ethics and myths. An important aspect of Anand's fiction is its concern with the reality of organized evil. In all his novels he appears as a social critic. The society he has seen and observed is the field of his work. His writings probe deeply into the social process. His fiction unfold his socialistic vision and impassioned humanism, largely shaped by the European socialism as well as by the thoughts and philosophy of Eric Gill, Herbert Read, E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot, Jack Lindsay, George Orwell and H.G. Wells. For him "literature is an expression of society" and the large majority of the questions raised by him are social questions - questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myth. Through his art he has been trying to awaken our sympathy for the underdog of society which in turn can urge us to take part in the drama of revolt leading to social reform. Both *Untouchable* and *Coolie* are excellent examples in this respect. In other words, Anand is a humanist, a proletarian who does not believe in the 'Art for Art's sake' but writes to awaken the social conscience. Anand has all along written novels and short stories with a view of teaching of human rising and exercise vigilance in regard to the real enemies of freedom and socialism.

*Untouchable and The Road:*

"Mulk Raj Anand's childhood friends were mainly children from the cantonment. They included a dhobi by called Ramcharam, a Muslim child named Ali, son of a cobbler called Chotu, and a sweeper boy named Bakha. He mixed with them freely without giving any importance to the caste feeling his elders were trying to infuse in him. One day while playing with them, a stone thrown by Ramcharan hit him and he was flattened to the ground. Immediately, with great anxiety, they rushed towards their hero. Though he was in need of their help, they were afraid of even to touch him for fear of committing the sin of

pollution. However, Bakha, the sweeper boy, took courage and carried him to his home to be only scolded by Anand's mother"(2).

Her anger in spite of Bakha's Kindness and generosity was something shocking for Young Anand and turned out to be a vow to fight for the cause of innumerable Bakhas in India. Unlike Bankim chandra Chatterji, Ratannath Sarkar and Tagor Anand like the Bakha who boldly carried him to his mother, decided to carry the crores of Bakha to the sensitive souls of this nation, giving them dignity and heroism. It is with this aim that he created the heroes, Bakha in *Untouchable*, Bhikhu in *The Road* Munnoo in the *Coolie* and Gangu in the *Two Leaves and A Bud*.

While Anand's mind was saturated with the creation of *Untouchable*, one day by chance he happened to see James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The technique in *Ulysses* taught three important things to Anand. Thus Mulk Raj Anand's mind was very much influenced by the technique in *Ulysses* is obvious specially in the long reverie sequence of Bakha after he has been slapped on the face by a high caste man and also from the duration of the story. Besides, the 'Untouchability' the author himself had experienced in several occasions in life urged him to modify his manuscript and his passionate feelings and memories are exactly reflected in every page of *Untouchable*.

M.Raj Anand's *The Road* is based on an actual incident when Saros Cowasjee asked Mulk Raj Anand's cause of writing this novel, he found the same ground in *Untouchable*, he replied :

"Well, it was a kind of shock to me when I went to live in Haryana, twenty miles from Delhi in the human empire of Jawaharlal Nehru, to find that the out castes not only in the South India, but in the mixed North were still confined to limbo of oblivion. There was something tragic comic to me in the fact that the caste Hindus would not touch the stones quarried by the untouchables to make the road, because the stones had been touched by the untouchables. I mentioned this to the great Nehru. He did not believe me. He was quite angry at my mentioning this awkward fact. I said I would prove it to him by showing it to him in the enchanted mirror" (3).

The enchanted mirror Anand created is *The Road*. Untouchability has always provoked the intelligent heart of M.R. Anand into action. He finds that legislation as a means of social change does not work in the case of untouchability, since untouchability is deeply rooted in the Indian psyche. Anand realizes that this social evil can be removed only by appealing to the hearts of privileged people who unscrupulously perpetuate it. He understands that untouchability can be abolished only through a literacy of feeling. Hence, Anand,

the angry young man who protested against untouchability in the 30s tries his hand on the same theme after 25 years, in *The Road*. His coming back again to the same social evil in this novel reveals his emotional involvement with the problems of untouchability.

There has no such difference in case of social milieu between the era of *The Road* or of *Untouchable*. The law of the land has not influenced the attitude of the society. As in *Untouchable*, so in this novel, we find the caste Hindus ill-treating their out caste brethren: they are not allowed to come into physical contact with the 'twice-born', or permitted to enter the temple for coming into contact with the God of all. Just like in *Untouchable*, in *The Road* also Anand introduces a lecherous and hypocritical priest. In both of the novels we come across the Slapping scene. In *Untouchable*, it is a highly dramatic situation, the pivot of the novel, but in *The Road* it is a mere contrivance. On the last but one page of the book we come across the slapping incident. The thirsty Bhikhu accepts a brass tumbles of water from Rukmini, the beautiful daughter of Thakur Singh. Her brother Sanju, who hates all untouchables sees this and rushes towards Bhikhu and slaps him for defiling the bumbles. Like his prototype Bakha, Bhikhu for a moment thinks of retaliating but common sense warns him of the perilous sea in which he and the other untouchables struggles even after the years of Indian Independence.

*The Road* portrays not only the suffering of the untouchables but also of the magnanimous caste Hindus who try to awaken the conscience of the members of their community against the evils of untouchability. To be honest is a dangerous thing where the rule of hypocrisy dominates. This is what led to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. Socrates had to drink Hemlock, Christ to hang on the cross and Joan of Arc to burn at the stake for being honest to society. Dhooli Singh, in *The Road* is a social reformer and a staunch disciple of the Mahatma. His following of his Master's footsteps was a hard task. His single handed fight against untouchability in a society where casteism is interpreted in terms of religion is considered as a challenge to the religion itself. But he represents the true religion; he personifies the author's vision of an ideal Hindu.

We find Anand's *The Road* has good similarities with Raj Rao's *Kanthapura* in various reasons. Anand imitated certain aspects of *Kanthapura* in *The Road*. Both take place in caste ridden villages where untouchables are exploited. The landlord Thakur Singh in *The Road* who is responsible for the misery of untouchables is similar in character to landlord Bhatta in *Kanthapura*. They

resist any social reform and they consider social reformers as their enemies. Both the novels are dominated by symbolism.

There are also other defects in the novel. It is difficult to say who the real hero of the novel is. Bhikhu the hero does not hold on to the cynosure of the novel. Dhooli Singh seems to usurp it. Bhikhu remains shadowy.

Anand's effort to infuse in him is some of the qualities of Bakha make Bhikhu a caricature of the hero of *Untouchable*.

#### *Coolie and Two Leaves and A Bud*

Just as Anand's Childhood friendship with a sweeper boy named Bakha helped him to write *Untouchable*, his awareness of the sufferings of his childhood playmate Munoo, Who was compelled to labour in a pickle factory and who accepted his lot with a fatalism peculiar to the Indian peasantry, urged him to write *Coolie*. It has been called an epic of misery, the epic of modern Indian and the Odyssey of Munoo, the *Coolie*. Anand calls it 'a Whiteman poem' (4).

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie and Two Leaves and A Bud* (1937) are artistic creations depicting the widening gap between the haves and have nots the exploiters and the exploited the rulers and the ruled. The action of these novels take place in pre-independent Indian and as such they include characters both British and Indian. The problems of class system is a universal phenomenon but Anand's interest lies in exploring the stresses and strains generated in India society as a result of the basic economic transformation brought about by various acts of the British government, the penetration into the Indian society by commercial and other forces from the outside capitalist world, and the establishment of modern industries in Indian, which necessarily demanded new class arrangements in society. The two novels, *Two Leaves and A Bud* and *Coolie* may be regarded as proletarian novels as their heroes belonging to the unpropertied class who must sell their labor in order to exist. They focus on the inhuman attitude of the capitalist system which ignores the manhood in labors and treats them as mere 'hands' in the machine of profit.

*Coolie* portrays the sufferings of an individual coolie in a class ridden society while *Two Leaves and a Bud* pictures the same problem as a group experience in the frame works of a levitation capitalistic set-up. Both are stories of crushed humanity, of sighs and tears, of what man has done to man. Though Munoo in *Coolie* and Gangu in *The Leaves and a Bud* are Khatriyas by birth, their belonging to the wealth less class compels them to greet and obey people like Buta of the barber caste. The two novels, *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Coolie* may be regarded as proletarian novels as their heroes belong to the unprotected



class who must sell their labour in order to exist.

Anand's *Coolie* and *Untouchable* is the most popular works but a comparison of these two can help as to know the drawbacks of *Coolie*.

Unlike *Untouchable*, *Coolie* takes compactness. The action of *Untouchable* is limited to a single day in the life of Bakha but in *Coolie* the action is diverse and it spread over several months. The character of Munoo, unlike that of Bakha is not precise and sharp. In *Untouchable* there is less action and more analysis and this helped the author to go deep into the inner soul of the hero. But *Coolie* is dominated by action and the too many scenes and episodes introduced in the novel prevent the author from concentrating on the characterization of Munoo. Some critics noticed the defect of *Coolie* that it is the novelist's predilection for propaganda. In *Untouchable*, says Paul C Varghese," this is done a little subtly, but in *Coolie* it is open and blatant (5). If "*Untouchable* is a microcosm, *Coolie* is a macrocosm, that is Indian society", says K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger. It is a passage to India country made weak by capitalism and religious fanaticism and seen by Mulk Raj Anand through a telescope made in the pink decade. It is the sweetest song of the coolies that tell of their saddest thoughts with the chorus: "We belong to suffering! We belong to suffering! My Love!" (6)

Thus, the foregoing study of Mulk Raj Anand's four non-autobiographical novels with special attention to his social concerns and their implication for his art has brought us to certain conclusions. Anand's social criticism is sustained by his faith that an artist can contribute immensely towards social change. As *Untouchable* and *The Road* artistically reveal Anand's all embracing compassion for the oppressed and doomed people of India, they are fictional works of the highest order. His second and third novels *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* are directed mainly, towards the evils of class system. These novels show class system to be a greater evil than caste system. The tragedy of Munoo in *Coolie* and the horrible exploitation of Gangu and the ill-treatment of his beautiful daughter, Leila, in *Two Leaves and a Bud* amplifies this truth. The novel *Coolie* amplifies the view of Bernard Shaw that poverty is the worst crime of all and its eradication is the prime task of any socialistic society. This novel may remain the readers of both Dickens's *Hard Time* and Thackeray's *Vanity fair*. In its epic-sweep and comprehensive coverage of society in which the hero struggles to survive, it is also reminiscent of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly praises it for its unparalleled amplitude and power of narration, and calls it "a prose epic of modern India" (7).



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## Anand's *Untouchable* : A Critical Study

Gangalaxmi Patnaik

This paper is an attempt to find out what is so eminently unique or distinct about the writing of Anand and also to show how he has tried his best to put before us the ugly reality of the life of the untouchables. The present study concentrates on the existential predicament of untouchables as a subaltern class in the Indian society and the factors responsible for their marginalization in a World organized by the higher class. The term subaltern refers to the subordinate position of the untouchables having no voice in power structure. In the social order of Indian society there are two power categories – the ruler and the ruled. The ruled have no voice in the power structure being a less privileged class and also because they lack means of production, factory, tools, equipments, raw material and the conditions of working. The novel *Untouchable* popularized the term subaltern and Anand specially linked the notion of subaltern to the eastern men and women silenced, marginalized and disenfranchised economically and socially. The violence and suppression faced by the subalterns are multifaceted – very subtle and insidious and hard to recognize and understand. There is the clash between two sets of people. On the one side there is powerful high class people such as the priests who gain and regain their physical, psychological and moral strength from history, tradition, family culture, patriarchy and political opportunism. On the otherside, there is the less powerful low class people such as the untouchables who enjoy just no physical, no psychological and no moral strength from history, tradition, family, culture, patriarchy and political opportunism. The strong and powerful class give rude harsh cruel treatment to

their weaker counterparts when they try to fulfill their natural urges and desires. Even they are unfit to touch or be touched, hence untouchables. My purpose of presentation is to highlight the dichotomies that exist in the society and make the society to bring reformation for the collective interest of the untouchables.

In the novel, the 18 year old boy named Bhakha, son of Lakha, the jemadar of the sweepers of the town and cantonment faced the power imbalance that existed in the Indian society. He is a subaltern who plays a pivotal role relating his own life, struggle and escapades with a view to establishing his own identity as well as gaining the status of a youth. Through his daily routine the writer exposes various kinds of institutional cruelty and injustice that he receives. His job is to add psychological dimension to the physical torment that his family is enduring. Sometimes he faces the oral and verbal attacks from the higher class people. This creates a fierce picture of arbitrary torture and depict the disturbing relationship between power and fear. This presents a culture of total repression and the state of human beings at the mercy of the cruelest, most incomprehensible, irrational social order. The victim faces humiliation. It not only hits him physically but robs his sense of dignity and makes him an average human being totally powerless and helpless. In this connection reference can be made to another playwright of the contemporary world, like Vijay Tendulkar who has expressed time and again, the pain and anguish of the repressed characters in his anti-romantic play *Kanyadaan*. He has successfully depicted the deplorable plight of the Dalit community who are forced to lead a forceless life without any identity. In the same light Mulk Raj Anand also gives a new dimension to his novel exploring the female psyche. It exemplifies the travails of a woman in a male chauvinistic society. Sohini sister of Bakha is impressed once by the Samaritan spirit of an optimistic hill man – Kalinath, the priest. Kalinath requested Sohini to go to the his (Kalinath) house during day time to clean the courtyard. Sohini after arriving in the courtyard got the improper suggestions from the priest. So she starts screaming but the priest in order to patch up the matter shouts polluted and polluted to which a group of indignant high-caste people surrounded the priest thus he was saved. But the entire plot is rediscovered by her brother Bakha because he comes upon the scene while sweeping the streets in duty. Bhakha becomes furious and attacks to the religious hypocrisy of the priest and bitterly cries his father in the novel, *Untouchable* :

They think we are mere dirt  
because we clean their dirt.

(Page – 92)

Bhaka observes the style of the action of the priest by which he could not be

blamed by others. He shows his action very honestly to others in the following manner :

He could see the littleman with a drooping moustache whom he knew to be a priest of the temple, racing up the courtyard, trembling, stumbling, tottering, falling with his arms lifted in the air, and in his mouth the hused cry polluted, polluted, polluted... .. (p-52)

This graphic description is functionally important to the thematic concerns of the novel and shows the callous conduct of the religious man. Sohini's panic condition reminds the novel *The God of Small Things* of the celebrated artist and social activist Arundhati Roy. Roy in her debut novel informs the readers about the various types of dichotomies that exist in the society and make him/her aware about the needs to get the things rectified. In her analysis of the novel she finds that patriarchal forces are always operative in different forms and different ways and women are still victims by the hands of the superior class men. For this reason Mahatma Gandhi encouraged the people to destroy caste, to destroy the inequalities of birth and unalterable vocations. Mulk Raj Anand is equally on the parallel line with Gandhiji stating that most of the problems have been created by men and can be solved by men. Raj rightly and ruthlessly condemns the men-made barriers between the caste Hindus and the untouchable. His problems attain universal significance because of artistic manipulation of the subject. This reminds Gandhiji's advice at the end of the novel *Untouchable* :

I regard untouchability, as the greatest bolt on Hindu-ism. (P-137)

It can be said in the novel *A Handful of Rice* referred by Alistair Niven in *The Hindu* that Mulk Raj Anand stands out as the most wide-ranging and prolific... a figure of towering humanity whose works guide us through the multitudinous complexity of India in this century with more verve than any other prose writer of his time. (P-239)

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# The Social Exploitation of the Depressed Class in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand

Anupama Verma

The paper focuses on dehumanizing contradictions within the colonized Indian society as portrayed by Mulk Raj Anand. Almost all the novels of Anand represent the life of downtrodden, despised and oppressed sections of Indian society, the outcastes – those who were at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. These social evils were perpetuated in the name of religion and tradition. Indian nationalism is an extremely problematic concept. Untouchability persists in the country and it reflects a deep – rooted prejudice. It tends to affect human behavior and points to an intractable problem. Apart from pains and frustrations of the poor and untouchable, Anand has admirably communicated their hopes and aspirations. Being a champion of realism, humanism and socialism he addresses the plights and predicaments of the destitutes. Anand is the first novelist to feel on his pulses the fate of the underdog and the unprivileged.

Man's fate, today is no longer in the gods, but is often in conflict with the evil in other man. Man makes himself, thinks he can. The heart and mind of contemporary man is, therefore, moved by other causalities than salvation.

Anand occupies an important niche in the field of Indian writing in English. As an established novelist he deals in common and day to day themes of Indian villages and towns and makes contrasts in to the skyscrapers of cities enabling us to realize the chasm between the two worlds. An overall study of Anand's

novels surfaces the fact that most of his works emanate from despair and has been perfected in delight. Human life is a long and everlasting book where these two faculties (delight and despair) folded/unfolded and at times they override one another. One may find it difficult to define delight and despair as sweet and sour. Life moves on the two wheels of despair and delight which give a slice to our existence, and he once told P.K. Ranjan philosophically:

Life does not admit itself to a linear approach. The approach is much more complex, incoherent, determined by instinct and emotion, impulse and idea.

In each novel of Anand there are several layers of despair and delight. We hear in his fiction, echoes of all kinds. There are a number of motivations in each of his novels. Anand was keenly aware of the upward thrust of his protagonists. Independence for him is not only freedom from the alien rule but also the freedom outworn of despair and delight combines the most significant features of his philosophy and psychology. Anand's characters are born and bred in poverty. They are born to earn their own bread but the age old tradition of keeping them under the yoke of dejection and dissoluteness born of deprives them of the dignity of labour. The characters grow in an unhealthy environment of fear and fire but that does not negate their potential. His works were inspired and informed by the lives of real people in unglamorous situations, wars, untouchability, and poverty. His characters are the people whose lives are tied with pain and who suffer social injustice, humiliation and insult till the last of their lives. The characters seem to convey the message that the poor lot of the bottom dogs is a matter of economic determinism but it can be reformed by humanism, love, compassion and sympathy and human consideration of man as man. He leaves the task to the future generation which he thinks would take it up and sees to it that a millennium of happiness is promised forth. The prevailing condition of the ruler and the ruled, the high and the low eat up their flesh but not bones. Despair in the characters becomes an eye opener and paves the way to way to delight.

The man who suffers is greater than the man who writes in the case of Anand. It is the personal despair and delight of Anand which is expanded in fiction terms. The fact that "Anand" is an optimistic humanist who can move to action" is a tribute to him.

About his own technique Mulk Raj Anand said:

When I began to write about India, though I took Joyce's 'streams of consciousness as my method, I had to apply it to a different situation,

revealed to me by my upbringing in a province of the British Empire. I had hunch that man's in the world, his relationship to the universe and to himself, were important if one wanted to see the meaning of life. One could just wish away human beings lull oneself to calm with the music of Anna Livia Plurabelle. In my own country where the position of man has not emerged beyond speck of the dust of Maya, to the potential humanness of the individual with democracy invited against the long suppression of feudalism, orthodoxy and institutionalized religion, I felt that the novel should not press the inner monologue beyond a certain point, so that humanness may remain a charitable factor in the situation. Finnegans Wake, the antinovel novelists and the obstructionists concentrated on style and construction so emphatically as to sterilize creation. I therefore felt around for a synthesis of techniques between the west and the inner consciousness, analyzed by Shri Arviddo, hoping that man, forsaken by the Machine – war civilization, could be seen at least in profile, in the enchanted mirror, in order to illumine his awareness against maturity, dead materialness and suppression by society and shown in his confrontation of fate.

Anand keeps the hope alive and when the character grow to a full stature, he allows them to feel their guts that the ceremony on innocence won't be drowned. The story of Bakha in *Untouchable* is a struggle for liberation from the suffering of untouchability. "Bakha is duly impressed, feels more hopeful of the future than at any time since the day dawned and returns to his home to tell his father about Mahatma and about the machine that will clear dung without anyone having to handle it". Bakha's are stiff and his flesh numb. But it does not numb his private feeling. His burning flames give him a sense of power. There are sores in his soul and his sense of deterioration is sarcastic. One can hear Bakha's self cry in the following words:

But the crowd which passed grimacing, jeering and leering was without a shadow of pity for his remorse

Like Dickens, Anand is a novelist of the lower, down – trodden whose lives are doomed and oppressed class. Anand's novel depicts the inhuman plight of the oppressed Indian masses typical of which are sweepers, a coolie, a peasant, a tea – plantation labourer, a road maker, a village charmer who are all agonized victims of capitalistic exploitation, poverty problems of untouchability, social injustice and cruelty squalor, class-hatred and race hatred. When Forster read it his retort to those who complained about the 'dirt' in the novel, was that "that book seems to me indescribably clean.....it has gone straight to the heart of its

subject and purified it". Anand has a philosophical bent of mind and therefore tends to use art more as a means of critical realism than of manifestation of genres and literary excellence, and thus commits himself to the promotion of humanistic perspective in his writings. In novels after novels he has ripped open the ugly sore of Indian society and specially degraded, dehumanized lot of the not's with a bonafied intention for bringing improvement in their tragic wonds.

For the flower to develop the bud has to die, for the fruit the flower, for the seed the plant and for the plant, the seed. Life is process of eternal birth and death. All progress is sacrifice.

Anand like Dickens wants to change these sorry figures and to rebuild a world bubbling with milk of human kindness and which must be nearer to the heart's desire. As a novelist Mulk Raj Anand is a social reformer, par – excellence. This crusading zeal for reformation and the amelioration of the sorry plight of the social underdogs has given his novel an extra literacy interest. His role as a social reformer was simply to arouse the public conscience to evils and induce practical social reforms to introduce healthy reforms in the contaminated stream of Indian social life. He himself said that the theme of his work is the whole man and the entire gamut of human rapport ship rather than a single part of it. He demands enlistment of the poor and destitute with a missionary zeal. He shows the struggle of oppressed for the betterment. He has made Munoo, the hero of the novel because he is an orphan, poor, helpless and rustic boy. M.K. Naik observes:

The author's compassion for the exploited and downtrodden is pure and intense but does not degenerate into blend hysteric or dull preaching, one aspect of exploitation is presented in the *Coolie*. This is the exploitation of the Indian by the white man and poor by the rich.

Anand's commitment to his social creed and his obsessive preoccupation with the underdogs could be well elucidated interalia in his fictional experimentations. His sociological predictions, which are implicated even in his first novel written as early as 1935, are in themselves the product of all theses confluence of social and historical influences which seem to have provided him with a definitive impetus for future forays in to the human predicament, more particularly the seamier side of Indian social life.

Anand agrees with Shelley in terms that creative writers or poets are "unacknowledged legislators of mankind" and says that "if he is honest and brave, is in a position to understand the world qualitatively to perceive the most



delicate processes of human sensibility of the aesthetic as well as the cognitive and conative planes. The novel *Untouchable* capturing the pursuance of the Panjabi and Hindi Idiom in English was widely acclaimed and Anand won the reputation of being India's Charles Dickens. He also opines in the similar vein: "the novelist presumes to be god almighty and indulges in the sport of creating a world of his own in his novel". All his novels establish his saying "the novel should interoperate the truth of life, from experience, and not form books." This felt experience becomes the staple of his novels.

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## A critical study of the Female Protagonists in the Short-stories of Mulk Raj Anand

Ayesha Tasnim

Mulk Raj Anand, no doubt was a socially committed Indo-English writer, who through his works has addressed many social issues prevailing in India. His short-stories give a vivid picture of the irrational practices and discriminations among different classes of the Indian society. A close scrutiny of the short-stories of Anand reveals the fact that some of his female protagonists are presented as weak, frazzle & oppressed. They are represented as mere puppets whose strings are in the hands of the male characters. This paper is an attempt to present a critical study of the female protagonists in some of his well known short-stories like *Lajwanti*(1966), *The Tamarind Tree*(1947), *The Parrot In The Cage*(1959) and *Birth*(1947). In these short-stories, Anand very artistically depicts the true position and pathetic condition of the traditional Indian Women. He has highlighted the inner monologue, pain and agony of the Indian women through his female protagonists, who individually represents the common Indian women folk. Yet, in my point of view Anand has just depicted one side of the coin. In the above mentioned stories, he has portrayed the female characters as subordinate, weak and suppressed, enjoying position only next to men. These characters always suffer and are dominated by the male world around them. It has been marked that his female protagonists are not given an opportunity to raise their voice against the injustice done

to them by the male dominated society. In fact they are just shown as mere sufferers, who have no way to come out of the bondage and who are destined to suffer and suppressed throughout their life. For instance in his well-known short-story, *Lajwanti* which is a story of a rustic girl, named Lajwanti, is portrayed as a weak, desolate and helpless woman. Her helplessness is revealed from the fact that even after marriage she is forced to live with her in-laws, away from her husband. His brother-in-law often assaults her and sexually harasses her. Finding no hope, Lajwanti, one day runs away to her father's house. She also carries her little bird Maina in a cage whom she regards as her only companion in this brute world. The bird in the cage is the symbolic representation of Lajwanti herself. Like the bird in the cage she is also prisoned in her in-laws house. On her way to her father's house, Jaswant catches her and hits her hard. He also abuses her by saying- "Prostitute! Bad woman! Running away! . . .What will our neighbourhood think? You disgracing us like this! . . ." (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.55-56). These words show that Jaswant didn't have even an iota of respect or sympathy towards Lajwanti. He cares only about his own interest and society, not about the emotions and feelings of Lajwanti. Another incident that shows the negligence of women and faith in the traditional belief, which gives more weight-age to the social norms rather than a female point of view, is the one in which Lajwanti's father did not like her returning back from her in-laws house without their concern. He does not look even at her face. He takes it as a disgrace and treats her own daughter like a guest. He asks to his son, "give your sister a mat to sit on" (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.63). At such treatment Lajwanti, feels like an unwanted in her own home (The age old saying that, "a husband's home is the true home of a girl" is aptly shown here). Lajwanti's father realises his daughters pain which is reflected when he calls her a 'sensitive plant' but still he cares more about the society and says "the disgrace of your widowhood without your becoming a widow is unbearable. . . They will only call you ugly names here. . . They do not know you are a sensitive plant" (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.64). Then he took Lajwanti back to her parents in-laws home and while returning says, "kill her if you like, but don't let her come to me without the lap full of son. I shall not survive the disgrace if she comes again" (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.69). Thus Lajwanti is left all alone and helpless again to live on the mercy of her in-laws. (This shows the inequality and inhumanity, the society shows towards a female). When Lajwanti is compelled to live a life on

the mercy of her in-laws, a life which she hated, she tries to commit suicide but is rescued and thus destined to live again at the same place where life is more like a hell. The inner monologue of Lajwanti is clearly revealed, which shows her helplessness, when she says while committing suicide "... Above the well, life would be worst hell than even before ..."( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P71). The story ends with the victory of the hypocritical male dominated society and defeat of the female dignity represented by Lajwanti.

In *The Tamarind Tree*, Anand portrays a young would-be mother, Roopa, who longs for her freedom- freedom of expression, freedom of wandering, freedom of breathing in an open environment and freedom of fulfilling her desires. Roopa craves for tasting the sweet and sour tamarind fruit but cannot satisfy her longing due to a number of restrictions. She is compelled to cover her face with her headcloth. The veiled Roopa stifles under but yet had to follow the rule. She is also not allowed to talk freely to her own husband. When Anand writes, "... a spite against the whole world the inner impulses always remained where they were, incommunicable even to her man"( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.219), he clearly states the deplorable and poignant condition of the protagonist. Roopa did all the household chores and try to please every member of her family. She also obey her in-laws and put every effort to keep them happy, yet she is reprimanded by them. She is also not given enough to eat which is revealed when Roopa says, "You are not hungry-it is true mother-in-law gives just enough and no more, but you are not hungry. . ."( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P. 216). Roopa time-to-time recalls her childhood days, when she roams freely anywhere she likes. But as per now things are difficult for her, different for her, as her status has changed from a daughter to a daughter-in-law, her life has also changed. Now from a free bird roaming in the sky, she has become a mere caged bird. Her freedom is restrained, still she lives her life like a mere puppet. All this and more shows the silent sufferings of Roopa without any complaints, without raising voice, just tolerating the pain and keeps breathing.

In *The Parrot in the Cage* Anand depicts an old, weak, desolate woman, named Rukmani. At this peak of age when everyone needs extra care, love and rest, she is lost and alone. Lost as she has no habitation, alone as she has no companion. She is also uncertain about her whereabouts. She wanders here and there in search of a habitation accompanied with her pet bird, a parrot in the cage, during the migration

form Amritsar to Lahore. She has lost everything in the holocaust of the partition of India. Her uncertainty, helplessness and loneliness is revealed from her repetitive answers to the repetitive questions of the parrot, “Ni tun kithe hain? . . . Nowhere son, nothing, nothing...” (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P. 76) The story ends in a dismay, Rukmani still wandering recklessly and saying, “I don’t know where i am! I don’t know.” (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P. 78)

*Birth* another short story of Anand shows a working would-be mother Parvati, in a crisis. Parvati, represents the traditional Indian poor peasant women, who is in an advanced stage of pregnancy when the story opens. Even at such a critical stage she is compelled to work at breaking stones, owing to the straitened conditions of her family. The female protagonist, Parvati is portrayed as most of the common Indian daughter-in-laws, who are blamed by their in-laws, if something goes wrong after their marriage. They are blamed by their in-laws for bringing bad fortune with them and are rebuked and cursed. Many of them are also ill-treated and harassed for the rest of their life. Similarly, Parvati is also blamed by her mother-in-law for being the reason of decline of the whole family. She rebukes Parvati for bringing bad luck with her, as they have to mortgage their property due to her marriage. Anand has painted Parvati in such a way that at one hand she is shown, as a woman of strength and courage, as she manages the necessary midwifery herself and delivers the child all alone, but at the same time the pathos, helplessness and loneliness of a woman is also revealed. She also starts believing that if she would be able to give her family a grandson, she might compensate them for the slow agony of their ruin. The scene in which Parvati delivers the child is a terrible example of a woman’s helplessness as well as courage. When Parvati goes through the labour pain, she longs to touch a sympathetic hand or limb. She craves for her husband or a helping hand at that critical time when excruciating pain gnawed her viscera. But she has to handle everything on her own. Parvati delivers the child all alone as there is nobody around her, at a time when a woman needs more care and attention. Another example which shows woman as a least concern person who is regarded as a mere child-delivering machine and nothing more is the one scene in which Parvati’s father-in-law, totally ignoring her, picks up the whining boy from the basket and hopes that perhaps the boy would bring luck and favour them simply because he is a male child. Again the prejudice mindset of the traditional male dominated Indian society is depicted by

Anand, (A society in which a 'boy' is regarded as a casket of good luck where as a 'girl' is considered as a burden). In this story also Parvati's father-in-law is clearly shown supporting this idea when he says, "Come, come, my lion, my stalwart, don't weep. . . come, it won't be so bad. Come, my son, perhaps with your coming, our luck will turn. . ." (*Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.26). This clearly shows the status and power of a male child. The story ends with Parvati, putting her baby in the basket and going to break stones again, which means whatever may be the situation a woman has to continue her work, she has to play her role without any complains. . . without raising voice. . . without demanding equality. . .

The recurring theme in the above mentioned short-stories of Mulk Raj Anand are uncertainty and suppression of desires. For instance *Lajwanti* in *Lajwanti* remains uncertain about her future life and has to suppress her desire of leaving her in-laws home and living a free life. Similarly, in *The Parrot and the Cage* Rukmani is shown wandering recklessly till the end, which gives the idea of her uncertainty and helplessness of finding a habitation of her own. In the story, *Birth* also, the protagonist Parvati remains uncertain about her improvement in living conditions and the future of her newly born child. She only hopes for the best. Similarly, in *The Tamarind Tree* Roopa remains uncertain about her position in her in-laws family, whether it will improve or not as she delivers a male child according to the wish of her in-laws. Therefore, in all these stories all the female protagonists have to suppress their desires and live a life of uncertainty. The symbols used by Anand in these stories also signifies the poignant, weak, helpless and forlorn condition of the female protagonists. For instance the symbol of a bird in a cage signifies the position and status of a woman in a society dominated by the male power. The Protagonists of these stories resembles the common Indian women. Another common fact in all these stories, except *The Parrot and the Cage*, is the yearning of having a son. For example in *Lajwanti*, her own father says, "kill her if you like, but don't let her come to me without the lap full of son. . . ." This shows the prejudiced mindset of the Indian society, which gives more importance to the male child. Similarly, in the short-story, *Birth* also, the main concern of the father-in-law of Parvati is the birth of a male child. Even Parvati starts believing that, if she will give her family a grandson than only she might compensate them and make herself free from the tag of bringing bad fortune to the family. In *The Tamarind Tree*, the protagonist Roopa, being

a woman hope to deliver a girl. But her in-laws want a boy. Thus they become very happy when Roopa delivers a baby-boy. All this show the importance and superiority of a male child over a female child. Through these stories Anand has clearly depicted the true mindset of the Indian society, which prefes a male child over a female child.

Anand has written these stories after Independence, when the Indian social scenario was slowly changing. The Indian women have already started realising their importance and they were raising their voice for equality. Many women were playing important role in the different fields. Everywhere women were demanding for there up-liftment, justice and equality. As such it is very surprising that Anand has not highlighted this feature, this phase through his female protagonists. The stories of Anand, no doubt are interesting, spontaneous, impressive and thought provoking which explores a wide range of themes, emotions and moods. Through his stories he has raised thought provoking questions, but fails to provide solutions to those questions and leave his stories somehow incomplete. His female protagonists in the climax of the stories are shown silently suffering all the pain and still serving them who are responsible for their sufferings. . . .For instance Lajwanti in *Lajwanti* says at last, “There is no way for me...I am...condemned to live. . .”( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P.71) In *The Tamarind Tree* also, the female protagonist, Roopa, has to put down all her desires of breathing in a free environment and silently suffers. At last she is shown burring all her desires with the coming of her baby. The story ends with the words- “But the lips of the young bride were ripe and blood red as she put her mouth to her babe- even though her face was sallow like the leaves of the tamarind tree...”( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed. P. 222). Also in *The Parrot in the Cage* another well-known short-story of Anand ends with the protagonist, Rukmani’s words-”I don’t know where I am! I don’t know!”( *Greatest Short Stories*, Ed.P.78), which shows the continuity of her displacement, insecurity and loneliness with her only companion, a parrot. Similarly, in his short-story *Birth* the protagonist, Parvati, in the end is shown striding towards the ridge to go and break stones, just after giving birth to her baby, that even all alone. This shows the unending cycle of work and hardships in her life till she is alive.

Thus, although Mulk Raj Anand, in my opinion has been quite successful in provoking anger and sympathy in the mind of the readers, yet fails to provide right judgement to his female protagonists individually

and to the Indian women folk as a whole. He has somewhat suppressed and marginalised the status and position of female characters as comparable to his male characters. This paper is restricted to a few works of Anand only in which Anand has restricted himself in depicting the revolting part of the female counterpart. There is a limit of toleration and when that limit is crossed it is obvious for anybody to revolt, to raise voice against the injustice done to them, but Anand ends his stories without providing a chance to revolt on the part of his female characters. As such his female characters keep suffering at the hands of the male power and he fails in rectifying the evils of the society, which in my view should be the true job of a modern writer.

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## Reflection of Social Vision : A study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

Sandeep P.Joshi

Anand is a novelist with a mission and his conception of art accords with his humanism. He is a novelist with an inherent social purpose. The primary emotion that moves Anand is a deep compassion for his fellowmen. He sympathetic depiction in fictional terms of the changing social reality of India, his compassion for the sufferings of the poor and the deprived, his passionate zeal for change and his painful realisation of the gap between the need for Revolution and the unripe material conditions and above all, his relentless search for the integral man and for the emergence of a higher consciousness constitutes the core of his art. His novels embody a conscious effort on the part of the novelist to organically relate the Indian reality to a European fictional form. The tension between what remains unresolved in his personality and the attempt to resolve that crisis in form is characteristic of Anand's art. He suggests that the untouchables kept slavish and condemned for centuries deserve a better deal, and this possible only if men give up the age-old belief in caste and karma and spread the message of love and tenderness – and, of course, practise these values conscientiously.

Mulk Raj Anand occupies an important niche in the field of Indian writing in English. His novels show the psychological and moral effects of the East-West encounter. They emphasize both the traditional cultural norms and the extent to which new growth is appearing among them. In fact his stories

sometimes require that European conceptions be taken as a standard against which Indian norms are to be evaluated. A study of his fiction shows that he is sensitive to the subtler taboos that govern personal relationships in a caste-ridden society. His novels may therefore be described as part of a “literature of initial socialization.”<sup>1</sup> Anand is a novelist with a mission and his conception of art accords with his humanism. He is a novelist with an inherent social purpose.

Anand was faced with the problem of how to adapt the ideal of a European fictional form to the demands of a Third World reality. Though his fictional theory was profoundly influenced by the West, the reality he sought to represent and interpret was the Indian reality. Anand exposes social evil which eat into the vitals of socio-economic progress of the underdogs in the Indian society. He brings to light the theme of caste system and its numerous manifestations which have been hindering the progress and subversive of human dignity. His heroes were the down-trodden sweepers, coolies, the unemployed coppersmiths and farmers were rendered helpless by heavy debts. In all his novels which are characterized by a Dickensian piquancy of realism, he emerges as the champion of suffering humanity and a crusader against social distinctions which obstruct the growth and development of human understanding. The character of his themes and his didactic intentions necessitated that he be a realist. Describing himself an Indian Expressionist, he called his art “poetic realism”.<sup>2</sup>

Anand’s characters are born and bred in poverty. They are born to earn their bread in poverty with great hardship. However, the age-old tradition of keeping them under the yoke of dejection and servility born of exploitation deprive them of their dignity of labour. Historically they symbolize the labour class of pre-independence India but their exploitation by their masters is undoubtedly ‘man’s crime against man’. (83) The characters grow in an unhealthy environment of fear and fire that doesn’t negate their potential. The prevailing conditions of the ruler and the ruled, the high and the low eat up their flesh but not their bones. Their persecution without their protest is the ample proof of their simplicity and innocence.

In *Untouchable*, the hero of the novel Bakha is a child of darkness. The caste system which has degenerated with the passage of time into a hydra-headed evil signifies a set of crippling injunction. Bakha lives in a cave-like dingy, dank one-roomed mud-house.

His features are handsome but sometimes knotted and ugly. His bones are stiff and his flesh numb with the cold. On the positive side, Bakha is in nature dignified, the nature’s well built child. Anand presents in the life of Bakha an

inauspicious day punctuated by happy and sad experiences. Bakha is confronted with a reality that's stripped off all romantic illusions. When he's slapped, he faces the crisis of identity. He is presented as a victim of an unjust and insensitive society. His various responses to the sad and happy incidence make the perspective of hope and despair complex. The remarks of Saros Cowasjee in this connection hint at the larger implications in perspective.

*Untouchable* opens quietly on an autumn morning and by the time the evening approaches, the author has been able to build round his hero a spiritual crisis of such breadth that it seems to embrace the whole of India.<sup>3</sup>

Bakha's entire story begins in the early hours of the day and the time the dusk approaches, Anand has been able to create round him a spiritual crisis which seems to seize the whole Indian subcontinent. Bakha is constrained to announce his approach by crying 'Posh, posh, sweeper is coming' lest he may defile the twice born Brahmins like Pandit Kali Nath. Cigarettes are flung at him as a bone is flung at an insistent sniffing dog. Jalebis are thrown at him like the wastes thrown at a pig and the thin paper like pancakes (given as food to the sweeper) flies down to him like a kite from the third floor. Wherever he goes, he is referred to as a swine, son of a pig, low caste vermin. The privileged caste men state arrogantly that the untouchables "ought to be wiped off the surface of the earth." (133) The mental depression of all untouchables finds its expression in Bakha's agonised interrogation. "What have I done to deserve all this?" (133) When Lalla slaps him for his damned impudence he sulks and then regrets not summoning courage to resist. He despondently utters, "I could have struck him... But why couldn't I say something?"

In *Untouchable*, Anand is on sure ground, as he is denouncing an aspect of traditional Hindu society which deserves wholesale condemnation. To quote Forster again, the Indians, "... have evolved a hideous nightmare unknown to the West: the belief that the products are ritually unclean as well as physically unpleasant and that those who carry them away or otherwise help to dispose of them are outcasts from society. Really, it takes the human mind to evolve any things so devilish. No animal could have hit on it."<sup>5</sup> Anand's condemnation of untouchability derives from its total control of all the aspects of his problem. He shows a sure grasp of the psychology of both the caste Hindu and the untouchable. In his dealings with the untouchables, the caste Hindu is armed with the feeling of six thousand years of social and class superiority – a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that the untouchable is a human being, but insists on treating him like a sub-human creature, to be ignored or bullied or exploited

as the occasion demands.

In *Untouchable* it is the 'touch scene' which suddenly brings home to Bakha his real position in social order; it is a moment of self-revelation for him:

For them I am a sweeper, sweeper – Untouchable: Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word: Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!" Like a ray of light shooting through the darkness, the recognition of his position, significance of his lot dawned upon him. It illuminated the inner chambers of his mind. Everything that had happened to him traced its course up to this light and got the answer: the contempt of those who came to the latrines daily and complained that there weren't any latrines clean, the abuse of the crowd which had gathered round him this morning. It was all explicable now.

The shadow of this moment spreads over all that follows. The realization of his ignoble position in the social order throws him into a dreary sense of isolation and poisons everything that happens subsequently. But this self-realization also gives him a critical faculty- a definite advance of his consciousness in its search for freedom. The first evidence of this new awareness is the critical thoughts that rise in his mind when he sees a well-dressed old Hindu advance to a sleeping bull and "touch the animal with his forefingers" (58). Then on his response to the situations is critical. When his sister Sohini is molested by Pundit Kalinath, he reacts instinctively, but behind the rage and fury, there is a new awareness he has acquired about the hypocrisy and brutality of the caste Hindus:

. . . and he searched for the figure of the priest in the crowd. The man was no longer to be seen, and even the surging crowd seemed to show its heels as it saw the giant stride of the sweeper advance frighteningly towards the temple. . . His fist was clenched (p.68).

Later, after picking up the loaf of bread thrown to him by the woman of the big house, he has second thoughts on it; he regrets his action: "I shouldn't have picked up that bread from the pavement, he said, and he sighed" (pp.81-82)

Shocking and painful, no doubt, are the numerous cruelties perpetrated on untouchables. But Anand is too robust an optimist to think that their pitiable plight defies change or improvement. Anand shows, in so many subtle touches, how the harrowing incidents in the novel, far from deadening Bakha's soul, whip it up to comprehend his problems intelligently and also to find some solution if possible. He is happy that the Tommies treat him as a human being. He even tries to imitate them by securing for himself their old garments, however ill-fitting they are. And he tries to take lessons from the Babu's son and become

educated. At last, his encounters with Colonel Hutchinson, Mahatma Gandhi and Iqbal Nath Sarshar prompt him to think if he can help himself to live like an honourable man. There is some hope, may be very vague and rather distant – and this relieves the book from becoming utterly gloomy.

The primary emotion that moves Anand is a deep compassion for his fellowmen. He sympathetic depiction in fictional terms of the changing social reality of India, his compassion for the sufferings of the poor and the deprived, his passionate zeal for change and his painful realisation of the gap between the need for Revolution and the unripe material conditions and above all, his relentless search for the integral man and for the emergence of a higher consciousness forms the core of his art. His novels embody a conscious effort on the part of the novelist to organically relate the Indian reality to a European fictional form. The tension between what remains unresolved in his personality and the attempt to resolve that crisis in form is characteristic of Anand's art. "My realism is only superficially like that of the West European. Deep underneath, all the characters search for their human destiny in the manner of our forest books."<sup>6</sup>

Towards the end of *Untouchable*, Anand juxtaposes three possible solutions to the problem of untouchability, seen from three mutually exclusive viewpoints. The first is the momentous task of changing the religion, as is suggested by Colonel Hutchinson, the Salvation Army missionary. The second is offered by Gandhism, which affirms the difficult idea that while all Indians are equal, untouchables should still claim their equality by "cleaning Hindu society", an operation that should encourage them to "cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one shall point his finger at them" (163). The third solution is given by the poet Iqbal Nath Sarashar, whose viewpoint is closer to that of Anand. Sarashar thinks untouchability can best be removed by a change of social goals, for "caste" he says, "is now mainly governed by profession" (171). This being the case, he advocates the removal of the most degrading aspect of the sweepers' profession. He would have to touch it. To the extent that Anand would adopt the ideological basis of this view, he resembles "a rational humanist, in the western tradition, believing in the power of science to improve material conditions in progress and in the equality of all men". The novel undoubtedly a social document reveals Anand's optimistic humanism. He suggests that the untouchables kept slavish and condemned for centuries deserve a better deal, and this possible only if men give up the age-old belief in caste and karma and spread the message of love and tenderness – and, of course, practise these values conscientiously. Prof. C. D Narasimhaiah rightly

remarks, “In the novel (*Untouchable*) doctrines and dogmas are assimilated into a total sensibility which shapes his (Anand’s) imagination and gives life to an epoch and its hopes and aspirations, and its curses.<sup>8</sup> *Untouchable* is perhaps, the only novel wherein we find a total fusion of Anand’s social preoccupations and artistic concerns.

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## Theme of Social Transformation in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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and

Ashwini Pravin Tatugade

It is said that the literature has power to change the society. From this perspective, it is better to study the theme of social transformation as reflected in Mulk Raj Anand's very first novel *Untouchable*, which was published in 1935. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) is a prominent voice among the writers of Indian English Literature. He produced more than two dozens of novels dealing with Indian socio-cultural panorama. He is a writer of, in the words of Pramod Singh, "genius, mission and stamina" (2001: 44). His literary art has been praised by awarding him 'Padma Bhushan' in 1967 by the government of India.

The present novel is a commentary on the suppressed life of outcaste people to whom Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar referred as "Broken Men". They are broken men because the so-called Hindu religion offers them nothing but humiliation and despair. The novel portrays outcastes' bitter and inhuman life suppressed under utter poverty, illiteracy, and superstitions. Thus, it deals with socio-cultural problems of scheduled castes and their exploitation. Along with this socio-religious reality, Anand presents upcoming transformation in the society with the wake of British colonialism. The novel is an authentic picture of the mute voices of the wounded hearts in the pre-independent era of India

that is of 1930s and 1940s. Thus, it is a genuine portrait of the saga of untouchability preserved in the society as a time-honored custom.

The protagonist of the novel, Bakha, is a representative of transformative spirits, who is eager to devastate shackles of age-old traditions and customs. He is from the society, which passively accepts humiliation and marginalization as a destiny. Though, he is a victim of this tradition bound society, at least, he tries to escape from this age-old shackles of religion. Actually, Indian society is rooted in the religion; the religion, which treats some human as stumpy while others as highly esteemed. Consequently, some leads life of highly honor while the others are totally deprived of the basic human rights. It creates unjust and unequal society, where one man becomes the enemy of the other. This social disparity based on the religion begets various forms of exploitation. Mulk Raj Anand handles this core issue of exploitation and need of social transformation in his first and epoch-making novel *Untouchable*.

The novel *Untouchable* opens with the description of the outcastes' colony at Bulandshahr in Punjab. Bulandshahr is a representative of millions of villages in India, which are backward and rested on the blind orthodoxy. The novel spans a single day in the life of Bakha, the untouchable of eighteen years old. Anand presents him as a child of modern India and the devotee of 'fashun'. He is called thus because of his desire to end up the traditional superstitious codes and customs in the society. Thus, he wants to escape from inhumane and pathetic world, which is full of insults and mortification.

Thus, Bakha is a representative of the voice of revolt and protest. However, he is a victim of the poverty-stricken, illiterate, disinherited and helpless strata of the society namely Dalits or Harijans. He is a mouthpiece of dread experiences of the untouchables. He belongs to the lowest category among the low caste i.e. of *Bhangi Samaj*. Bakha's pathetic and heart-touching experiences lights on the bitter condition of the untouchables. At the same time, he shows the ray of hope to dissolve bitter and inhuman condition of the outcastes.

Bakha is a son of Lakha, the Jemadar, the head of all sweepers in the town. He lives in the outcaste's colony in the house of "twelve feet by five, dark, dingy, one-roomed mud house" (Anand 02). This outcaste's colony is "an 'uncongenial' place to live in" (Anand 01). The outcaste's living place is as deprived as their feelings and rights. The novelist rightly describes it as, "there are no drains, no light, no water; of the marshland where people live among the latrines of the townsmen, and in the stink of their own dung scattered about here, there and everywhere; of the world where the day is as dark as the night and the night pitch-dark" (Anand 75). Thus, the outcastes have to live at very



uncongenial place devoid of basic amenities.

Bakha's father, Lakha is a representative of the poverty-stricken, illiterate, disinherited and helpless strata of the society. He never blames the high caste for the exploitation but blames himself for his fate. He believes that his birth in the low caste family is the result of sins committed by him in the previous life and for getting salvation, he has to bear it all. He has accepted the hegemony of the high caste Hindus without any protest. He says, "We cannot do that. They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient against all that we might say before the police. They are our masters. We must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind" (Anand 109). Lakha never mind to do mean work like cleaning latrine and sweeping roads and never think about his enrichment besides whatever he inherited from his forefathers that is of humiliation, marginalization, poverty, inhumanity and slavery. He docilely accepts everything and persuades Bakha to accept the same. He says, "They are really kind. We must realize that it is religion which prevents them from touching us" (Anand 74). Thus, he never renounced his deep-rooted sense of inferiority. On the contrary, Bakha is eager to end-up the traditional suppressive codes and customs, which deprived their basic human feelings as well as basic human rights. Thus, by presenting characters from two generations, Mulk Raj Anand wants to explore the theme of social transformation. Lakha is a representative of the docile acceptance of the traditional code and ethics, while Bakha is a representative of emerging voice of liberation and revolt.

Actually, Bakha inherited from his ancestors "the weakness, of the down-trodden, the helplessness of the poor" (Anand 09). But he is a man of nobility, "strangely in contrast with his filthy profession and with the sub-human status to which he was condemned by birth" (Anand 12). He has fascinated by the clear-cut styles of Europeans and eager to be like "Sahibs, superior people" (Anand 03). It seems that the arrival of English men in the colonial era alters the socio-cultural and religious figure of India. Here, the outcaste people realize that though Englishmen are superior to high caste Hindus, they never treat outcaste separately than the other Hindus. Bakha observes, "They don't mind touching us, the Muhammadans and the Sahibs. It is only Hindus, and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I am a sweeper, sweeper – untouchable!...." (Anand 43). It helps to demolish the sense of inferiority in the outcastes mind.

Bakha is eager to be a man like Englishmen by mimicking their life-style. He knows that "except for his English clothes there was nothing English in his life" (Anand 04). Even though, he longs to be a babu by taking education. Unfortunately, it is social reality that the outcastes are not allowed to

take education. Bakha is ready to pay one anna for per lesson to a Hindu boy because he realizes that “there was no school which would admit him because the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low-caste man’s son” (Anand 30-31). Even the masters are not ready to teach them, as this act of teaching the outcaste would pollute their purity. Bakha’s father tells him that the schools are meant for the babus and not for the lowly sweepers. Rakha says, “There you go trying to be a Sahib when you are a sweeper’s son” (Anand 108). Consequently, Bakha realizes that he is a sweeper’s son and can never be a babu. Then also, he longs for education, justice and equality.

Moreover, Bakha wants to escape from the shackles of Hindu religion, which has rested on the hierarchical structure of the society according to the four *Varnas* namely *Brahmin*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Sudras*. As hierarchy indicates, the *Sudras* are the last stratum of the society and have low status accordingly. They have to do mean jobs such as cleaning latrines and sweeping roads. It seems that the above three *Varnas* has treated the outcastes very savagely and inhumanly. Thus, these outcastes have to lead very miserable and pathetic life worse than animals like cat and dog. Thus, the untouchables or outcastes are existed in the society.

It seems that these outcastes has deprived of both of basic human rights and basic human feelings. They has deprived of freedom to touch the high caste men or to public property, to wander at public places, to worship God, to take education, etc. Along with it, they has deprived of the basic human feelings such as the sense of happiness, the sense of honor, the sense of self-esteem, and the sense of self-identity. Thus, they has deprived of freedom, equality, justice and education, which makes them barely human at all.

Thus, these outcastes suffer without any fault, they become victim without any crime, and they face punishments without any reason except they are born into the rejected or neglected strata of the society. Their birth in the low caste family becomes curse for them. Moreover, the outcastes are downtrodden because of the socio-economic deprivation by the high caste society. Their utter poverty and illiteracy make them silent and passive. Their passivity, their disarray, their silence is the cause of long suppression and humiliation. They accept whatever there is on their way as a fate and endures it silently without any voice of liberation or protest. They remain silent as if the act of liberation is too much for them to bear. Consequently, they become slaves of the high caste Hindu society, as they have to depend on them to fulfill their basic needs such as food, water, and clothes. It seems that they endure humiliation, exploitation,

and misery without regret or revolt and accept it as a fate or result of previous life's *Karma*. Thus, these outcastes become helpless victims in the society and Lakha is a representative of it.

Moreover, the outcaste's have not allowed mounting the platform surrounding the well, because "if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor they were allowed access to the near-by brooks as their use of it would contaminate the stream" (Anand 14). As a result, they have to wait for the caste man to come and to show mercy by giving water to them. The outcastes are not allowed even to wander at public places and if there is emergency they should alert the people by shouting as, "*Posh* keep away, *posh*, sweeper is coming, *posh*, *posh*, sweeper coming, *posh*, *posh*, sweeper coming!" (Anand 42). Actually, the outcastes' have to work a lot, but their work has been permanently devalued and misappropriated. They have to eat rotten food given by the high caste Hindus, which leads to malnutrition. Thus, after finishing the work they have to wander home to home for collecting food shouting, "Bread for the sweeper, mother. Bread for the sweeper" (Anand 59).

In addition, the outcastes have no right to perform the religious rituals. As a result, Bakha feel curiosity about these high caste Hindu's prayers and worshipping manners. He is also eager to see icon of God in the temple. Once he was there to see what is going on in the temple. But suddenly the crowd cried "polluted, polluted, polluted" (Anand 52). On that occasion, he fees for a second that he was as if dead. Thus, the evil of religion lies in the support is provides for an unjust social system. Thus, the socio-religious and cultural system of the Hindu dispossess the basic human rights of the outcastes and forces them to lead very miserable and painful life as if they are barely human at all.

The crux of matters lies in the hypocrisy of the high caste Hindu society. The hypocrisy of the society has delineated by the incident of sexual exploitation of Sohini, Bakha's beautiful sister, by the priest Kali Nath, the so-called Brahmin. Kali Nath tries to seduce Sohini when she was engaged in cleaning lavatory of his house. But when Sohini cried out for the help, the priest came out shouting that he has been defiled by Sohini. Naturally, Bakha becomes angry after this incident and wants to kill all Brahmins. However, he is eager to kill that Brahmin, he cannot do anything because of his low caste birth, he is helpless man, and Sohini is a helpless victim of the lust. Bakha's thinking lights on the society's expectation from highly honored Brahmins. Bakha thinks that "This man, a Brahmin, he lies and accuses me of polluting him, after – father of

fathers, I hope he didn't violate my sister" (Anand 54). Thus, these high caste Hindus reject to touch the low caste men but look at the low caste women as object of sexual satisfaction.

Anand, here, succeed to point out the hypocrite nature of the Hindus in the name of religion. The high caste Hindus are not ready to touch the outcastes but they are ready to fulfill their lust by seducing low caste women.

Thus, the outcastes' poverty, illiteracy, and orthodoxy place them into inhuman category. Consequently, they become pray of social, economic, political, religious, sexual, and colonial exploitation. The sweetmeat-seller manipulates the scales to cheat Bakha knowing that he will not protest. Bakha also know that he has been cheated, but he has no dare to complain. The bitter impact of this exploitation falls on the psyche of the outcastes. Bakha is a representative of it, who never forgets that he is 'untouchable'. He always feels awkward in the public places due to "consciousness of his low position" (Anand 102). He faces such incidents "with a smile of humility on his face" (Anand 102).

Moreover, Bakha expresses his agony against the high-caste people as, "They would ill-treat us even if we shouted. They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt" (Anand 70). This focuses that the Hindu religious codes and customs has dispossessed the basic human feelings of the outcastes such as happiness, satisfaction, self-honor and self-identity. Thus, this stratum of scheduled caste has been deprived of both human rights as well as human feelings. In short, their life is not worthy than the life of animals like cat and dog. Commenting on the novel, K. D. Verma writes that the novel is "a poignant commentary on man's inhumanity to fellow man in the history of the human race, especially on the formation of collusive centres of power and the unprecedented complexity of these hegemonic structures in controlling human beings" (2008: 33).

Bakha's pathetic condition figures forth by his comment, he says, "I only get abuse and derision wherever I go. Pollution, pollution, I do nothing else but pollute people" (Anand 107). Thus, the exploitation damages physical and mental condition of the outcastes'.

No doubt, Bakha is a victim of these socio-religious codes. But he raises some questions against these suppressive and oppressive codes as he says, "Why are we always abused?" (Anand 43). Mulk Raj Anand rightly commented on Bakha's condition in the novel as,

The cumulative influence of careful selection had imprisoned, his free  
will in the shackles of slavery to the dreary routine of one occupational

environment. He could not reach out from the narrow and limited personality he had inherited to his larger yearning. It was a discord between person and circumstances by which a lion like him lay enmeshed in a net while many a common criminal wore a rajah's crown (Anand 85).

Along with this social discrimination, Mulk Raj Anand shows the ray of hope to alter the bitter condition of the outcastes. It can be done by converting into other religion such as Christian. Colonel Hutchinson, the chief of the local Salvation Army and a Christian Missionary, tries to convert Bakha into Christianity. Bakha is at least eager to know the principles of Christianity, but Lakha, representative of older generation, has plainly rejected to convert in to the other religion saying, "that the religion which was good enough for his forefathers was good enough to him" (Anand 114). Anand shows another remedy to escape from this discrimination is to follow Mahatma Gandhi's principles.

Thus, the novel voices the deadening and dehumanizing values of the tradition-stricken Indian society under colonial rule. It delineates the subjugation of a cursed community trapped into insensitive and hypocritical world. However, technology and science have brought significant transformation in the lives of the Indian people and though, the majority of the people are associating with computer, it is seen that caste is not totally abolished from the social life. In the social life we talk about to become 'decast' but in private life we strictly follow the caste. This reality we cannot ignore. Therefore, what is depicted in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is seen in various forms of social practices in the present century. Still the Indian minds are anchored in caste, which is a great hurdle for progress of society and the dignity of man. Therefore, rereading of *Untouchable* and its interpretations in the present century has great relevance and meaning.

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## Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*: An Exploration into Inner Space

Shahaji Subrao Mastud

*Untouchable* is one of the earliest examples in Indian English literature, that makes extensive use of stream of consciousness. "It was a phrase used by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the unbroken flow of perceptions, thoughts and feelings in the waking mind." It is a narrative technique through which the author shows the fluid and eruptive nature of human thought. The narrative is anchored in the interior life of a character rather than the perspective of an objective third-person narrator. Thus Anand's novel begins with the thinking trance of Bakha. He thought uncongeniality of his home as he lay half awake in the morning of an autumn day, covered by a greasy blanket. Even though, Anand is careful to mark changes of scene clearly, the reader has to keep his wit about him in order to follow the transitions that occur, when Anand moves from presenting the outer scene to present what is going on in Bakha's mind.

*Untouchable* is Anand's first novel, and his most artistically satisfying work. He depicts suffering and anguish of the untouchables as a result of oppression and exploitation. It is revealed through the stream of consciousness technique. Anand had learned this technique from a study of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Anand frankly states:

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.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of traditional story, *Untouchable* has a relatively modern plot sequence. The series of events took place and a change taking place in the inner conscious of the illiterate hero. After repeated humiliation, Bakha reaches a point where he no more thinks of escaping into the white man's world. His last movement as the fateful day ends in the direction of his house. He walks home with a new willingness to talk to his father about what he has seen and heard in the evening. The change is to accept reality with some hope, not total despair.

*Untouchable* is a novel that reveals the mind, the inner being of a character. It does not follow the clock or calendar. It is flashed backward or forward. Now we are in the present, then we are sent back to the past and then all of a sudden the future creeps in. Instead of external action revealed through dialogue in the traditional novel, this novel concentrates on the internal action. Anand's main emphasis in *Untouchable* is not on the action of the novel but on the way the mind of its hero works. He presents Bakha as a young sweeper boy with a highly sensitive type of temperament. He therefore, think and think on everything that happens to him. He is exposed to one humiliating incident after another in the course of an autumn day and is therefore, given to an unbroken process of thinking from dawn to dusk. The technique miraculously helps Anand to project the inner drama of his soul on the pages of his book. There could be no method more effective than it to apprise us with torments that an outcast in Indian society is destined to suffer on account of the murderous caste-system that we have so religiously been observing for more than two thousand years. The injury done by the caste system is not physical, it is in fact mental. It could be expressed by conversation, as follows...

Here is your portion', said Ram Charan, unfolding the handkerchief which he carried. There were three sugar-plums in it, all slightly broken. 'Throw me one', said Bakha. Take it said Ram Charan. But Bakha hesitated and didn't hold hands out. Take it, why don't you take it?

Ram Charan grumbled. 'No, give it to me, throw it', Bakha said. (P.87)

With this incident both Ram Charan and Chota were surprised. Never before they had seen Bakha's behavior like that. When he touched caste Hindu in the market of Bulashah. He earns for his transgression much abuse from the public and slap from the man he has polluted. The slap on cheek does not hurt physi-



cally but mentally give more shock. The inside of Bakha is expressed with the help of his own soliloquies, which is a major technique of this type of fiction.

Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him! And to think that I was so eager to come to the town this morning. Why don't I shout to warn the people of my approach? That comes of not looking after one's work. I should have seen the high-caste people in the street. That man! That he should have hit me! My poor jalebis! 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 come across 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? (P.43)

The fantasies and nightmares of Bakha are also revealed to us. He had often felt like reading Waris Shah's *Hir* and *Ranjah*. While he was in the British barracks, he had felt a burning desire to speak tish-mish, tish-mish English. But his father told him that "schools were meant for the Babus, not for the lowly sweeper". He had begun to work at the latrines at the age of six and resigned himself to the hereditary life of the croft, but he dreamed of becoming a sahib. He decided to take a self-education. But his self-education hadn't proceeded beyond the alphabet.

While going to the marriage of Ram Charan's sister, Bakha's mind turns romantic. He remembered how, he had been playing with her brother and Chota in the barracks, they had come and started to play at marriage. Ram Charan's little sister was made to act the wife because she were a skirt. Bakha was chosen to play the husband because he was wearing the gold-embroidered cap. Bakha always felt proud of having once acted as her husband. When his thoughts darkened, he felt as if he could forcibly gather the girl in his embrace and ravish her.

The working of Lakha's mind is also revealed through the technique of stream of conscious at some places. When Rakha, Bakha's younger brother is away from barracks to fetch the left-over of the sepoy's launch, the hungry Lakha wistfully remembers the left over of fests that he had seen in the cantonment and the town. His mind travels to the great big piles of cooked food, which he had received on the occasion of marriage in the alleys of the city. There were fried bread and chingri puffs, vegetables, curries and semolina pudding, sweets and pickles. Even he recalled how the wooden box, where his wife kept sweets was never empty that year.

The flash back technique is also a major aspect of stream of consciousness technique in the novel. It is used to show the memories or feeling of the

character. Lakha narrated his nasty experience to Bakha, when Bakha was ill with fever.

Babu ji, Babu ji, God will make you prosperous. Please make my message reach the ears of the Hakim ji. I have been shouting, shouting and have even asked some people to tell the Hakim Sahib that I have a prayer to make to him. My child is suffering from fever. He has been unconscious since last night and I want the Hakim ji to give him some medicine.” “Keep away, keep away,” said the babu, “don’t come riding on at me. Do you want me to have another bath this morning? The Hakim Sahib has to attend to us people who go to offices first, and there are so many of us waiting. You have nothing to do all day. Come another time or wait. (P.71-72)

*Untouchable* is a ballad born out of the freedom. “I had tried to win for truth against the age old lies of the Hindus by which they upheld discrimination. The profound thoughts of the upper orders in an ancient India about caste were often noble. Someone in the great *Mahabharata* had cried, ‘Caste, caste—there is no caste!’ And I wanted to repeat this truth to the ‘dead souls’ from the compassion of my self-explanation in the various Hindu hell, in the hope that I would myself come clean after I had been through the swear, as it were.”<sup>3</sup> The use of the stream of consciousness bares before the readers the brushed mind and soul of Bakha, his fears and anxieties, his feelings and emotions, his ideas and reactions. Anand uses the stream of consciousness successfully, to show that ‘A Man is a man - and he is born equal to all other men.

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## Gandhi's Presence in Anand's Novels : A Study of *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle*

Nityananda Pattanayak

If any single individual had exerted remarkable influence on and moulded the world vision of Mulk Raj Anand it was M.K. Gandhi whose hold on the writer was so great that most of his writings act on or react to his (Gandhi's) thoughts. Under his influence Anand prepared himself to face the reality of India and capture it artistically in words, turning away from romanticism and adulation of the past.

Gandhi was a humanitarian whose views and ideas aroused the conscience of India from deep slumber, who fought relentlessly against age-old conventions and traditions of orthodox India, who revolutionized the social structure spearheading the fight against all forms of social injustice towards untouchables, downtrodden, women and widows, and who gave the clarion call to build a new India free from poverty, illiteracy, religious bigotry, social evils etc.

Gandhi's force was so sounding that for about two decades-1930s and 40s- no writer in India could resist the temptation of bringing Gandhi or his movements to their literary arena; some treated him as an idea, some as a tangible reality and a benevolent human being while some others treated him as a myth, a symbol. In a few novels he appears in person as in *Waiting for*

*the Mahatma* ( R.K.Narayan) or in *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle* (Mulk Raj Anand) while in most others he is invisibly present as in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* or Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*. To quote Srinivas Iyengar: " Novelists, whether writing in English or in the regional languages, have likewise exploited the magic of Gandhi's name and presence, but seldom is the Gandhian role subsumed in the fiction as a whole. Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part: on the other hand, he is sure to turn the novel into a biography if he is given a major (or the central) part. The best thing for the contemporary novelist would be to keep Gandhiji in the background but make his influence felt indirectly"(372). Though Gandhi's influence on his contemporary writers is reflected on several novels of respective writers yet this paper is concerned with Gandhi's impact on Mulk Raj Anand in shaping his life-values and his presence in his works , mainly *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle*.

On Gandhi's influence on him Anand says how he spent days after days, weeks after weeks in Sabarmati Ashram to imbibe Gandhian spirits and values, how he became an Indian after taking off the mask of Brown sahib that he had become in England.

There I learnt to love the poor, the disinherited, and the voiceless. The first three novels...were inspired by the Mahatma...they are about the miseries of the poor" (qtd. in Sharma).

And there he developed his understanding of the Indian social and political systems in which man exploits man in the name of social bond and economic progress, a practice perpetuated by age old Indian orthodoxy and supported by the political system of the colonial rule in India led by the capitalistic British. In his *Apology for Heroism* Anand writes how he became vaguely interested in the ideas of Gandhi, particularly

in the ethics of simple living that he was insisting in the press, spinning, weaving and the wearing of home spun, travelling in third class compartment, the campaign against untouchability, and the great doctrine of ahimsa, non-violence...(38-39).

There in the Sabarmati he became

conscious of the need to help raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies and the other suppressed masses of society, to human dignity and self awareness in view of the abjectness, apathy and despair to which they have been condemned (137).

After coming into contact with Gandhi and his ideas Anand vowed to portray

in his works only the sufferings of the poor and the exploited and the need to uplift them materially and spiritually.

Gandhi was a great hater of exploitation, exploitation in its myriad classifications such as social exploitation, politico-economic etc. Anand's very first novel *Untouchable* (1935) echoes Gandhi's voice against untouchability in which on the basis of Gandhi's suggestions he made a strong plea for abolition of the practice for its debilitating effect on the society.

The germ of *Untouchable* is a real life situation when Anand experienced symbolic cleaning of latrines in Sabarmati Ashram and Gandhi's discussion on this hideous practice with the Ashram inmates. Anand heard from Gandhi how the practice violates human values, how he considers it a sinful and contemptible act to be condemned and despised and how it deprives a section of Indian people of their human rights turning them into sub-human species unable to talk in voice that can be heard or in long sentences that can be meaningful, only mumbling and meekly joining hands as if to carry the filthy burden imposed on them by high castes in the society.

Gandhi during his life time was a beacon to the untouchables in India. They had their faith in him, they had their hope on him. To identify himself one with the suffering millions Gandhi took himself to scavenging to teach others about its horrendous effect on the mind of those who are engaged in it and also to teach the importance of self-service. In *Untouchable* Gandhi says:

I love scavenging. In my ashram, an eighteen year old Brahmin lad is doing a scavenger's work, in order to teach the ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the Gita and faithfully says his prayers. When he conducts the prayers, his soft melodies melt one in love. But he felt that if he wanted the ashram sweeper to do this work well he must do it himself and set an example (162).

To give vent to Gandhi's thoughts on this abominable practice Anand created Bakha, a character one with the vast majority of the outcasts who are physically unable to revolt against their traumatic existence and habitual submission to the so called pillars of society.

In *Untouchable* Gandhi appears in person. Anand gives details of his appearance, his dress, his glasses and his child-like smile. He also describes the appeal of Gandhi to the masses, how the crowd surges forward to have a glance at him, rushes and jostles to touch his feet and makes thunderous sound by shouting "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". Anand quotes some of the famous lines

of Gandhi on untouchables in the work and offers his comments that drive home the point that Anand's novel is a Gandhi influenced novel. Gandhi's speech at the Suppressed Classes Conference in Ahmedabad on 13 April 1921 is quoted verbatim by Anand in the novel, that "Two of the strongest desires that keep me in flesh and bone are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow when these desires are fulfilled, there is swaraj, and therein lies my soul's deliverance" (166). While thus showing Gandhi as a messiah of the *pariahs* and Gandhi as a patriot Anand offers his comment on the great soul that "No sword could cut his body, no bullet could pierce his skin, nor fire could scorch him!" (154)

Anand puts Gandhi's and Bakha's characters in close proximity so that Gandhi's words can go directly into Bakha's mind that can ennoble him and help him rise above the mundane level. Anand quotes the real words of Gandhi about untouchability when he (Gandhi) declares:

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition (162).

Bakha while listening to the words realized the greatness of Gandhi and vowed to do anything for the man whatever is possible by him. He was convinced that the man was God to the untouchables, a saviour of them. "He adored the man. He felt that he could put his life in his hands and ask him to do what he liked with it. For him he would do anything" (163).

Anand has presented Gandhi in the novel as a rebel and a reformer. He rebels against the heinous practice of untouchability, he also attempts to reform it from within. The novelist writes how Gandhi reacts to the hypocrisy of the so called higher castes of the society:

They claim to be Hindus. They read the scriptures. If, therefore, the Hindus oppress them, they should understand that the fault does not lie in Hindu religion, but in those who profess it (163).

Gandhi too desires to bring change into the mind set of the untouchables themselves. He asks them to shun evil habits like gambling and drinking, and to live in clean environment and to learn how to protest against the hegemony of higher castes. Echoing Gandhi, Anand writes:

They (untouchables) should now cease to accept leavings from the plates of high-caste Hindus, however clean they may be represented to be. They should receive grain only – good sound grain, not rotten grain

and that too, only if it is courteously offered. If they are able to do all that I have asked them to do, they will secure their emancipation (163).

In the *Untouchable* Anand deified Gandhi projecting him as a messiah of the suffering lot but in *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) he sets out to demolish the legend of Gandhi, deliberately putting him in poor light to dispel the charm of his principles which Anand began to think as impractical and unhealthy. As Bakha was presented to articulate Gandhi's views on the practice of untouchability and the impact of latter's electrifying words on the downtrodden, Lalu is brought in *The Sword and the Sickle* to reflect Anand's disagreeable position on Gandhi on the issue of capitalistic exploitation and ways how to resist it.

Lalu, a demobilized young man who is trying to organize and spearhead a peasant revolt in Pratapgarh meets Gandhi face to face and listens to his views on suffering which appeared to him quite ridiculous. Gandhi's oblique acceptance of suffering, even glorification of it and his words that "all the people around him did not believe in happiness" (200) did not go well with Lalu. The words of Gandhi that

Suffering is the mark of human tribe. It is an eternal law. The mother suffers so that the child may live. Life comes out of death. The condition of wheat growing is that the seed grain should perish. No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering... It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone, the sufferer the suffering, the greater is the progress. Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering... (200)

irk him so much that he remarks "The man is a physical deformity". Gandhi does not approve Lalu's revolutionary spirit or his resolve to answer with violence to the Nashirabad Manager or to hit him back for his terror let loose on the poor peasants of the Nashirabad. Gandhi's excessive pacifism, his disapproval of Lalu's eye for an eye attitude did not go well with him and he began to interrogate some of the non-violent approaches of the former.

In *Untouchable* Anand has accepted ungrudgingly and unquestioningly Gandhi's views on social evils like untouchability, caste division etc. but in *The Sword and the Sickle* he has questioned Gandhi's idea of passive resistance or his "doctrine of trusteeship of the poor by the rich". Even to give credence to the narrative Anand describes Gandhi as a "little lop-eared toothless man with a shaven head which shone clean like a raw purple turnip" dictating an article on

the “conservation of the cattle wealth of India” and “the adulteration of ghee”. These are disjointed, incoherent and out of context. Gandhi’s final words with Lalu about the spinning wheel, self-perfection, and the sublimation of sexual urge are no doubt subjects dear to Gandhi but they do not make the context explicit and he uses it cleverly to sidetrack the main issue. Anand even shows Gandhi’s smile here in poor light commenting that it is ambiguous unlike in *Untouchable* when it was simple and child-like.

However, Anand ends the novel by making Gandhi winning over Lalu. After a prolonged discussion between Gandhi and Lalu about non-violence, pacifism, revolution and patience Lalu felt guilty and weak. “His face was covered with sweat and he felt he would have to submit rather than go on fighting this great man” (2004). Whether this submission is out of exasperation or springs from genuine feeling, the author is not categorical.

Thus this paper shows that Anand is not a blind follower of Gandhi. Gandhi’s influence on him is not linear and final. While accepting in its totality some of the views of Gandhi on India’s social system he too interrogates some of his methods regarding how to resist capitalistic economic system where a section exploits a vast majority and which is as harmful as social exploitation and political subjugation.

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## A Closer Look at Mulk Raj Anand's Novel: *Private Life of an Indian Prince* and its Criticism

M. A. Nare

Mulk Raj Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince* and E. M. Forster's *The Hill of Devi* were published in 1953. Both these novels depict the life of Indian Princes during the British Raj. Anand's novel includes half a decade more after Independence in 1947.

It is one of the best novels of the last Century by Dr. Anand the great humanist. In this novel he focused his attention on the Last Days of the British Raj in India and the relationship of the Indian Princes with the Crown and later with the Indian Union.

In 1947, when India and Pakistan became free Nations the problem of the Indian Princes remained unsolved for some years. Some Indian states wanted to remain Sovereign: They did not want to merge with either Indian Union or Pakistan.

The Maharaja of Sham Pur falls under this category. These states even tried to seek help from foreign countries in solving this problem but ultimately they failed. The British Government told them frankly that—they had no power now to protect their freedom.

Lord Mountbatten, the first Viceroy and the Governor-General of India, was successful in handling the issue of transfer of Power.

‘By the time Mulk Raj Anand returned to India in 1945 with the in-

tention of settling permanently, after nearly twenty years in England, he was unquestionably the most distinguished Indian novelist writing in English. His *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and Bud* (1937), and the famous trilogy *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940) and *The Sword and Sickle* (1942) had already received wide notice, and he himself was being held as the first writer to have dispelled the myth built around the Indian character: the myth about 'contentment' in the midst of poverty, 'mystical silence', 'spiritual attainments', etc. In his novels for the first time, the Indian People had been clearly and intimately described with unflinching realism and deep understanding, and the exploiters, whether imperialists or feudalists, exposed with uncompromising truthfulness. Anand, no doubt, would have continued to write of the poor, as he was indeed to do later, but for an incident which had profound effect on him and led to his best work, *Private Life of an Indian Prince*.

Anand had returned to India in the hope of sending for his English wife Kathleen Van Gelder and daughter as soon as he had settled down. But in Bombay he met a clever hill-woman who initiated him into the local Bohemia. More had been initiated than that: in 1948 he returned to England to get a divorce so that he could marry this woman. No sooner had he got the divorce than he learnt that the woman he wanted to marry had fallen in love with a Frenchman and had left for Paris. Anand suffered a nervous breakdown, and was nursed by a Greek dancer who advised him to write the anguish out of his system. The result was *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, which says Anand, 'rushed out of me in one month'. It was put aside and not published till 1953.' (Sarus Cowsjee: Introduction. pp 7-8)

If we understand how the British Raj had pampered the Princes and used them against the freedom movement with their policy of 'divide and rule' we may not find the behaviour of Ashok Kumar the Prince of Sham Pur state eccentric or absurd.

Let us see what the British Government had led the Indian Princes to believe for nearly a century.

'Her Majesty Queen Victoria, in 1858, gave her celebrated pledge to 'respect the rights, dignity and honour of the native Princes as our own.'

His Majesty King George V reaffirmed this promise in the most uncompromising words: 'Ever to maintain privileges, rights, dignities of the Indian Princes, who may rest assured that this pledge is inviolate and inviolable.' Representatives of the Crown in subsequent years repeated these promises, but when Independence came to India and Pakistan in 1947 all that the princes got were advices and admonitions. The princes, whose dynasties had faithfully

stood behind the Crown through two World Wars and had fought the nationalists at home to defend the British Raj, regarded this as an arrant breach of trust. The British Government, on their part, argued that their pledges to the Princes rested on Paramountcy, on the fact of their supremacy throughout India, and not merely on the treaties and assurances. With their withdrawal from the rest of India the Paramountcy automatically lapsed, and they were thus no longer in a position to offer them protection. However there was an alternative for the princes: they could strike for independence if they wished. Paramountcy would not be transferred to any successor Government, they were assured. But this was small comfort for them. Lord Mountbatten, then Viceroy and Governor-General of India, urged the princes to forget about independence and to accede to either India or Pakistan. The majority of them reluctantly took his advice, but the Nawabs of Junagad and Bhopal, the Maharajas of Travancore, Indore, and Kashmir and Nizam of Hyderabad, who began riding the high horse against the Centre. They were soon brought to heel in various ways: some were bribed with huge privy purses and important diplomatic assignments abroad, others were asked to sign the Instrument of Accession on the grounds that the administration in their states had collapsed. What happens in Sham Pur epitomizes the events in several other states. (Intro. P.10)

Sardar Patel, the Iron Man of India, the Deputy Prime Minister in Pt. Nehru's Cabinet used his unique statesmanship and determination to bring them under one umbrella of the Indian Union, otherwise India would have remained a collage of princely states and Indian Provinces.

'The British India was made up of provinces over which the British had direct jurisdiction and 562 princely realms. The Crown, however was glad to recognize them all: they provided an excellent instrument for its 'divide and rule' policy, and in addition were a check on the nationalist movement which was gripping India after 1857.'

The Maharaja's full name was Victor Edward George Ashok Kumar: Victor after Queen Victoria; Edward after Edward VII George after Emperor George V, Ashok after the ancient Indian Emperor Ashoka.

A Brahmin hill-woman-Ganga Dasi was his mistress. Vicky describes Ganga as a 'bitch', and a 'consummate actress', while she calls him 'very clever', 'very cruel' and 'very jealous'.

To know how eccentric some Maharajas and Nawabs were we must know some samples of behavior of Nizam and the Nawab of Junagadh.

'The most eccentric of them all was the Nawab of Junagadh. A dog fancier to an extra ordinary degree, he is said to have spent 50,000 dollars on a 'wedding reception' at the mating of a prize bitch. Dogs were brought into his

presence on palanquins carried by retainers, and when two of his dogs were mated he would invariably declare a public holiday in the state.’

Maharaja Ashok Kumar claims descent from God Indra via the God Rama. So did many other princes: Maharaja of Udaipur from Ram, Patiala from Moon, Banaras from Lord Shiva, and Travancore from God Vishnu.

He is not the richest, the most eccentric or the most flamboyant of his order. His Exalted Highness the late Nizam of Hyderabad was reputed to have two billion dollars in negotiable wealth, and some 300 concubines. A story goes that in his younger days he paid a state visit to the Nawab of Rampur in his special train and took with him his 300 concubines.’ (Note: p 17)

The novel begins with a scandal in Simla where Vicky the Prince of Sham Pur state disappears from the lodge with a school going girl, a daughter of Captain Russell. All except Dr. Shankar are very much worried about the Prince but the Doctor Shankar knows the mental condition of the Maharaja who was asked by Shri Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to come to Delhi to sign the Instrument of Accession to the Union. He also knew how Vicky was terribly upset as his mistress Ganga Dasi had left him. Under this terrible crisis tension was mounting every hour, he knew that the Prince must be indulging in some sexual adventure or another. That was his habit, his hardened nature—nothing new in his behavior. Right from his early days in the Zanan Kahana the Prince had developed the habit of indulging in sexual adventures with various women young and old: This was a common way of life of most of the Indian Princes as wars with neighbouring states stopped and hunting also became a rare sport.

When ‘Miss Bunty’s Case’ went to the Commissioner the doctor was asked to decide whether it was a rape; his tension mounted again.

He says, ‘I tell you I am like a rat in a hole...And she has brought me to this. I would never have gone with this girl if the Tikyali Rani hadn’t been forcing me away from Ganga Dasi. I should have had Gangi with me here if so many petitions had not gone everywhere against me and her! And now...Oh, what will happen to me? Where shall I go?’

Then, in order to escape from the case they take him to England and there also he falls in love with a sales girl in the store. Later he is involved in the case of getting his rival in Ganga Dasi’s love murdered. When he came to know that the British Police approached him to inquire into the criminal case in India he suffered a nervous breakdown. Later he went mad and was sent to the lunatic Asylum in Poona. Indira Rani, his third wife wanted to nurse her husband but the authorities did not allow her to do so. She was allowed to see him once in a week.

‘The characters, to use Anand’s own words, ‘are taken from my intimate

experience, but are transformed creatively from within—often a lamb becomes a lion and a dove becomes jackal. I rely on my subconscious life a good deal in my creative work, and allow my fantasy to play havoc with facts.’

‘Vicky might have a slight resemblance to a prince Anand had known, but in him Anand has caricatured some aspects of his own emotional life; one must not forget the circumstances which induced Anand to write this novel. Dr. Shankar is modelled on Professor Man Mohan, a liberal gentleman who was Private Secretary to a Maharaja. But there is as much of Anand in Dr. Shankar as in the Prince, for Dr. Shankar is the rational side of the author analysing the irrational side as seen in Vicky. Ganga Dasi has her origin in the hill-woman who initiated Anand’s divorce. Maharani Indira bears some relation to Kathleen Van Gelder. Anand used to tell her, ‘If ever I were dying, I am sure you would come to nurse me.’

In the novel Maharani Indira goes to look after her husband when he has been admitted to the asylum. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is a facsimile of the man as everyone knew him.

The two principal characters, Vicky and Ganga Dasi, defy facile literary definition; they are presented in such complexity and with such psychological insight that critics will go on redefining them. It is impossible to put one’s finger on the spot at anyone given moment and say, ‘this is it’, for at every next moment the conclusions are belied... The author’s purpose is to reveal life in all its contrarities, not to explain it’. (Introduction: pp 14-15)

Now, let us examine how the critics hailed this new novel by Mulk Raj Anand or failed to judge its merits and its multidimensional nature.

‘Absolutely contemporary in its theme and presentation, this new book by the foremost (Indian) novelist of today is likely to take us deep into the obscure corners of India where he has always led us in his previous well-known works, *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *The Big Heart*, etc.’ **Spectator** (London) The Publisher’s blurb

The author Dr. Anand clearly states why he wanted to write on the nabobs and the rajas ‘who deserve pity more than contempt.’

‘My knowledge of Indian life at various levels had always convinced me that I should do a *comédie humaine*. In this the poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one kind of outcasts. The middle sections and the nabobs and rajas were also to be included as a species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been a time to show the poor-rich of our country, who deserve pity more than contempt.’ (2) (M.K.Naik: p. 100)

Upon this an Indian critic M.K.Naik writes in 1973:

‘*Private Life of an Indian Prince* hardly comes anywhere near becom-

ing a genuine *comédie humaine*. It is at once a pathological study of an odious neurotic, and a strongly exaggerated picture of the intrigues in an Indian Princely state and of the whole process of the merger of states into the Indian Union. The Maharaja (Vicky to his friends) is as Dr. Shankar tells us, a “hopelessly illadjusted-personality”...Vicky, given to uncontrollable fits of temper and sexual orgies, gets caught in the coils of the courtesan Gangi who exploits his weakness so thoroughly, that for her sake he gets a rival murdered, and faced with exposure goes mad. In the whole process, with attention centered mainly on juicy descriptions of the hero’s Pan-like proclivities and accounts of his tantrums, there is hardly any room for genuine psychological portrayal. To support his view, he quotes a passage from K.R.S.Iyengar.

The reason for this is pin-pointed by Professor Srinivas Iyengar, who rightly observes:

Anand doesn’t know his Victor as he seems to know his Bakha, Munoo and Lalu. There is a failure of understanding, and therefore a failure of compassion as well. Ackerley’s *Hindoo Holiday* and Foster’s *Hill of Devi* describe rajas too, but these princes although they are by no means free from blemishes seem to be human and alive, whereas poor Vicky is but a caricature and a name.’ (3) [K.R. Srinivas Iyengar’s book, Bombay, 1962 pp. 276-277] (M.K.Naik p. 101)

Perhaps M.K.Naik did not know that Professor K.R.S. Iyengar had already changed his opinion about the Novel *Private Life of an Indian Prince* and published a long review of the book in Deccan Herald (April 1971). Professor Srinivas Iyengar realized his mistake in judging the new novel by Mulk Raj Anand when he found an Introduction by Dr. Saros Cowasjee (University of Saskatchewan Regina) to the new edition of the novel published in 1970.

Immediately after this revelation he wrote a note at the end of the chapter on which Mulk Raj Anand which was originally composed in 1961.

In that note he says, ‘I wasn’t aware of the autobiographical nuances in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, which Saros Cowasjee has brought out in his Introduction to the new edition of the novel (1970). I now see things in the novel that I couldn’t see before, and in my long review in Deccan Herald (April 1971) I have referred to its vivid sense of history, its richness of incident and character its considerable narrative power, and above all, its fearless compassion. *Private Life* will surely take its place as an integral part of Anand’s “work in progress” the *Comédie humaine* for twentieth century. [Note-to the chapter on Mulk Raj Anand in the second edition published in 1973]

This shows how Professor Iyengar was never adamant in his views on books and he did not fail to record the change/s in his writing. This also shows

a rare quality of his scholarship and his great humility.

This scholar-critic did not stop here, he wrote about his revised opinion of the book and its author-in the Postscript (Fiction I) of the Book 'Indian Writing in English' (p. 737)

'When *Private Life of an Indian Prince* came out in a new edition in 1970, with Saros Cowasjee's Introduction drawing attention to certain autobiographical elements in the novel, it was possible to read it anew as the paradigmatic transformation of these events in Anand's life: the divorce from his first wife, the betrayal by the hill-woman, the memory of the Prince (Anand's ex-pupil) who had become mad, and other flotsam and jetsam of the subconscious sea of memory. After three legal marriages, Victor the Prince is fatally drawn to Ganga the hill-woman who becomes his Cleopatra, his Messalina, his 'dark lady', his flawed Paradise, his sugared hell his ultimate doom. Between the Prince and the hill-woman, "two bad people who made a pair," who is the criminal, who is the victim? Being a clinical specialist, the novelist isn't afraid of handling the ulcers and the wounds; but he is a man of compassion also, a recorder who wears the yoke of pity, and his grace is denied to neither of the Protagonists. The third important character is Indira the Tikyali Rani, who is merely shown on one occasion and withdrawn, but it is her love that abides with the Prince till the end. Nobody can predict the possibilities of human nature. A novelist like Anand *sees*, and we are grateful to be able to see with his eyes.'

This shows how the Introduction by Dr.Saros Cowsjee became the landmark of Criticism on *Private Life of an Indian Prince*.

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## God's Plenty - A Critique of Mulk Raj Anand's Short Stories

C. Lakshmi Prasad

Mulk Raj Anand, rightly hailed as the Charles Dickens of India and the Zola or Balzac of India, is undoubtedly a writer of international reputation. His contribution to Indian short story is remarkable. The inspiration for his short stories came from the ancient Indian tales and fables and the impact of his mother's story telling. He talks about this part of his inheritance in his preface to selected stories:

One of the oldest books of stories in India was entitled *Ocean of Stories*.

I have always thought of this book as symbol of the highly finished art of storytelling in India. I read it at an early age and was inspired by it to read and hear many of the folk tales told in my country. (Naik 12)

The folk tale has seemed to him the most perfect form of the short story. *The folk tale of India* interprets the joys and sorrows of a peasant people of the long eras of Indian feudal life. While accepting the form of the folk tale especially in its fabulous character, he took in the individual and group psychology of the European and tried to synthesise the two styles. Thus he sought to create a new kind of fable which extends the old Indian story form into a new age without the moral lessons of the Indian story but including the psychological understanding of the contemporary period.

In his introduction to Aesop's *Fables*, Anand acknowledges his indebtedness to folk tales:



One of my favourite folk tales was the *Adventures of Raja Rasalu* and I would pester my mother to tell me this over and over again. The humorous anecdotes concocted by one of our teachers, Master Shah Nawaz, based on the legendary incidents in the life of Raja Birbal and Akbar the Great, impressed me with the gift of laughter that one could bring to bear on human foibles. When I read some of the stories of Tolstoy in his Sevastopol sketches as well as Gorky's stories *Creatures that Once were Men*, I began to conceive the short story as I would write it, by combining the framework of the folk tales with the concentration on character and situations of contemporary life. ( 6 )

Anand's fiction received considerable attention while his short stories have not been appreciated in the same measure. Saras Cowsajee in his introduction to the volume of selected short stories points out that Anand in his letters to several friends and literary persons had repeatedly lamented the fact that little or hardly any attention had been paid by the general readers to his short stories.

But his short stories are marvellous and as a short story writer Anand is still matchless. Different modes such as strong satire, uproarious laughter and acute psychological perception unravel through the pages of his short stories. What is remarkable about him is his technical effectiveness and aesthetic distinctiveness. In mode of narration, delineation of character, his art excels any other in the sphere of writing. His stories have a sensuous quality – his pages are charged with heat, colour and scents.

Anand exposes the contemporary situation through an analysis of the predicament of the men and women he knows. His stories reflect his sympathy for the marginalized and downtrodden. His language is powerful and poetic enough to paint a realistic picture of India. A reading of Anand's short stories reveals the panoramic picture of rural as well as urban India with all its glory, wealth, poverty, its dirt and squalor and adherence to tradition. Anand's most outstanding quality is his fidelity to the background he wants to present.

*The Lost Child*, a popular story of Anand is an in-depth portrayal of child psychology. The story revolves around a universally accepted fact that for a child what is most important is the emotional security provided by the parents. The story begins with a description of the village fair. During the festival of spring, a common sight in Indian villages is the speeding of the gaily clad humanity towards the fair – some on foot, some on horseback and others in bullock carts. One little boy is seen running between his parents legs brimming over with life and laughter. The boy is fascinated by the toys in the shops but the cold stare of refusal in the parents' eyes disheartens him. Yet he cannot suppress the desire of his heart to get the toy. Father looks at him in his

familiar tyrant's way and the mother directs his attention to other scenes. On reaching a footpath in a field the child gets saturated with joy and wonder at the vast glory which Anand describes in poetic flights of fancy:

It was a powering mustard field, pale like melting gold as it swept across miles and miles of even land – a river of yellow liquid light, ebbing and falling with each fresh eddy of wild wind, and straying in places into broad rich tributary streams, yet running in a constant sunny sweep towards the distant mirage of an ocean of silver light. (82)

The child plunges headlong into the field prancing like a young colt and followed the group of dragon flies that were bustling on purple wings intercepting the flight of a butterfly. The child tries to catch it which flapped up into the air. Mother's cautionary call brings him to them, then he is attracted by the little insects and worms along the footpath.

Scenic beauty of the field is poetically described by Anand:

An old banyan tree outstretched its powerful arms over the blossoming jack and jaman and neem and champak and scrisha and cast its shadows across beds of golden cassis and crimson gulmohur as an old grandmother spreads her skirts over her young ones. (83)

When a shower of young flowers fall upon the child, he gathers the raining petals which drops from his forgotten hands. The parents catch the child running around the banyan tree and takes the sorrow winding footpath which led to the fair through the mustard field. The child is fascinated by the confusion of the world he was entering. The child's mouth waters for the burfi but he feels his parents would say he was greedy, the child is lured by the implacable sweetness of the gulmohur flowers and gets an overwhelming desire to possess the rainbow glory of the balloons. The child remembers the parents forbidding him to hear the coarse music of the juggler.

Seeing a roundabout in full swing he ignores the parents' eternal denial and makes a bold request "I want to go on the roundabout please father, mother" There is no reply. Panic Stricken the child runs in all directions. The balloon seller tries to pacify him offering the rainbow. The man takes him to the flower seller, sweet shop, but the child only reiterates the sob "I want my mother, father".

Saros Cowsajee's comments on the story sums up the significance of *The Lost Child*. "The story can be read at different levels. At its simplest it is about a child's natural fear of being left alone, at its most profound, it is a metaphor for the human condition. The child in the story epitomises our individual cravings, desires, fears, but most of all our vulnerability and dependence on one another. Anand had said that a maxim by Guru Nanak – We

are all children lost in the world fair – was reverberating in his mind when he wrote *The Lost Child*. This provides the essence of the story. The nameless child is the proverbial ‘everyman’ and the village fair is a microform of our universe with its beauty, joy and pleasures but underscored by pain and insecurity.”

*The Terrorist*, another popular story, gives an analysis of the mind of a young terrorist as he prepares himself for the throwing of a bomb in the legislative assembly. The time of action described in the story is the 1930s when the political atmosphere in India was tense and explosive. Singh, a handsome man dressed in Ranken and Cosuits and expensive polo topees, enters the Legislative assembly building with a slip signed by the Deputy President. So Captain Beatty allows him without any suspicion. He seems to Beatty like all the other native students who came to hear debates.

He tries to look perfectly calm and unsuspecting and pretends to admire the huge pillars. But he hates the building because it was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, a British architect. There is an uncontrollable tremor on his lips. He looks around to find whether his companion Vasu Dev has arrived. He gets relieved when he sees Vasu Dev sitting in the front row. Then he checks whether the bomb which he had kept in the pocket of his overcoat was safe. He has a dreadful feeling that if his coat brushed against any of the people, then the vessel would be broken.

The tempera paintings describing the Hindu seven ages of man in the hall does not please him. The picture of Buddha preaching to his disciples transports him to his past life. He reminisces how he had lived in disguise in shrines after looting and raiding the armoury. The yogis and ascetics had taught him that death was the only way of securing release from the trammels of existence. He believed that sacrificing one’s life for the sake of motherland was glorious death and he was going to experience that glorious death. He lamented that if India had been free he would have patiently waited for his death.

The red coloured curtain hanging on the chamber brings him a sense of joy and fulfillment. He believes that the Britishers had deliberately chosen that colour as they ooze out the blood of poor Indians. He is very proud that he would dye the whole chamber with the blood of the Britishers. His proud thoughts get disturbed when a group of Englishmen come and sit in the distinguished visitor’s gallery. He feels very sad that he couldn’t find any Indian in the gallery.

He is filled with rage and indignation when a stream of politicians enter the chamber. He feels that all were traitors and they pretended to be more English than the English people. The only person he appreciated among them was Prasad Sharer, the leader of the Congress Party. He wishes to have been born as his son whom he considered as a real hero.

Bir Singh recollects the words which he would utter when he would throw the bomb. He hopes that his speech would form the headlines of all the newspapers. He had printed the words on leaflets. So that if all died in the bomb blast the printed matter would remain.

He pulls out the hand kerchief from his cuff and waves to Vasu Dev as a signal for throwing the bombs simultaneously. He tries to calm down and control himself. His throat seemed parched, body perspiring and felt dizzy. He takes out the bomb and like a juggler throws the bomb into the air.

But unfortunately the bomb doesn't explode and Vasu Dev is arrested with the live bomb in his hand. Bir Singh is in a dazed state and he tries to utter his speech. He is brought back from the trance by the slapping of Beatty Singh, who believed in violence till then, but suddenly turned his other cheek and said, "If they hit you on the right cheek, turn your left". His carefully rehearsed last words thus sound totally ineffective.

The most impressive thing about Anand's short stories is the wide range of themes and his uncommon ability in being able to deal with them. The sheer variety of what he writes about is impressive. Hence Dryden's comment on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* - 'Here is God's Plenty' is applicable to Mulk Raj Anand's short stories. The variety and abundance of characters that unravel through the pages of Anand's short stories makes him an unrivalled story teller. His short stories have no doubt the power to stand the test of time.

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## Politics in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: An Exploration of *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Coolie*

Jiban Jyoti Kakoti

The career of Mulk Raj Anand flourished during a period dominated mainly by colonial rule and anti-colonial struggle. It was a period when, on the one hand, the colonial discourse was percolated to every nook and corner of the Indian society, and, on the other, the nationalist discourse started emerging powerfully to counter or resist that discourse. Though a product of the colonial English education system introduced with the intention of establishing colonial hegemony in the guise of an obligation to civilising the ‘savage’, Anand, in spite of that education, or, rather, because of that, like many other English educated Indian intellectuals, was able to decipher the secrets of the strategic imperialistic designs of the Britishers. His heartfelt sympathy and commitment to the causes of the poor of India made him aware of the exploitation, displacement, disintegration, and social unrest produced by the hegemonic imperialistic dominance of the British rule in India. Anand’s novels are a true representation of diverse complexities of Indian life ranging from casteism to capitalism and colonialism.

This paper is an attempt to explore the spatial politics inherent in the colonial representation of and interaction with the indigenous peoples of India as manifested in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Our discussion will be confined to *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, two major novels by Anand. In

our endeavour to investigate spatiality in the novels, we will rely on the ideas put forward by some key thinkers on space and place.

Michel Foucault's comment that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all else the epoch of space" (Of Other Spaces 22) was responsible for shifting the importance from temporality to spatiality as a "context for considering issues such as power relationships and negotiations of identity" (Upstone 2). His spatial concern can be attributed to his interest in mapping which contributes towards the "deconstruction of dominant power structures" (2). But an assertion of spatiality need not exclude temporality because, as Derrida argues, "time is the truth of space" (*Margins* 42). Similarly, the privileging of space over place does not rule out the latter's importance in understanding colonial as well as postcolonial spatiality. For Upstone 'without space, any negotiation of place is incomplete' (3). Space can be both physical and conceptual and 'it encapsulates not only physical location, but also abstract conceptual space' (3).

Colonial appropriation of space is based on "Euclidean space of points, lines and linearity" (Noyes 87), "the drawing of linear boundaries and homogeneous space" (Islam 9). A bounded territory of this sort lends authority to the colonisers to exercise control over the colonial subject. Postcolonial deconstruction of colonial ordering of space, on the other hand, reveals the inherent multiplicity and fluidity of space which colonial treatments of space always try to obscure. Bill Ashcroft argues that it is place which signifies colonial control, space which offers a more fluid and open form that the imperial attempts to obscure (*Newness* 95-97).

In *Two Leaves and a Bud* the labourers are made to live in a highly spatialised locale that appears to be fixed, absolute and controlled. The tea planters' right to territory is protected by the authority they give to their spatial divisions. Gangu and other plantation labourers are provided with huts which are not hygienic and appropriate for a decent living. The gap between the haves and the have nots, the coloniser and the colonised, is made conspicuous by the disparity in their living conditions as well as the exercising of authority. This spatial demarcation of territory is presented as natural, as all that it is built upon is obscured by the pervasiveness of the colonial concept. The labourers are made to respect this bounded territory as a legitimate entity and no local affiliations are allowed to undermine this authority. Even the language of the coloniser plays its role in exercising its influence on the labourers and acts towards perpetuating their marginalised conditions. The status of the territory "as an absolute undermines the preference for older communal or tribal practices. Its laws, religion, education and social practice become superior" (Upstone 5).

When Gangu's wife died of malaria he had no money for buying a red cloth and making a bamboo hearse for the funeral of his wife. He first approached Shashi Bhushan to talk on his behalf to the manager in 'angrezi' for a loan. He said, "Babuji, I promise to give you some of the money which the sahib may give me if you talk to him in 'angrezi' and get me the loan I want . . . my wife died last night. And I have been ill take pity on me" (111-112).

Here the English language becomes a communication barrier between the coolies and the tea planters and thus helps in perpetuating the gap between them. Then he approached Croft-Cooke and pleaded to lend him some money. But Croft-Cooke had no respect for the customs of the coolies and so instead of showing any sympathy for Gangu's urgent need for arranging funeral rites of his wife, he barbarously beat and kicked him off.

Upstone observes that the totalisation process in the colony culminates in having its impact not only on the physical locality and the civil rights of the indigenous population, but also acts to support particular construction of identity. The violent material effects of colonisation is the product of the coloniser's right to space. The colonial gaze that forms a territory also creates an identity for the colonised (5). Homi Bhabha notes, "What is increased is the visibility of the subject as an object of surveillance, tabulation, enumeration and, indeed, paranoia and fantasy . . . a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible" (*Other* 156).

"The identity created in such a space", notes Upstone, "quite often portrays the indigenous citizen as an absolute space also, with a body marked by characteristics that can quite easily not be his or her own. In the colonial appropriation of space it is identity that risks being lost, as the imposition of an absolute threatens to oppress all it subsumes" (Upstone 6). The exploitation meted out to the colonised is based on the coloniser's assumption that the colonised territory and the peoples and animals that inhabited them are "spaces, unused, underused or empty" (*Decolonizing* 53).

Anand's depiction of Reggie Hunt's physical exploitation and molestation of coolie women can be seen in the light of the above observations. This lustful plantation master lives possessing three coolie mistresses in the Tea Estate. Anand gives a vivid description of Reggie's lust for one of his mistresses which underscores his treatment of the coolie women as sub-human creatures to be possessed and used just as he and other plantation masters possessed the lands and animals that inhabited them:

She yielded to him, her body limp and contorted into a silent despair, her eyes a gaze at the wild sensual heat in his face, her heart turned inwards at the cold virginity that seemed to freeze her at the contact with



him. He made a sudden upcharge as if he swung her body hard, hard, harder tearing the flesh of her breasts, biting her cheeks and striking her buttocks till she was red and purple like a mangled corpse, ossified into a complete obedience by the volcanic eruption of the lust ( 180). Reggie Hunt also cast his lustful eyes on the half naked bodies of the young coolie women in tatters. Hunt's colonial gaze could only see the flesh beneath the tattered clothes of these women which he wanted to possess. Anand ingeniously presents the interior of Reggie's mind as he fixes his licentious eyes on Leila. He writes, " Slim young body defined by the narrow girth of her skirt and the fine stretch of her bodice, her whole demeanour like a bird that would flutter in the hands of the shikari" (121).

The picture of a bird in the hands of the shikari indicates the dominance of the one over the other and brings to the fore the colonial gaze that recognizes the colonised as the "other", the animal and the "not-human". According to Huggan and Tiffin, in the colonial capitalist system the colonised people are often regarded as part of nature and thus treated instrumentally as animals ( 6). Plumwood argues that the masculinist 'reason centred culture' views nature and the animal 'other' as being either external to human needs, and thus effectively dispensable, or as being in permanent service to them, and thus an endlessly replenishable resource (*Environmental Culture* 4-5).

The brutal killing of the colonized 'other' is not only naturalised, but also legalised on the ground of "the absolute prioritisation of one's own species' interests over those of the silenced majority" ( Huggan and Tiffin 5). This is evident from the vicious and cold blooded murder of Gangu by Reggie Hunt when the latter's attempted rape on Leila was thwarted by Gangu's interference. Cary Wolfe, citing Jacques Derrida, addresses the issue of "the systematic, institutionalised killing of non human others"(39) in a different light: The humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and institution of a speciesism which relies on the tacit acceptance that the full transcendence to the human requires the sacrifice of the animal and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a 'non-criminal putting to death', as Derrida phrases it, not only of animals but of humans as well by marking them as animal" (39).

But the colonial spatial order attempted by the colonist is only a myth. This order never successfully exists, and what actually does exist is 'a strategy of totalisation' (Noyes 129). The possibility of subversion and 'chaos' is inherent in the multiplicity, openness and fluidity of space that the colonial ordering endeavours to obscure. "In the postcolonial space, the colonised is given the opportunity to write back, to express a clear sense of agency, and



the possibility of overturning. The fact that the colonial conception of space is only ever a myth is exploited to indicate that dissenting voices can never be completely silenced” (Upstone 15). In such postcolonial spaces oppression is transformed into resistance. Upstone notes, “Subversion of the status of the minority location from which the postcolonial speaks transforms a colonial identity as victim into a postcolonial interrogatory voice and reversed gaze” (13) .

When Reggie tries to seduce Leila by asking her to come to his bungalow, she protests against his lust and escapes an attack on her virginity by taking refuge in her hut. Gangu sacrifices his own life to protect his daughter’s chastity when Reggie attempts rape on her inside the hut. This shows that the colonial attempts at totalisation is a myth because dissenting voice and resistance might come even from the margin.

Both in *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Coolie* the tragedy of the protagonists begins with their displacement from their native places; but whereas in case of Gangu the dislodgement is confined to Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam, in Munoo’s case this begins with the small town of Sham Nagar through the city of Bombay to the hill resort of Shimla. Territorial expansion and colonial appropriation of space make such displacement inevitable. But this “deliberate ( or accidental) transport of animals, plants, peoples throughout the European empires” instigates “widespread ecosystem change under conspicuously unequal power regimes” (Huggan and Tiffin 6). In *Two Leaves and a Bud* the displacement of Gangu and his family is effected by Buta, one of the indigenous agents produced by the colonial capitalist system, who lures Gangu to migrate to Assam with the promise of offering him a job and a plot of land. Tea is planted for profit and for that purpose displacement of peoples from their original habitat is considered essential. This displacement brings untold misery to Gangu and his family. But it is overlooked by the plantation masters because their eyes are cast on profit, not on the deplorable conditions of the labourers whom they consider as sub-human creatures.

In *Coolie* the displacement of Munoo from his native place was occasioned by his uncle Dayaram, a peon in the Imperial Bank, who internalised many of the capitalist cultures and started considering Munoo as his property having no voice or likes and dislikes of his own. Dayaram uproots Munoo from the idyllic environment of his village on the river Beas and brings him to Babu Nathoo Ram, an officer in the Imperial Bank, who was looking for a servant for his house in the small town of Sham Nagar. Unlike Gangu, for whom the recollection of his native village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab makes his present deplorable condition more conspicuous and brings him despair,

Munoo revels in his musing of his village. Though his displacement physically severs Munoo's link with the idyllic natural environment of his native village, the memory of the hills and river Beas that he carries with him lends him the much needed psychological strength to face the agonies of his life entailed by his dislocation. Lucy Lippard points out that place is "temporal and spatial, personal and political", for place is "a layered location" involving time, history, and memory that connect human life (*The Lure* 7). Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* also presents space and place as interdependent and related to people's life experience. Henri Lefebvre also remarks that sensory experience of human body constructs space (*Production of Space*, 405). Personal experience is, therefore, significant for both place and space. Since people experience small things from place to produce their sense of place, place forms the space that people perceive, conceive and live in. This is what E. W. Soja calls the "Thirdspace" (*Thirdspace*, 68). In *Coolie* Munoo's memory of his attachment with nature in the place where he grew up has affected his response to all the places where fate led him to. In fact, the small things of nature such as the shade of the trees, grazing of cattle on the banks of the Beas, low waters of the marsh, torrid heat of the morning sun, hills and the valleys, the cool breeze, the singing birds, the butterflies fleeting over the wild flowers, and so on, are Munoo's life experience connecting him to his place. He experiences these things to situate himself in place. He lives with these things in place and experiences them in place. His life experience thus forms his sense of place that produces space where he lives and experiences. His sense of space is thus formed by his life experience from the place where he lives. We see that Munoo feels himself in the midst of nature in his new places as he used to feel in his native place. Lawrence Buell comments, "Whether and in what sense I experience a particular location as a 'place' will be further affected by such factors as how rooted or peripatetic my previous life has been, what kinds of surrounding I am conditioned to feel as familiar or strange, and so forth. So place-sense is a kind of palimpsest of serial place-experiences" (73).

According to Sara Upstone, "colonial treatment of space attempts to obscure an existing diversity with order. What is initially "written" is erased and is replaced with a new representation" (6). Both in *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Coolie* what is obscured is the freedom of the protagonists and the other poor to interact with nature and live one's life according to one's choice. They are rather compelled to live a dictated life which is definitely an imposition on them. But, "in the deconstructive spirit, such erasure always leaves its mark" (6). Munoo's recollection of his association with nature in his native place, for example, helps him regaining his lost identity and rediscovering the fluidity

of space. Similarly, “a hill tune” that Munoo and his co-workers in *Coolie* sing together in the absence of Ganapath rejuvenates their sagging spirit and makes them aware of their long forgotten identity. To describe the effect of the song on Munoo Anand writes, “Munoo then regained the wild freedom of his childhood” and “wanted to be a man, to flourish the true dignity of manhood like the chota Babu at Sham Nagar” (90-91).

Explaining ‘environmental racism’ Huggan and Tiffin observe that it is embodied “in the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalised or economically disadvantaged peoples, and in the transference of ecological problems from their ‘home’ source to a ‘foreign’ outle . . . through the more or less wholly imagined perception of other people’s ‘dirty habits’ . . . “ (4). Munoo’s first night at Babu Nathoo Ram’s house was spent in tension and in the early next morning he was confused as to where exactly he should go to relieve himself. In his native place he had the habit of relieving himself in the open. Anand observes, “Besides, the first thing he had always done when he got up every morning in his village home was to run out into the fields and relieve himself, then bathe at the well, come back and eat his food before going to school or taking his flock to graze at the riverside” (*Coolie* 17).

But in Nathoo Ram’s house he could neither find a latrine nor an open place to relieve himself. “He ran to the wall outside the house and sat down there” (17). Suddenly Nathoo Ram’s wife appeared and seeing him in that position started abusing him. She says, “Vay, you shameless, shameless, vulgar, stupid hill boy! . . . We didn’t know we were taking on an animal in our employ, an utter brute, a savage!” (17).

It is not simply “environmentally discriminatory treatment” of a marginalised boy, it is, I think, also a part of spatial politics inherent in the colonial or capitalist treatment of the animal “other”. It is an attempt at obscuring the fluidity and multiplicity of space.

In both the novels Anand gives the impression that one day the suffering would come to an end but for that they would have to rise. According to Priyanka Sarma, “Anand presents the loss of identity for his protagonists and prepares them to regain such identity though after a prolonged struggle” (*Criterion*). Hardt and Negri also suggests, although in a different context, that “the struggles to contest and subvert Empire . . . will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself . . . The deterritorializing power of the multitude is the productive force that sustains Empire and at the same time the force that calls for and makes necessary its destruction” (xv, 61). But the basic difference between *Two leaves and a Bud* and *coolie*, so far as the deconstruction of colonial space is concerned, is that whereas in the former it happens more or less in the personal

or/and individual level, in the latter, it happens in a somewhat organized level as demonstrated in Anand's portrayal of the Trade Union Movement which is gaining ground under the able leadership of Hari and Sauda.

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## Whispers from Eternity: A Rendezvous with Mulk Raj Anand

Gopal Roy

I had the good fortune of visiting the literary doyen Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) for the first time in December 1986. With a stout body, bold head and palm of extraordinary breadth, he seemed hardly sixty two albeit he was eighty two at that time. He looked more like a soldier than a writer but for the deep intuitive eyes which indicated he was a soldier with a difference. He came as chief guest on the eve of the Convocation at Bardhaman University. As he lay sitting on an arm-chair in the sun on a fine winter morning, some visitors were talking with him, including the Vice-Chancellor. The VC, who came there for a formal visit, was asking: 'How Gopal Baag appeals to you?' etc. I entered there, stood among them, and introduced myself: 'I am Gopal Roy. I am from Bolpur'. He was at once elated and said: 'You – Gopal Roy? So you really have come? From where you got the information that I am here?' I replied: 'From newspaper and radio. And you yourself had written to me in a letter.' Saying 'Have your seat' he looked around but found nothing to sit on. He hurried up from the arm-chair, looked around again, and hurled a question to whosoever it might concern: 'Where's a stool?' I requested him not to worry: 'Please have your seat. I am trying for it'. I took his hand and placed him on the arm-chair. He sat and began to talk, but a stamp of uneasiness was there on his face, eyes and movements. Soon he rose up again, went into his room and took out his rag. He spread it on the railing. I had a seat and he felt easy. Now he resumed his talk; he was telling about his relationship with artist Jamini Roy and poet Sudhindra Nath Dutta as well as with Calcutta

(Kolkata) from the 1930s. The people present there were surprised seeing a cult of modern Indian culture so much moved. But to me it was an expression of his broad heartedness and deep humane feelings.

I have used the term 'modern Indian culture' in a very broad sense instead of confining the matter to literature only. Through this, I want to recall the period from mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century while a vital relationship among literature, song and music, paintings and sculpture and various other branches of knowledge was established. The people working in the branches of science and arts were interested in each other and they did not differentiate it with elevating social order. Mulk Raj was born in 1905, so in his formative years he had the chance of going through the golden period of time.

In the beginning of 1986, I wrote a letter to Anand discussing the qualities and the limitation of his novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*. I was encouraged by the invitation and consequent expectation of having a visit as Visva-Bharati University decided to honour him with the title 'Deshikottom' (the highest honour conferred for contribution to Literature and Education). Visva-Bharati was only two kms. away from our residence at Bolpur. A long letter came from him. A part of it: "..... I could not come to Shantiniketan to receive this honour, because the University informed me a week before the Convocation days and I had another conference on those days in Delhi, in connection with my troubled homeland Punjab".

"I am sensitive to your reactions to my novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Other young people in Bengal have read it for over so many years since its issue, and they have felt the agony of the tragedy of the tea pickers under the white planter. Since then the agonies of the pickers have gone on because of the Browns who have taken over, (who) exploit the labourers as previous masters...."

In Bengal, the Left had succeeded in bringing egalitarianism of the Nehruvian kind..... Our Central Parliament is in the hands of the people many of whom want to take the place of the British burg....." (Letter dated 11.02.1986)

Mulk Raj's relationship with Kolkata took a greater shape in and after 1948. Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay, a noted writer, translated *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* into Bengali. The young readers, enthused by newly acquired Independence, read his writings widely. Before this, Mulk Raj's novels were proscribed by the British ruler. In the latter half of the 1960s tremendous price hike and political unrest in Bengal for years decreased the reading habit. Our generation was crossing the adolescence then.

As a man with the finest human quality, Mulk Raj wrote innumerable letters to various persons. After dropping any letter to him in the post office, if I ever came to know about his illness and excessive busy moments he had to



undergo, I craved him for taking a rest. My letter could be replied some time after. But reply did come from him. This kind of courtesy is an inseparable part of the value-oriented activities developed during Victorian age, continued by writers and artists. Along with a short letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 1986, Mulk Raj sent me an article 'The Sources of Protest in My Novel'. It was published in *Rock Pebbles* (July – Dec. 2001). Before going further, I am accepting his letters to me as a kind of intimate talk.

In 'The Sources of Protest....' he described how his hate against British Police developed while he was only fourteen. A few years later, he was a student of Khalsa College. A student strike broke out. Mulk Raj joined the strike and went to jail. His father, who was an employee of the British Raj, beat his mother accusing that she indulged her son. He was already perturbed seeing his aunts tortured by his uncles. But the last incident made him burst into flame.

In August 1988 I stayed at his residence in Mumbai for two days; he told me emphasizing the incidents came in his life one after another to change him totally. He had an affair with the sister-in-law of a close friend. The girl belonged to Muslim community. Her father forced her to marry a railway employee, she became the third wife. The railway employee came to know about earlier love and killed her. Mulk Raj now decided to visit poet Md. Iqbal as he was a devoted reader of earlier writings of the poet. Hearing his situation Iqbal gave him one hundred rupees and the address of a few friends in London. Meanwhile, he secured a good result in the final examination in the college, the Principal gifted him one hundred rupees. His mother sold some of her ornaments very secretly, saved a little from family expenses, handed the money over to Mulk Raj.

He crossed the sea of uncertainty, had a damp and small space for living in London. Later he managed to get the job of a proof-reader in Hogarth Press. Through the friends of Iqbal he came in touch with T.S. Eliot, sculptor Eric Gill, poet and art critic Herbert Read, philosopher and journalist Middleton Murray, political scientist Harold Laski. Besides, he became habituated with writing diary. He had a chance of walking into Virginia Woolf's drawing room one day. She had just finished a novel which she read out before Mulk Raj. The diary gradually transformed and took the shape of a novel named *Bakha*. It was much influenced by the 'Stream of Consciousness'. From London he went to Ireland to know about the Irish movement. He came in touch with W.B. Yeats and George Russell. Poet Russell told him about Gandhiji's movement for amelioration of the conditions of the untouchable and suggested him to return to India when he came to know about *Bakha*. In this context, Veena Nare has written about Mulk Raj: "..... he read a story by Mahatma Gandhi published in *Young India* and he was impressed by its 'utmost simplicity'. This was the



story of a sweeper boy Uka. This simple story by the Mahatma brought him to the Sabarmati Ashram”.

“..... I fail to understand how even a critic like K.R. Shrinivas Iyenger is silent about Mahatma’s role in shaping the novel....” (see “The Role of the Mahatma in shaping Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, in *Rock Pebbles*, July Dec. 2000). So the transformation of Mulk Raj’s diary into *Untouchable* is not fully discussed in Veena Nare’s article.

On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1965, he wrote a letter to the great novelist Mikhail Sholokhov – the writer of the epic novel *Quiet Flows The Don*. It is very important as considered by Mulk Raj himself. A part of this long letter:

Dear Sholokhov,

‘The evening your sixtieth birthday was celebrated in the Hall of Columns of Moscow, I was in the platform partly behind you and witnessed a heart – warming spectacle.....

..... I first read your *Quiet Flows the Don* about thirty years ago, in London. At that time I had just finished a short novel *Untouchable*. Your book with its broad epic sweep inspired me and made me believe that the writers of the East could also enter world literature by telling their readers about distant people of whom the West knows very little. Ever since then, when considering novels about the Asian Continent, I have thought in epic term....’

‘It is a fact that .... the most powerful and intense human experiences can only be acquired by a writer through the ordeal of a changing social system, and not from the humdrum existence of ossified societies, where lack of any broad experience of life reduces us (writers) with a few exceptions, to the role of lapdogs or favourite pussies, only fit for amusing their owners or their families....’

‘In your novels ..... people remain human, they do not change mechanically in the course of social revolution, and even in the midst of harrowing changes, fight to maintain their personal dignity and integrity. Their humanity, their struggle to wrench love from the very claws of death, to assert the fortitude of spirit, all emerge as something more important than any direct heroism.

‘.... you seldom leave your home stanitsa. (Russian word meaning locality). You remain yourself when you go abroad, the extremely modest person whom I saw a few years ago in a writers’ club in Stockholm.....’

‘I have used the word ‘humanism’. By this I mean ‘a country without frontiers’ .... Its essence is faith in man, in his honesty and dignity, in his desire to live and let other live regardless of race, the colour of their skin or their beliefs...’ (Letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> August 1965)

The writers of our generation started writing in the decade of 1970s in Bengali, accepted two notions indicated in the letter though without knowing about its existence. The first one is: ‘..... you seldom leave your stanitsa....’ (locality) The second is ‘I have used the word ‘humanism’. By this I mean a country without frontiers... or their beliefs .....’ And in 1970s there was a turning in literature in several Indian languages. Later, in Bangla the 1970s became known as the decade of anti-establishment.

From my adolescence individually I looked into the hypocrisy of the highly educated established people and a few biased teachers in Visva – Bharati (Shantiniketan) and protested against the system as far as I could. It was 1968-69. The present writer happened to get the letter in 1987 accepted as an introductory note to Sholokhov’s collection of short-stories and asked Mulk Raj about it. Naturally, the letter gave me a conviction.

In 1981-82, the present writer became interested in Rabindranath Tagore’s paintings. Tagore is considered as a pioneer of modern Indian painting. I came to know about Mulk Raj’s writing on Tagore’s painting. His role as an art-critic and some of his constructive works for young artists is not much discussed. So I am trying to touch the matter in brief. Otherwise, the present article would be too much lengthy. One may see the issues of *Marg*, a magazine once dealt with painting and sculpture edited by him.

In conversation with him at his residence mentioned before, he told me that his love for painting and sculpture was developed while he came in touch of Herbert Read. I wrote a letter to him on 16.8.1986 expressing my thought about painting, sculpture and cinema : ‘..... influence of art on literature is now full-fledged. Now it is the age of cinemautographic influence though some of its characteristics have already entered into modern and neo-modern poetry.... Satyajit Ray has rightly noticed that pictorial art and music are to some extent abstract. Literature and cinema have to permit details.

‘Ancient Indian literature is enriched with cinematographic details. So by introducing cinematography in literature we can admit our heritage....’ (Dated 16.8.1986). This letter was the result of my experimentation for writing poems. In response, Mulk Raj wrote two letters to me. There he wrote about his involvement in the struggle against Apartheid. He wanted to talk freely for hours. These two letters (14.9.86 and 19.9.86) bear the instance of his life – long devotion for infusing creative works and social commitment.

In the latter half of 1960s as the Chairman of Lalit Kala Academi, he convinced Indira Gandhi that a triennial should be started to encourage the young artists. Exhibition of world contemporary art at three years’ interval took a start in 1968. So it is an instance of Mulk Raj’s sincerity for attending new and newer generation. During the occasion of first triennial, a souvenir was published by Lalit Kala Academi in March 1968 in which an article by

Mulk Raj was included. The article 'Artist As Hero' seems relevant though was written about fifty years ago. One would find relationship between the letter written to Sholokhov and the article signifying that the two being emerged from the same mastermind. A few lines from 'The Artist As Hero' '..... What do I mean by the theme behind the themes? If I may put it in terms of the gossip always indulged in after a visit to the galleries, the question is invariably asked about contemporary art : 'Is it art or double talk?'

'The few people who are initiated in the new ways of handling paint, or other materials, naturally feel angry about this kind of dismissal of both the genuine and the fake with broad contempt..... The artist has, in fact, come in the midst of the disruption caused by power potentates, to be the hero of our time. Specially where he is not merely a fashionable pawn of the galleries, but a sincere searcher of his impulses, intuitions, vision.

Perhaps one may say that the kind of free expression of the nuances of the body-soul, which seems to be the pre-occupation of the contemporary artists of the world, offers a new kind of personal religion to the young.... As the orthodox religion, moralities and social system fail to assuage the inner needs of the children of the age of technology..... I am an unashamed and notorious defender of the experimentalists and .... I see emergent, in our century a new unitary man.'

'This man is not a mere figure of speech. Nor is he a generalized personality. He is the free thinker often called 'mad Professor' by the roughnecks. He is the scientist who does not want atombomb used for the destruction of the world but for increasing the basic plenty. ... He is the artist who quests after the many ambiguities of form, allowing his inventive spirit to lend his materials to all the multifarious apperceptions of the body-soul, ... He is the enlightened public man of generous outlook who knows the broken world of science and the cracks in the social structure of the nations.... The unitary man is supra-national in politics and has mentally abolished the frontiers of the power-states, though he is rooted in his sense of locality.... and is not a neutral, faceless universalist. He forces the very challenge of whether we shall have more or less technology. And he seeks to adjust himself to his environment, as far as he can, or rejects the environment where he cannot absorb it, or rejects-accepts parts of environment, with a view to remolding it in the interest of the survival on the human plane'... ('The Artist As Hero', Lalit Kala Contemp. 7 and 8, Sept. 1967 – April 1968).

The present writer had a long time visit and interaction with him when he came to Bolpur – Shantiniketan on the eve of 125<sup>th</sup> birth-day anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. He presided over the international seminar organized by Visva-Bharati. It was in March 1987. A better understanding between him and me occurred which made the said visit at his residence possible.

He wrote to me: 'I am due to reach Shantiniketan on 6<sup>th</sup> March by which train from Howrah I don't know. I will be there 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> may be also 9<sup>th</sup>. Please contact me in the office of the Assistant Registrar'. (Letter : 18.2.1987) That time, I had to live at a remote village Jatra in Birbhum dist. from where one had to walk five or six kilometers to reach bus-stop. Bus plied twice or hardly thrice throughout the day which would get suddenly stopped any moment. I managed to reach Bolpur and after a search found the lodge where he was staying. Mulk Raj introduced me to Anees Jung who came with him. She was a journalist-cum-writer usually writing in the pages of *The Times of India*, belonged to Nawab family of Hyderabad. She was a few years younger than Mulk Raj's daughter. With the help of Mulk Raj she built her writing career.

It was nearly 4 P.M. in the afternoon. In an hour they were ready for going away. He looked at my old and worn-out bi-cycle and was watching the muddy spots on my pajama (country type trouser) being amused. I felt, he guessed that I had to come across a long paddy field and muddy-path, dried. Passionately he said to me : 'Leave your bi-cycle here. Come on with me. I am going to K.G. Subramanyan and Some Nath Hore'. These two are stalwarts in modern Indian painting and sculpture respectively. I was in a crux. I always had some fun and interaction with the teen-aged boys. One of them started writing poems and prose. Several times the boy happened to see and called me aside the streets, made me read his writings. I showed him Mulk Raj's letter saying that he should visit the legend. At last, he and a few of his friends wanted to see Mulk Raj at least once in their life time. So how should I leave them. They would wait for me at a street corner settled before. Seeing me in hesitation he began to call upon repeatedly. Being unable to convince him, I had to ask the escort provided by Visva-Bharati to convince him. At last, Mulk Raj made me promise so that we arrived at his room at 7.30 P.M. There was a marathon kind of free talking. The young poet talked scarcely, gazed at him all the time with a surprise in his eyes. We came out of the lodge at near about 11 P.M. The streets were lonely. I said to the young poet; 'Do visit him early in the morning before 6.30 A.M. He is an early riser. Gandhiji himself made him habituated with early rising. I know that he practises pranayam (breathing exercise) and completes everything within 6 A.M. A hesitation came in young poets' gesture. After a pause he said; 'I cannot but speak English or Hindi. Aside this....' In fact, it was difficult for a young boy to stand face to face before a great personality. I tried to assure him : 'Throw away your English or Hindi. Do make a hodgepodge of Bangla, English and Hindi to serve it before Mulk Raj.'

Night passed anyway and I reached Mulk Raj's room next morning. It was hardly 6.30. He sat on verandah peeling an orange. He fingered me to sit on a morha (a kind of stool made from bamboo-stick) nearby, gave half

the orange to me and started: 'The boy you sent has probably been suffering from mental complex. He cannot adjust with his parents and friends too.' All on a sudden I could not recall whom I sent to him. I had in mind that the boy possibly won't come. In an attempt to remind me, Mulk Raj said; 'Oh! He is your student'. In a minute or two I apprehended that the young fellow at last could overcome his hesitation. I felt a great joy within. What I said to the boy was not proved false. At the same time I was astonished because a few days back one of his friends told me about some change and inconsistency in his behaviour. How Mulk Raj touched his soul which I only heard about. I said: 'But I know that the boy is very sensitive. He writes good prose and fine poems. Waving index-finger, Mulk Raj as if said with his whole body; 'You should inspire him'. I replied; 'Yes, so I have given him the room number of Mulk Raj Anand. He earnestly asked; 'What does his father do?' I was in an awkward position to say: 'I do not know all about him'. Passionately he added: 'He is your young friend and you do not know about his parents?' I said: 'I happened to visit him twice or thrice only in the streets. I have talked with him for some minutes only.' Anees Jung reported from inside the room: 'His father is food and supply inspector'. Mulk Raj was a bit excited to say; 'Does his father accept bribe?' It was not possible for me to answer such question. Yet it is still strange to me how Mulk Raj covered the large age-gap multiplied because of the rapidly changing world. In various senses, this change is due to the degeneration in 1970s-80s and afterwards.

In Bolpur-Shantiniketan Mulk Raj told me that his relationship with Tagore was deeper in 1938 while he decided to organize a writers' association. He visited Tagore in Shantiniketan then. In 1937, Mulk Raj and Urdu writer Sajjad Zahir joined World Writers Congress in Madrid in Spain. From there, both of them took the inspiration to organize an association. Later it was given the name Progressive Writers' Association. Tagore was its President and its first conference was held in 1938 in Kolkata. As the President of All-India Committee of the Association, Mulk Raj delivered a speech which became a history. A few lines from the speech: 'And from the beginning we had the guidance and the good-will and the active help of the oldest and youngest poet of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore, who came out boldly in the defence of civil liberties campaign and who was the first writer to sign the statement sent by Indian intellectuals to the Peace Congress at Brussels....'

At the endeavour of Progressive Writers' Association and at the earnest skill of Mulk Raj, a connection among the writers of various Indian provincial languages was established. The idea of 'unity in diversity' innovated by Tagore was established as a reality. From Bangla Bishnu De, Hiren Mukhopadhyay, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay and Manik Bandyopadhyay; Shiv Shankar Pillai and Potekkad from Malayalam; Shiv Ram

Karnath from Kannad (Karnataka); Ismad Chughtai, Ali Sardar Zafari, Faiz Ahamad Faiz from Urdu joined the association and played important role. But a section of writers writing in Hindi stood against the venture. These activities greatly influenced the writers emerging in 1940s in various Indian languages. Its repercussion came back again in late 1960s, in 1970s-80s and even in 1990s in various ambiguous manners.

If Mulk Raj and Sajjad Zahir did not go to Spain, they scarcely had the idea of organizing a writers' association. In 1936, Mulk Raj found the Falangists and the Facists attacking democratically elected government in Spain, he joined the battle against the autocrats. The Falangists captured the power during Civil War in Spain. Indian writers scarcely have the experience of passing days in trench. Mulk Raj made a rough sketch of the novel *Across the Black Waters* in January - April 1937 in Barcelona, Madrid with the experience gained in Spain. In *Across the Black Waters* everything is seen through the eyes of Lalu, a boy born and brought up in a peasant family who had just crossed his adolescence, he reached manhood in cold, wet trenches of First World War in fear and death, fighting hand-to-hand with German soldiers. Mulk Raj returned back to Europe in 1939 to rewrite the novel and to get a publisher. It was translated into eleven languages after its publication. Its Indian edition was reviewed by *Indian Literary Review* as 'The best Indian war novel' but is not much discussed. From 1939 he worked as a journalist in Europe smashed by Second World War. He was a representative of BBC for South-East Asia. He worked with the noted novelist George Orwell, collected the tape-record of the speech of Netaji Subhash Bose broadcast by Radio Berlin. Mulk Raj worked in this field with an innovative and creative mind, but his activities as a journalist is scarcely known to Indian people.

The intimate talk in Bolpur-Shantiniketan at time turned into frolicsome exchanges. Anees Jung asked me; 'Have you ever loved any girl?' Being asked by such a lady I was genuinely abashed and managed to say: 'No – not so seriously yet'. Mulk Raj, in a jovial mood and at the same time for understanding me, said with a wink: 'Why in Shantiniketan?' Mulk Raj knew that I was a college student at Visva-Bharati (Shantiniketan). During that time (1969-72) our friend made fun by describing it as 'Premniketan' (abode of love-affair). Mulk Raj came to know this, I guessed. Possibly for making me little more free, he said about his second love with Irene, a woman of Ireland. Irene joined the Irish movement and went to jail. Now I was free from hesitation to say: 'The girls I saw in Shantiniketan seemed artificial. To most of them love meant conflict of status. They looked at the simple people with a scorn, particularly at those who did not come from rich families. I came from lower-middle class and was shy by nature while I was a college student and so was not free in mixing with the girls not much acquainted.'



Later, I wrote a long letter describing my individual agony evolved from that situation around me. He wrote: 'I read your sage, I feel you are very sensitive human being and honest to the core. Such a person is unlikely to be acceptable to our people in the present transition.... It seems that you are probably divided in your mind whether you want yourself only or yourself as a part of a process of bringing awareness to the new young.... Why not write a hundred page autobiography in Bengali. You may see yourself more clearly as you grow up and may be that will be the best way to accept yourself as you see your face in your own mirror....' (Letter dated 10.12.1987).

In later days his thought was rounded about his autobiographical novels. The indication is found in *Sources of Protest*.... (Rock Pebbles July-Dec. 2001) thus:.... 'The terror of one's self, may be got over, by asking every day, as in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: 'Who am I?' 'Where do I come from?' and 'Where am I going?' I would have to recognize my identity as an Indian, not subservient to the white rulers. And I would have to be a man without the help of an anthropomorphic god ....' From a matured state of this kind of understanding, he possibly suggested me to write autobiography.

Quotations from a few letters written to the present writer reveal Mulk Raj's mentality:

- 1) 'I suggest you publish your stories in Bengali only, in the first instance. Then if you can get a good translator, get the Bengali stories rendered into English. Of course, there is no publisher in Delhi who will issue stories. Nor in U.K. either. There may be someone in Calcutta?'

'Write about your village. Your autobiography – the story of an unknown villager beyond Nirod Chaudhri....' (Dated 22.09.1989).

- (2) As you can guess I am involved in troubles in Punjab.... For months I have not thought of my writings or often people's work.... You are young and naturally ardently creative. Do go on with your expression.... Actually, the acceptance of the Swedish magazine proves you don't need patronage. Your talent will be recognized...' (Dated 10.05.1990)

- (3) 'For once you have noticed that there are other things in life beside writing stories! The Gulf war is certainly the beginning of a process which will make the world into the American Century!!'

'And we will be fumbling with our words, without making our people resilient enough to till our soil and be self sufficient with mechanization of the western kind and bring in the consumer society!'

'That is why I have suggested that West Bengal was, by and large, going in the direction of retaining the kurta – dhoti culture and Sriniketan handiwork without selling out to the West....' (Dated 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1991).

During this time he was writing a ‘long novel’, to some extent, autobiographical. Here Mulk Raj tried to establish a concern he nurtured all through his life. It is his epical *Bharatyatra*, where he predicted that how much we are devoured by American kind of consumerism now; the real peasant of our country would not lead American life-style even after five hundred years. In this novel he wanted to shape the idea ‘small is beautiful’ – an idea innovated by Mahatma Gandhi. Here, Mulk Raj fulfilled the inspiration of ‘broad epic sweep’ he had from Sholokhov. His novel *The Bubble* published in 1984 has epical quality about which Prema Nandakumar, a noted Tamil – English bilingual writer, once wrote: ‘the long novel has become a rare thing in Indian writings in English today. Publishing cost as well as a paucity of creative imagination is the reasons for the shrinking of the Indo – Anglian novel. Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Bubble* comes as a welcome change.....’ *The Bubble* gave him the confidence for writing longer novel mentioned just before.

Mulk Raj’s short-stories are unique but scarcely discussed. Books for children by him like *Mora* or *Street Games of India* are yet to be discussed. We should thank Dr. Udayanath Majhi who has given us the scope for discussion through his world-wide circulated journal *Rock Pebbles*.

At night on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1987 he, being in a trance, was saying: ‘Who was Rabindranath? He wrote *Geetanjali* and won Nobel Prize. Is it all?... No, he was a MAN. I am not a novelist. I am trying to be a MAN’. One of my friends and journalists told him: ‘But we know that you are one of the greatest novelists of modern India’. He answered: ‘No, I am not a novelist, I am trying to be a man.’

Years have passed. Now I hear a stormy voice, echoing and re-echoing, has shattered down the barrier of time and distance, uttering: ‘I am not a novelist’. That time, we did not want to accept it but he said the truth. He is not mere a novelist. He is a myriad minded man – a sage of our time.



## Blend of Imagination and Reality: A Study of Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

P. K. Debata

Mulk Raj Anand has created a lasting impression in the literary firmament not because of his personality but because of his aesthetic merit. His association with Mahatma Gandhi and his doctrine of Ahimsa has immensely influenced his life and work. He had also been influenced by Gandhi's account of a sweeper boy in the magazine *Young India* and when he was a student at Cambridge and University College, London, he was rewriting *Untouchable*, after Gandhi's essay. Later on when he submitted his manuscript to Gandhi for his comments, Gandhi advised him to restrain his style by giving up the language of Bloomsbury and embracing the language of an untouchable. In fact Gandhi's advice was to come close to a home-grown native Indian language to understand the pulse and throb of the people. But Anand was very good at Punjabi and Urdu but his decision to adopt the language of the immigrant to write about the untouchables and coolies and to convey the spirit of one's own was a overwhelming movement. Alastair Niven has emphasized his adoption of "a hybrid language to suggest in English the rhythms and nuances of a mother tongue in this case Punjabi" (p.145). As Anand wrote in his *Apology for Heroism*, he was faced with a double burden, "the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalaya of the Indian past." So in this way Anand happens to put himself as an iconic stature between the imagination and the reality of

the then Indian socio-cultural milieu.

The primary concern of Mulk Raj Anand had been to sustain his belief “in the struggle, the struggle of men to free themselves and to expand freedom to others to sustain the ever expanding areas of consciousness, to make man truly human as for him”(Apology,p 25). “The world becomes our task” (p.25). This was so because he did not take in any particular faith, religion or belief early in life and his readings were very “discursive and mainly snobbish”. (p.37), a kind of aid to cleverness and even one point he had toyed with the idea of turning “to consider the possibilities of terroristic violence as a means of achieving national freedom”(p.39),attempts “as ludicrous as they were abortive(p.39).Again deep down there was also this muffled protest against the submission and the compromises of his father who believed was settling down like a respectable person. Anand’s decision to leave India in the early autumn of 1925 to research in philosophy there at University College, London turned the wave of his life. His identity of “an Indian, a British subject by birth, born of a father who had broken away from the hereditary profession of artisan-ship and joined the mercenary British-Indian army, and of a peasant mother” brought new vicissitudes. In to the formation of this identity had gone all the readings of philosophy, literature, and the arts of Marx, Hegel and Kant, of the old philosophies and the religions of India. He was very much active till the end of his life and looking forward to a day when he would be able to furnish his biographical cycle of novels *The Seven Ages of Man*.

He befriended writers like George Orwell, E.M. Forster, William Empson, Henry Miller and many others during his stay in Great Britain. The 1930s was a turbulent decade in English literary history and writers and intellectuals were apprehending the worst because of the rising tide of totalitarian dictatorship in Spain, Germany and Italy. The freedom of the writer was under peril. In Spain the Republicans were at odds against the dictatorial regime of Franco. Spain drew some of the best writers, poets novelists and painters to fight for the cause of the Republicans. Ernest Hemingway came to Spain to report for Esquire and later on sent his NANA dispatches and wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Andre Malraux came from France, Camilo Jose Cela wrote *The Hive* against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil war. Picasso painted Guernica. Neruda was there, so too Lorca Auden wrote one of his most controversial poems on Spain where he wrote about the urgency of “necessary murder”. George Orwell himself wrote *Homage to Catalonia* and many more essays, journalistic accounts and notes, apart from fighting in the war supporting the republican cause. Orwell’s literary career was more or less determined by the Spanish Civil war and he was forced to embrace journalistic reporting to bring home many of the com-

plex issues of the war. Mulk Raj Anand too participated in the war in the side of the Republicans of Spain, and he too concerned himself to a political cause. Unlike Earnest Hemingway who had initially come to participate in the First World War to “see the show” from close quarters with a “spectatorial attitude” as Malcolm Cowley would write about the generation of writers. Orwell and Anand took the opposite stance and blended politics and art to write some of the most engaging pieces. England and Spain offered Anand the preparatory ground to think about the political social reality of India, the country of his birth. Orwell had pointed out that where so ever you are, you can’t escape the ground realities, the socio –economic dynamic of your location. In a turbulent time a writer is bound to be political and Anand did come to the basics of his country to reflect upon the perennial problems of the untouchables and also the larger issues of war and totalitarian dictatorship.

Anand in way opened up links between these two worlds and tried to hold to the premise that he would not just adhere to the country of his origin for the subject matter of his fiction as there was again and again this surprising twist which took him to look back on the west. Anand was operating within a distinctly new horizon and embraced the best of the two worlds :he moved in the Bloomsbury circles, but he was not out of touch with contemporary realities; he invested a considerable effort in trying to convince that the whole world is his “task” a world described by James Joyce as a “Chaosmos”, neither simple cosmos nor simple chaos, but a complex loosely joined and supple configuration given to chance and the unexpected, the contingent and the open-ended, a word suffused and hounded by shades and spectres of poverty and starvation, and such unrelenting evils like casteism and untouchability, a world colored by the throb and excitement of love and togetherness. As a citizen of this world, Anand had realized early that writers must break away from the sentimental politics and rhetorics of the romantics and make reality our mehboba” (*Reminiscences* 12). This “reality” is starkly evident in his confirmation and participation in the freedom struggle and in his fight against the inhuman genocide of the Fascist and the Nazis. He had announced: “Only when man may seek to become a whole man through all his concrete experience of suffering can writing become a genuine in content and beautiful in form” (*Reminiscences* p.12). Anand had a taste of this “concrete experience” of suffering among the people in the West during his brief sojourn in London in the 1930s. The ordinary mass of people was a disillusioned lot reeling under employment when the people in the upper echelons of power were trying to appease the racists, Hitler and Mussolini. Anand had willingly joined the thirties movement to preserve the for the future against the violence of the fascists. As a member of the group of progressive

writers of India, he had assigned himself the task of the conscience keeper of his generation threatened with violence and mass-extinction and in the world writers' conference in Paris in 1936 he sided with Maxim Gorky, Andre Gide, Andre Malraux and Louis Aragon, who believed that true art must involve itself in human political affairs against the "murders of hope". He was indeed the sole representative of India in the anti-fascist writer's campaign in UK in late 1936 bringing to the forum the message of Jawaharlal Nehru to defend the weak and to kindle the conscience of men and women into self-Awakening through the words of the writers. When General Franco, with help and support of Hitler and Mussolini, attacked the popular elected government in Spain, he joined the Republican cause like the anti-fascist writers of the west. As a member of the Progressive Writers Movement, he took the advice of his colleagues and fellow writers who met in Lucknow under the chairmanship of Prem Chand. And he went to Spain to join the International Brigade with Andre Malraux, Ralph Fox, John Cornford, Christopher Caudwell and others. Even when the poems of Tagore, Iqbal, Nirala and Faiz and Bishnu Dey had made him aware of the sense of shock at the barbarism released by the masters against the slaves, of violence against Gandhi's non-violence, he was not prepared for the organised oppression and killing of the Jews by Hitler and his cohorts. For the moment he went against the vow he had made to follow the path of non-violence and became a part of the International Brigade to fight against the ruthless, impersonal and centralized forces of Franco. But when he fainted on seeing a wounded man bleeding in Dr. Bethune's surgery in Barcelona during the war in Spain, he asked to be put in the category of Journalist, near the trenches. "I felt I could not shoot anyone, even an enemy" (Reminiscences p.14). His inability to participate actively in the new global culture of the world brought in a schizoid sense of alienation from the general mass of people. His allegiance to the principle of non-violence also prompted him to stay away from the violence and to reassert his belief in the culture of humanism. When the Second World War broke out, he opted to be a conscientious objector and did such work like tilling an acre of land running a library van for St. Pancras Borough Council. Later he joined the war effort as a causal broadcaster with George Orwell in 1942. He had the double burden of fighting against the larger issues of war, fascism and imperial violence and the more subtle issues of poverty, child-labour, casteism exploitation and colonial subjugation. It was when he was in England that he wrote his *Untouchable*, a paradigmatic text of "pro-subaltern cosmopolitanism" (p.250), as Vinay Dharwadkar would like to say. Untouchability manifested itself as an evil, segregating and marginalizing and excluding a sizeable section of human population. Mulk Raj Anand took

of the cause of exposing thus evil of untouchability in Indian society and he was very much under the influence of Gandhi who wanted that the language of text be true to the characters .Anand did just that. Throughout his life he had this brush with the stark reality of India with the coverings of myth and stories .He was not a historian but the history of India seeped into his narrative and transferred it. Be it the *Confession of an Indian Prince* or *The bubble*, his life and socio-political history of the times went into his fiction and enriched it in the process he had done away with high aesthetic aims of the nineteenth century writers followed a “low mimetic mode, in which a writer confronts and represents contemporary reality and everyday life, individual experience, shared social phenomena and the unfolding events of current local and national history”(Dharwadker p.244). Alastair Niven in his tribute to Anand has aptly written: “He is in truth a figure of towering humanity whose work guides us through the multitudinous complexity of India this century with more verse than any other prose writer of time” (p.145).Therefore it an apt to regard Mulk Raj Anand stands as an icon transporting the very spirit of social reality by superb sense of poetic exuberance before numerous critic and readers across the national as well as international boundaries.

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## *Untouchable* : The Unfinished Journey of Caste-System

Rajendra P. Lokhande  
and  
Padmavati V. Phutane

Mulk Raj Anand as a writer is deeply rooted in the Indian and Hindu tradition. He attempts to expose the age old agony and anguish of the down trodden and the aggrieved section in the Indian society. He keenly saw and felt the atrocities and suppression to which these sub-humans were subjected for ages together. He himself recognizes in his preface to *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) that all the heroes and heroines in his literary ventures are dear to him because they are reflections of real people and that he had known them in his childhood and youth. He was thoroughly obsessed with these people in society. His literary projection is of the people whose life is trapped in pain, social injustice, humiliation, affront and insult.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* portrays the realistic picture of society. It describes the events in a single day in the life of Bakha, the protagonist in the novel, in the town of Balushah. Bakha, an untouchable boy, is a victim of the caste-ridden society. He belongs to the sweeper community. Though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean. On many occasions, Bakha and his family are subjected to humiliatory treatment. The untouchables being weak have no justice. Bakha is a type and an individual as well. He is characteristic of the repressed, depressed and under privileged class. He is one of the many unlucky ones whose fate is painful and is destined to undergo humiliation and

mortification by the touchable somewhere or today.

Bakha searches for a solution to the tragedy of the destiny into which he was born. By the end of the book he concludes that it is a technology, in form of the newly introduced flush toilet that will be his savior and it will liberate his class collectively in the end by elimination of the need for a caste of toilet cleaners. Rejected, dejected and subjected to trials and tribulations, he is hopeful. The novel ends on a note of optimism. Through Bakha's character Anand wants to develop a kind of awareness in the outcaste and exploited people. Bakha is thus a true representative of a society in a state of transition. Bakha is extremely sensitive and his aspirations include a decent life with good education. He wants to be treated as a human being. In spite of his good merits he is insulted and put beyond the possibility of proper recognition. Several incidents in the novel explain this fact. The high caste priest's vulgarity, the inhumanity of the crowd delighting in his humiliation and finally the rebuff for his purely selfless act of saving the injured boy, have all made it clear to him that though he is in the society, he is not of it, though he is a fine boy, tender and wise at all, the society humiliates and injures him.

All of them abused, abused, why are we always abused? ...because we touch dung. It is only the Hindus and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I am a sweeper ...untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word I am untouchable. (Anand p.38)

Thus Bakha is aware of the limitation of the given social structure and is also ready to acknowledge the rising rebellion within him, but is unable to translate that protest into action. Bakha is a universal figure to show the oppression, injustice, humiliation to the whole community of the outcastes in India. Bakha symbolizes the exploitation and oppression which has been the fate of untouchables like him. His anguish and humiliation are not of his alone but the suffering of the whole outcastes and underdogs. The novel emphasizes on an individual's attempt to emancipate himself from the age old evil of untouchability.

Anand's hero is not of the race, not of the time and the place, but exemplifies all humanity caught in contingencies of an antiquated social order that impedes his evaluation into a self consistent social life. This is an unfinished journey of untouchables. Today we are surrounded by gadgets, automatic appliances and all kinds of labour-saving devices. We have tranquillizers, psychiatry, psychology, motivational research and the power of positive thinking to help us cope with life. Yet the condition of untouchables is not totally changed. Mahatma Gandhiji once said that untouchability and casteism are



the most indelible stigmas on Hinduism. It is a truism that evils like casteism and untouchability which have survived in the Indian society have fraught and marred it. Even though efforts by social reformers, over the years and centuries were made, the evils could not be obliterated. What Gandhiji said is true in the present age also. Since 1950 India has enacted and implemented many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its Dalit populations. Taking affirmative action for people from poor, backward castes, India has expanded its efforts to include such people in its economic and social mainstream. However, we talk about 'decaste' in public life but we are more conscious about the caste in private life. This attitude of intellectuals and the politicians and even common men promotes the prominence of caste-system in our life. Therefore, in this new era of globalization there is little hope of eradication of caste-system from public and private life. So in this context, the significance of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* has relevance. This is the unfinished journey of Indian people towards the eradication of the caste-system. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* underlined this problem before independence but still the solution is not in the sight. Thus by revisiting *Untouchable* many questions arise in mind. The prominent one of them is the intensity of caste.

There are many Bakhas hidden in the society in new form, not necessarily addressed as untouchables. In most of the areas human rights are rejected for people belonging to lower class. They are humiliated by using new techniques though not like old age techniques. Even though, they have access to education, water, temple and such all facilities, they have not reached the status of the touchables. Growth in slum areas, unawareness of rights and their inability to use them, biased views, unwillingness in selection, not much change in allotting age old and lower profession to particular castes etc. are the signs of unfinished journey of untouchables. It will continue as long as the caste-system is dominant in minds of the society. Dr. Ambedkar once pointed out rightly that 'outcaste is a by-product of the caste system'. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can help to save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu faith of this odious and vicious dogma.

The social evils in India are rooted so deeply in the soil that a complete revolution is necessary for reformation. Mere change of the hereditary profession by mechanization, as Bakha thinks, will not put an end to the evil and cannot totally uproot this native problem. The hope of humanity lies in such men who care for other men. People should collectively come forward to overturn the social order. Anand proclaims, "... one man is the other: the other men are in one: all men are brothers. The recognition of that truth is the next



promised world revolution – which literature may help to bring about, against all the odds of our age – so tragic and yet potentially so full of hope for man ...”(Anand p.16)

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## Naturalism and Realism to Register social protest : A reading of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

Ajith R.

*Untouchable*, the first novel of Mulk Raj Anand, one of the 'Big Three' of Indian English fiction deals with a day in the life of Bhaka, an 18 year old Bhangi boy. The novel is a sharp attack on the caste-system, which excluded 'untouchables' from virtually all areas of Indian life. 'Bakha' here is a universal figure to show the oppression, injustice and humiliation suffered by the whole community of the out-castes. The novel portrays typical characters and situations and it presents Indian life with a philosophical position. As a social realist, the novelist views life and its conflicts with sympathy for the down trodden.

The outcastes colony is portrayed as a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows. A brook ran near the lane, carried dirt and filth of the public latrines, altogether made it an 'uncongenial' place to live in. The very first incident in the novel can be cited as a good example for earth realism. Bakha returns after cleaning three rows of latrines, his father still snoring, while his brother Rakha playing out in the maidan and his sister Sohini blowing hard to light fire with wet sticks. Bakha relieved her of the job while she went out to fetch water. She had to wait till the temple priest was kind enough to draw water for her from the well, as the untouchables were denied access to the wells. Since his father complained of not being well, Bakha undertook his

father's job of sweeping the roads. The very details of Bakha's job revealed the stark reality of the wretched life of the certain communities termed 'low'. The picture of Bakha not only throws light on their abject poverty and suffering but also gives emphasis on their low-caste. As K.N. Sinha comments on Bakha:

...He is the lowest of the lowly whose destiny does not suffer any appreciable erosion...

Lakha, Bakha's father is portrayed as an utter contrast to Bakha. He is old, selfish and ill-tempered. He thinks only of his own comforts and takes his children to task. Lakha uses all kinds of vulgar words in abusing Bakha. At the same time, He is softer towards Rakha who is a clever rogue. May be his father finds in his younger son his own qualities like laziness, shirking of work and dirty habits. Lakha is so severe with Bakha that the latter has to walk away from the house in frustration. The various characters in the novel are presented true to their social habits and customs. When Bakha reluctantly reports to Lakha about the humiliations and the insult offered to him and his sister at the temple, Lakha tries to console his son by narrating an incident of Bakha's childhood. Bakha was lying seriously ill but Lakha, waiting by the roadside could not get any upper caste man to procure the needed medicine from the Hakim. Finally, Lakha burst into the Hakim's room and implored him to save his child's life. At first the Hakim took him to task for polluting him, but later came to Lakha's hut and cured the child. Lakha warned his son to note that all high caste people were not necessarily wicked. The fact was that Lakha has seen so much of the pleasant and unpleasant sides of life that he had sunk into a philosophy of accepting things as they are. During his active days he had received many favours and presents from the superior officers, both English and Indian. But as a whole, the upper-caste people treated the outcastes with contempt and Lakha did not think it profitable to rebel against this injustice. Life had made him a conservative, afraid of progress which required courage and willingness to face dangers. He is in sharp contrast with Bakha, who is not only sensitive to injustice but dreams of the ways and means of overcoming them.

Bakha is a very dexterous workman, passersby often marveled at his skill saying he is, "a bit superior to his job, not the kind of man who ought to be doing this [cleaning toilets] (16)". Despite Bakha's skill and work-ethics he has no chance of moving up in his life. He is forever confined to his dirty, demeaning job. Each day Bakha saw the Brahmin boys walk to school and he dreamed of going with them. "How nice it must be to be able to read and write! One could read the papers after having been to school. One could talk to the Sahibs (38)."

Bakha expresses interest in the West, by being educated and able to

talk with the Sahibs he would rise above his caste. However, he has no chance for education as outcastes were not allowed in school because “the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low-caste man’s son (39)”.

Bakha’s desire to be educated like the Sahibs was strong and he offered to pay another boy to teach him to read. Bakha did not have much money so his offer to pay was indicative of his desire for education. Education was denied to people like Bakha and by becoming educated Bakha hoped to distance himself from the stigma of his caste. A lot of Bakha’s actions are motivated by his desire to distance himself from the outcastes.

One of the most pathetic scenes in the novel is the ‘touching scene’ in the market. After offering tea to his ailing father, Bakha set forth with a big broom and a basket to sweep the roads in place of his father. On the way he bought four-anna worth ‘Jilebi’. After tasting a little piece he walks on with the rest of the sweets wrapped in paper. Overjoyed with the sweets he forgot to make the customary cry of ‘Posh, posh, sweeper coming’. The caste Hindus expect this cry to prevent them from the touch which would pollute them. Tasting the ‘Jilebies’ Bakha inadvertently touched a high caste Hindu. A small crowd soon gathered and they abuse and cursed Bakha. Fortunately a Muslim tongawala came that way and dispersed the crowd. But the polluted man gave Bakha a smart slap as the manifestation of his anger. Bakha’s turban fell off and the ‘Jilebies’ were knocked in to the dust. With tears in his eyes and anger in his heart, Bakha though impelled to return the blow, was restrained psychologically. Bakha says:

...All of them abused, abused, abused why are we always abused? The sanitary inspector that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too..... I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable I am an untouchable!(58).

The cruelty imposed on oppressed outcastes finds the best illustration in this episode.

Bakha is a hard working boy who never disobeys his father despite his repugnance for him and his lifestyle. Bakha had worked in the barracks of a British regiment and, “had been caught by the glamour of the ‘white man’s’ life (9)”. The British, or ‘Tommies’ as Bakha called them, treated him with respect despite his caste. “Bakha had looked at the Tommies, stared at them with wonder and amazement ... and he had soon become possessed with an overwhelming desire to live their life (11)”. The simplest way for Bakha to imitate the Tommies was through ‘fashun’, “by which he understood the art of

wearing trousers, breeches, coat, puttees, boots, etc.. (10)". Bakha is trying to rise above his caste by westernizing, yet he receives insults from his friends about his dress. However, it seems to be the only way he can remove himself from his caste.

Bakha endures one of the most humiliating and depressing days of his young life in this story. From sunrise on he is forced to deal with discrimination, hatred and hypocrisy. He is woken this early morning by his father's shouts. The first chore of the day is to clean the latrines before the rest of the community gets up to use them. When Bakha sleeps in he is chided by a local Hindu man who wants to use the toilet, "Why aren't the latrines clean, you rogue of a Bakhe! There is not one fit to go near! (7)". Bakha takes this customary abuse in stride and begins to clean the toilets. A local man is thankful for Bakha's work and offers him a hockey stick in a rare display of generosity. This gift pleases Bakha greatly as he has "the smile of a slave overjoyed at the condescension of his master, more akin to pride than to happiness (17)". Bakha is compared to a slave a number of times throughout this book. As the above quote shows Bakha is more proud that he satisfied the needs of the local Hindu man than he is happy that he got a new hockey stick. Despite Bakha's hatred for his job and lifestyle he still feels pride when serving the higher castes. Bakha's duty in life seems to be imbedded into him. As much as he wants to separate himself from his outcaste position, it is the only one he has had in his life. He has been conditioned to do his duty and to do it well. That is why he takes pleasure when the higher castes compliment him on his job or show him some other sign of courtesy. As much as Bakha hates the work he recognizes that it is his duty, so he does the work with no complaint.

The outcasts are proscribed from temple-entry. This is subjected to criticism by the novelist in the temple episode of the novel. Bakha is a Hindu and yet he cannot approach any of the Hindu Gods. When Bakha walks in front of the temple, the majestic look of the temple building rouses his curiosity. His curiosity makes him to climb the steps to get a glimpse of the wonders inside. Untouchables are not allowed to see the inside of the temple for purity reasons. While Bakha was peering through the window he was interrupted by the priest shouting, "Polluted! Polluted! (60)". Soon a crowd had gathered and they all berated Bakha saying they would need to perform a purification ceremony now. "Get off the steps you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service!," shouted the crowd (61). Bakha ran down to the courtyard where his sister was waiting. Here he got a shock as the priest claimed, "I have been defiled by contact(61)". Sohini explained the priest's claim saying, "That man made suggestions to me, when I was cleaning the lavatory of his house there.

And when I screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled.” Bakha was enraged by this and flew into a tirade. Unfortunately the priest had gone and the crowd had dispersed. This is an example of the hypocrisy of the other castes in their attitudes towards the untouchables. The higher castes view them as impure and make them do all the menial labour, yet they are not adverse to sexual relations with them. It seems the idea of impurity is only there to when it suits the higher caste people’s desires.

The plight of the outcasts is so dire that even for the fulfillment of the basic needs like water and food; they have to depend on the mercy of high-caste Hindus. Sohini has to wait as well, for quite along time, to fetch a pot full of water, for her tired and thirsty brother, putting up with the lustful and ogling men.

The wretched life of the untouchables is clearly depicted while dealing with the food they depend on. The women in the silversmith family used to give the left-overs of food to Bakha’s family as payment for the sweeping. For this Bakha has to shout at their doors like a beggar and wait till the lady comes out and throws some left over food, often they fall on the sands of road and get dirty. Bakha has to pick them and wrap them in his cloth. He gets so disgusted at the way of food has been thrown at him as if he is a street dog. He decides not to beg for food any more.

Another notable humiliation takes place in the hockey match scene. Bakha scores a goal, the goal-keeper hits him on the leg and this created a violent clash between the two sides. Sticks and stones start flying and by chance Babu’s son gets hurt on the head. He bleeds profusely and falls. Bakha takes the child in his arms and goes to Babu’s house. Instead of thanking Bakha for his kindness, the lady of the home abuses him for hurting her son and polluting her house. Bakha walks away with disgust and anger.

Bakha’s life was filled with difficulties, and humiliations and yet he has some expectations about his future. He wants to live a life free from ‘dirt’. Eventhough most of the incidents in his life smashed his hope for a bright future, there were some incidents which strengthened his hope. Havildar Charat Singh was a different person, though a high cast Hindu, he presents Bakha a brand new hockey stick. He also asks him to go into the kitchen and bring some coal for him. It was a miracle for Bakha, because no one has so far allowed the sweepers to stand even near the entrance of their house. Havildar bids him to hold his ‘chillum’ and shares his tea with him. Bakha believes there will also be some other caste Hindus like the Havildar and they may help him to fulfill his desires. The Havildar seems to be a person of different stock, a symbol of new humanity that treats all with honour and love.

At the end of Bakha’s day he finds himself following a crowd of

people who are going to hear Gandhi speak in town. Bakha listens attentively to Gandhi's speech and much of it strikes a chord in Bakha's heart. Gandhi tells the untouchables to stop accepting this treatment, he wants them to refuse the leftovers of the high-castes. The road out of untouchability is to purify their lives, they need to improve their hygiene, and get rid of their vices. Gandhiji mentioned about the Brahmin-boy who cleans latrines in his Ashram. Bakha is thrilled to hear the speech of 'champion of the untouchables'.

Bakha happens to over hear the conversation between Basheer and the poet, Iqbalnath. The poet is against Gandhiji's attempts to the liberation of the depressed classes. He is advocating for the use of machines. He speaks about the flush-out system in which human hands are not necessary to clean the latrines. Bakha is thrilled to hear about the flush-systems. He is unable to believe that there will be such mechanical system, which will liberate his people from the cleaning work. The sweeper boy finds in this flushing machine the solution to his problem, and feels it better than the solutions of the Colonel and Mahatma. These incidents strengthen his hope of freedom in future.

The incidents in the life of the hero are realistic. In this novel the author has narrated incidents that are truthful descriptions in the life of the so called untouchables in India. Mulk Raj Anand presents his hero as a representative-victim of the evils of a caste-ridden society. The Christian missionary, Gandhi, and the local poet who debates Gandhi's speech afterwards offer views on this question. However, the views are not satisfying because none of them offer the possibility for the untouchables to take action against their oppression. The Christian missionary simply offers salvation from untouchability through converting their religion. Bakha was turned off by this because he had no desire to change his religion and adopt the confusing teaches of this white man. The Christian missionary could not properly explain his religion because he was too busy singing hymns which are incomprehensible to Bakha. The idea that Bakha was born with sin turned him away. The only part of the missionary's talk that he took interest in was the idea that God sees everyone as equal. However, when Bakha meets the missionary's wife he sees the scorn in her eyes for him and realizes that replacing one religion with another will not change peoples attitudes. . He hopes that the new ideas (like that of Basheer) and an industrialization may change the lives of the untouchables.

Through naturalistic and realistic situations juxtaposing the plight of Sohini (the passive sufferer) with that of Bakha( the active sufferer), Mulk Raj Anand portrayed untouchability as pretentious religiosity and exploitation. The contemporary relevance of the novel lies in the subject of 'untouchability' which still exists in the Indian society in one way or the other. The impact of the

book also lies in its story telling and has emphasized by Forster that it affects the reader because the author had a clear understanding of the problem as he himself is an Indian.

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## SHORT-STORY

### Ghost

Basant Kr. Samant

In course of time I was transferred to the College of my native village. Initially I felt happy but was disillusioned after some days as I could not find a good house to stay. So I decided to stay in the old ancestral house at the end of the village. It was a house of olden times – the time of my grandfather. I thought, for so many years nobody stayed there. It was not in proper habitable condition. But it was very difficult for me to resist the temptation of staying in that house. Somehow an unknown force compelled me to take the decision of staying there.

I went to the house. Except human beings all other living creatures were there and they were the monarch of that kingdom. There was a high compound wall surrounding a very big piece of land – the last symbol of aristocracy. Inside there were four big rooms, some mango and jackfruit trees and two big granaries. In fact this farm house told so many tales of the past, although it was constructed only for the purpose of storing the agricultural products only. However the house had all modern amenities. I planned to repair and clean the house and stay there. Accordingly I started the work and continued for about a fortnight. During this time, the villagers came closer to me and told so many stories about this granary and the house.

According to the people, beneath the floor of the granary, was hidden immeasurable wealth. During rainy season, this wealth turns into a witch and take the shape of a big golden plate. This used to come out in the midnight and used to move about just like a ball of fire. If any human being comes before it, he will be simply devoured but if secretly human urine will be thrown over it, then it will turn to a plate of gold. Also people say that a child-widow of the village Suni had committed suicide by hanging herself from one of the trees inside in this granary in order to escape from the ignominy of becoming a unwed

mother. Also as night advances, a devil while standing on the compound wall, used to direct some witches to dance to its tune, on the courtyard. Even people say the spirit of Suni used to sob in the rainy nights. Due to all these – leave aside the nights – people don't look at the house even in day time.

Anyway after necessary repairs, I started staying there. Two days passed. On the third night I don't know what the time is, I heard a loud thud on the bedroom door. Then the sound of slowly opening of the door, At that time there was no electricity. It was totally dark. Outside it was raining heavily. I became very afraid. However after gathering all strengths, I shouted "Who, who is there?" No answer. I waited for a reply. But heard light footsteps of somebody. It was as if somebody was moving inside the room very stealthily so that there will be no sound of the trinket worn by the lady. This made me remember about Suni. The footsteps were coming towards me, nearer to the bed. I was inside the mosquito-net, the edges of which were tucked in the mattress on the bed. I felt a false safety and gathered courage inside the mosquito-net against the ghost of Suni. Actually I was afraid of snakes but now I felt the mosquito-net will become a shield against the spirit of Suni. Simultaneously, I was excited as the apparition moving inside the house, was not that of a man but a woman. This thought made me forget about the ghost. The sexual attraction made me excited. I started thinking whether ghosts have sexual appetite? Are they mad about sex? Don't they have any difference among caste, creed, colour, age, place? This spirit must have known that I am married and have a child. Still why is she attracted towards me?

Just at this time something fell near the steel almirah. Till now there was no electricity in the room. I felt as if somebody was sitting on my bed. I switched on my mobile phone and with its faint light I saw from inside the mosquito-net that the pillow and the mattress kept on the steel almirah had fallen down. I thought this is done by the spirit as she wants to have sex on the floor and not on the bed. At least she is civil and polite. Because she knows that only the legally married wife has the right to sleep with me on the bed. So the spirit got prepared to sleep on the floor. Amidst fear I became somewhat excited. I just waited – waited to get the welcome signal after everything is ready. For a brief time I was lost in my imagination. Suddenly I heard the sound of teeth clattering and some munching sound. Simultaneously I felt the smell of raw flesh in my nostrils. I was baffled at this.

At this moment electricity came and the room became lighted. I found a big fat cat had caught a big mouse and enjoying the feast. The cat had a trinket tied around her neck.

## POEMS

### The Birthday

Jayanta Mahapatra

These days  
look like a brick wall  
and from out of a crevice  
between the two slabs  
a voice soft and soothing  
drifted through:  
what about the day-- your birthday!

Since last somnolent night  
I've already been lulled to sleep  
under its voluptuous blanket.

How could I get  
a glimpse of the mustard field  
glistening with the yellows  
in the dark?

While Darkness seems  
sparkled with a flame of love  
sorrow drifts off to slumber  
a hefty dowry  
imposed on the girl  
awaiting her wedding bells  
weighs her down  
all her hopes wither away  
not a word of pity  
from any quarter  
the wince of her agony  
bottled up.  
The years past by

and the oncoming ones  
give out only howls of laughter  
on the birthday  
on this mossy ground.

I would rather be  
close about the words  
rambling on about the golden river  
that nourished my whole being  
lost on the golden sands of time  
or about my mother  
questing something to discover  
best known to her  
from the debris of the years  
stacked up in the much neglected  
premises.

*Original in Odia.*

*Translation : Sarat Chandra Sahoo,*

*e-mail - saratsahoo 66@gmail.com*

### Your Portrait

Sitakant Mahapatra

No, no matter how much you may  
want to,  
you can't get mad at me now,  
cane in hand,  
can't silence the children  
who have started a commotion in the  
school-room.

You can't lift your hand  
to console my mother  
for the loss of her son,  
can't touch your daughter-in-law's  
head and bless her

when she lights the lamp and bows

to you.

Your hands will hang limp  
on both your sides beneath the glass  
frame  
like the roots of a banyan tree;  
you can't pick up, even if you  
wanted to,  
your half-torn, oil-smudged *Gita*<sup>1</sup>  
from the table.

You can't uproot your feet, take off  
your *kurta*<sup>2</sup>  
to walk hastily away toward the  
*Chitrotpala*<sup>3</sup> and bathe,  
can't chant the *gayatri*<sup>4</sup> *mantra*, rais-  
ing your palms,  
cupping water, when the sun emerges  
from clouds along the distant ho-  
rizon.

You can't chuckle as you did before,  
opening the pages in your grandson's  
comic books.  
Instead, you must keep looking  
from under the glass of the picture,  
innocence and affection in your eyes,  
you who can't shed tears, can't show  
anger or disappointment again.

You can't spread the cooling shade  
of your affection,  
lifting your hands to invite us  
under its umbrella  
and ask how we are,  
and never again will you check the  
almanac  
to remind us of each other's birth-  
days;

gradually you may forget it all

like a previous birth.

You're at a safe distance now—  
as far from your own grief, anger and  
disappointment  
as from our laughter and tears,  
joys and sorrows;  
one of the ancestors now,  
you remain on the wall  
and seem to stare from some  
unreachable, distant star.

1. holy book of Hindus, 2. Odia wearing,  
3. a River, 4. hymn

## Hidden Love

---

Adolf P. Shvedchikov

I don't love you like people  
Watching illuminating fireworks.  
I comprehended my love not by my  
mind  
But by an open heart.  
I love you like a rare flower  
That never blooms, hiding its buds  
From the envious eyes of people.  
I love you like a silent autumn  
haystack  
Ready to fall asleep before the win-  
ter's chill.  
I don't know why I love you,  
I love you without a logical reason,  
I love you without any explanations!

## Mothers Never Grow Old

Ratnakar Rout

Since childhood  
we all have felt it  
in our bones  
our mother impervious  
to feel perished  
even in the dead of winter.

She remains knee-deep  
in piles of work.  
While other members  
clad in winter apparel  
huddle around the fire  
she gets lost  
in the kitchen  
do the cooking  
do the dishes  
all by herself.  
Her eyes always  
rest on her own flesh and blood.  
While others feel their age  
she doesn't feel her frailty  
not even scared of the fragility.  
She gets up with the sun  
watchful and alert  
round the clock.

With a smile  
she keeps her cool  
heedless of complaints and  
enquiries  
only to let others feel  
her body language -  
that she is plain sailing.

Here, there - and everywhere  
streets unfriendedly  
biting wind, thick fog

not a soul in sight  
we feel chilled to the bone  
but no wince of pain  
no piercing look from her.  
But no-one soothes away  
her fatigue  
no-one whispers,  
'Mom, you look awful  
flake out on bed  
for at least forty winks.'  
With the coming of her age  
our compunctions prick  
we feel  
as if her blood had been frozen  
but when he sets out  
doing anything  
it seems as though she would meet  
with  
her dying breaths  
the very next moment.

She still doesn't pause;  
no breathing space.  
She's pretty sure  
if she pauses awhile  
the family lose their mealtime  
for the day.

Her birthday falls on  
the *Makar Sankranti*\*  
but we know not  
she's close to 70.

\* a Hindu festival, the day gradually be-  
comes longer from this day.

*Original in Odia.*

*Translation : Sarat Chandra Sahoo,  
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# Buddha

Tuhinamsu Rath

Mischance  
you forget the way  
from *Kapilabastu*<sup>1</sup> to *Kushinagar*<sup>2</sup>  
And the foot prints that stretch from  
the power plagued palace  
to the bliss bleached bank of *Ni-  
ranjana*<sup>3</sup>  
Your quest for existence and essence  
of a country  
turns futile.  
The masquerading museum of fleet-  
ing Time  
adorns itself  
with ragged apparels and cracked  
skeletons of monks.  
The memento of Conscience.

History changes itself  
in the pages of the text books  
Sermons memorized by the pupils  
to reappear in the answer scripts at  
exams.  
All the ways converge in the market.

Still comes  
the siren song of Non-violence  
from the streams of piety  
buds of Truth  
bewitch the branches of Wisdom  
- tree  
But  
The dying generations are deaf and  
blind.

In the girdle of violence  
Buddha, a scarecrow  
Guarding the fields of power  
A convict in the gallows of religion  
Standing trials of history.

Power that harbours violence  
and  
Violence that harnesses power  
Can redraw the map of a country  
But can not sustain it for thousands  
of years

A country replete with sounds and  
sights  
But without meaning  
Is a piece of land without collective  
consciousness  
Where there is living but not life.

No  
Buddha  
The intellect revolutionised  
The empathy ignited  
Is a synonym  
Of India and the world as well.

---

1. where Buddha was born.

2. where Buddha breathed his last.

3. the river on the bank of which  
Buddha meditated austerely.

*Original in Odia.*

*Translation : Prashant Kumar Biswal.*

## A lyric on winter mist

Namita Nayak

Today, in the morning  
when I opened my drawing room  
window,  
winter was rubbing  
its gray face  
against the rust-eaten window  
panes.

Today in the morning,  
there was so much musk  
and so much mist,  
I could n't see even  
the sleepy eyes of the birds  
from the branches of the  
*Seuli*<sup>1</sup> trees.  
Perhaps, the stars had wept  
throughout the night  
their tear-drops had  
drenched the poplar leaves.

Today, in the morning  
when I opened the gate  
to get a glimpse of the  
mist-wrapped paddy-fields,  
children of the nearby slum  
were collecting dry leaves and  
sticks.

As some oldmen were walking  
on the empty street  
A thin layer of dust  
had covered their bare feet.  
Nothing was visible in the sea-blue  
mist.

of *Malkangiri*<sup>2</sup> or *Rayagada*<sup>3</sup>  
had stabbed a knife  
in the golden heart of the sun,  
consequently, its yellow blood had  
stained the luxuriant  
wheat fields.

Today, the croton tree close to the  
garden-gate  
was bathed in mist  
Lighting a fire, the bare-bodied  
slum children were warming  
their mal-nourished hands,  
faces and feet.

Today, throughout the morning,  
I did nothing,  
Only sat by the window  
to watch the tall silhouette  
of the trees,  
but nothing was visible  
in the divine mist.

1. a typical Indian Plant.

2 & 3. two districts in Odisha.

## The Relationship

Nibedita Jena

Our relationship  
always stands poised  
between the two points;  
to remember; to forget  
as and when you desire.

It's a virtual chase;

---

Today, probably, some naxalites

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a game between  
a predator and the prey.

This time  
it's your turn  
to take up the chessboard  
but I'm pretty sure  
I'll be checkmated  
for, to bag the victory  
yours is the firm grip  
on the game.

You're the switchboard  
to your fingertips.  
Someone is the predator;  
someone else is the prey  
since the Creation.

It is the will of Providence:  
the mighty to bag the victory;  
the weak bite the dust  
the system's preordained  
unaltered, unruffled.

So why this breathless, fruitless  
run  
against the force -  
you may deem it  
Destiny, Fate or God.

Yes, now I twig the absolute truth:  
the need for your time.

~~Original in Odia.~~

Translation : Sarat Chandra Sahoo  
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## The Glass Doll

Anjali Sahoo

Look,  
finally, at your insistence  
with good grace  
flesh and blood  
metamorphosed into a glass doll  
willy-nilly, in a wink.

I had to school myself  
in stoical endurance  
to cool the moment.

In a twinkle  
dreams dissolved  
divested of the feel  
to the old self  
bartered for  
what you desired.

Helpless!  
I'd to fight back the tears  
not to bottle up emotions.  
All the outlets clogged  
tears frozen  
for, I'd to hang on  
your every word  
as gospel: embellished my looks,  
to look push  
only for your sake  
sans a blush.

Oh dear, have one look



at my face wearing make-up  
bright red lipstick  
so as to look becoming  
to your eyes.

Why to make others  
assume a cataract of tears  
under constraints?  
I'd to feign  
a beautiful smile  
unnoticed to anyone.

Everything's for your sake.

I'd to dissemble  
stiffened myself  
unfazed, unruffled.

Oh darling, tell me  
does a glass doll  
insensible and unemotional  
carry any human trait?

And now, how do you  
insist on my going back  
to what you made me do  
at the outset?

Robbed of my individuality  
I feel  
I'm almost gone.

*original in Odia*

*Transliteration : Sarat Ch. Sahoo*

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## Life

Debashina Dwivedy

Alone you come to this world,  
Only the fortunate ones get love,  
others on footpath walk their way  
Luck brings success, may be in  
work or in love ....  
Life goes on .....  
Somewhere stones, somewhere  
flowers,  
somewhere alone, somewhere  
filled.  
Then comes a day, you are all  
alone,  
Not a hope to live,  
No one to ask you how you are . . .  
Still life does not end.  
As by the saying when door closes,  
another opens . . .  
In that does come hope,  
a small one may be but enough for  
the reason to live.  
Then you live not for yourself,  
But for that small hope.  
You nurture it . . .  
You adore it  
You are afraid of losing it.  
But alas! One day you find,  
it's gone . . .  
You wait with agony,  
But in vain.  
Will it never come back?  
Maybe it didn't like you  
Or maybe you were not good  
enough  
You think for days,  
for a single reason.  
And at last,

accept it your fault.  
 Still life does not wait.  
 You live but as a dead  
 Again that hope comes back  
 You are not ready to accept it,  
 But you do.  
 You do because maybe because  
 you are selfish  
 But you do.  
 This time hope understands,  
 It loves you . . . .  
 Now you are much more afraid of  
 losing . . .  
 But this moment does not stay  
 ever,  
 Here life is cruel,  
 The fate is bad . . .  
 Here the hope does not leave you,  
 But you leave it.  
 Hope is hopeless now,  
 Begging you to come back,  
 But you know nothing of it.  
 Because you are away,  
 Either trying to be someone's hope  
 Or fiddling with angels.

## Blind Eyes

Debashrita Dwivedy

Maybe I was born so,  
 I don't remember;  
 But maybe something happened,  
 I became blind forever.  
 With my blind eyes  
 I cannot devour at anything  
 Black is for me . . . everything.  
 Black is the sun,  
 Black is the moon,  
 For me night  
 Comes really soon.

I have money, I have a house  
 But alas! I cannot see a creeping  
 mouse.  
 Folks take me as an object of fun  
 With my ears only I can learn ...  
 I am a beggar.  
 I don't ask for money  
 I want eyes, more precious  
 I am waiting for the day  
 The day I'll be able to see my way.  
 Someone will donate me eyes  
 oneday  
 And I'll be able to devour all the  
 Earth  
 With my eyes one day ...  
 With my eyes one day.

## Friendship

Krishnaprada Dash

Friendship, a word seems so  
 simple,  
 But, difficult to understand.  
 If you understand, forever it  
 stands.  
 It means to share and, to care;  
 To hold each other at the time of  
 despair.  
 It doubles the joy and divides the  
 grief;  
 The most vital thing is, to forgive.  
 Everything vanishes, but it  
 remains;  
 As it has no time-consciousness.  
 Somebody says, it's just a faith;  
 Somebody says, it's my strength.  
 But, I say;  
 Friendship, such a word which  
 lives even after death.

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