

MULK RAJ ANAND: A HERALD OF HUMANISM

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Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, through his rare prolificacy, bold experimentation and aesthetic sensibility, has made immense contribution to Indian as well as world literature in English. His choice of unconventional subjects and characters has been determined by his Dickensian humanistic philosophy. He set up new trends by introducing negative hero/anti-hero in his novels. His fictional world is peopled by characters from various strata of society- from the lowest to the highest rungs in the hierarchy. Anand has revealed exceptional, psychological insight in the portrayal of these characters who “once were real men and women” and are not mere phantoms of fantasy. However, his otherwise authentic and objective delineation of character is superb which the chief requisite of a work of art is. This paper presents a confrontation and interaction between Anand’s *métier* as an artist as a compelling demand of his humanistic creed. Not that humanism is, in any way, contrary to art. It will not be far from truth to assert that all is, at bottom, humanistic even though not expressly “a criticism of life”. The greatness of an artist lies in synthesizing art and reality. When he handles reality imaginatively and presents it artistically, the result is great aesthetic delight both for the reader and the artist but it is when humanism obsesses the mind of the artist so strongly that he is ready to make out sub servant to his philosophy, that the artist’s failure starts. The present study discusses the oscillation of Anand between his integrity as an artist and his enthusiasm as a reformist.

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Mulk Raj Anand, the most prolific and the most widely criticized Indo-Anglican novelist, feels that characters in his novels have been the motivating force- rather the chief cause- behind the writing of his novels. In Anand's novel, it was not the action that decided the choice of characters in his novels. The action instead, was chosen according to the characters he decided to write about. His characters are mostly people who once were 'men and women'. Anand, in his childhood and youth had been intimate with them. He had himself shared their feelings, thoughts, action reactions, troubles and joys. And he had studied their emotions from such close quarters that he could easily identify himself with them. Anand's complete identification with his characters accounts for the remarkable authenticity in their portrayal.

The choice of characters in a novel is determined to a large extent, by the exigencies of the period in which the novel is written and by the writer's own interest, whims, and idiosyncrasies. That is why there is a noticeable change in the concept of hero from time to time. Tom Jones, Moll Flanders and Huckleberry Finn of the early and middle eighteenth century with its love for travelling and adventures gave place to Emma, Elizabeth, and Mr. Bingley enjoying the unperturbed, easy and comfortable life of upper middle class society of the decade of the same century. They, in their own term were replaced by David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickel by fighting the naked and hard facts of life in the nineteenth century. In the modern age with its complexities and interest in psychology, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce rang the knell of the traditional hero and introduced heroes sans heroic qualities. About Indo-Anglian fiction, Williams aptly remarks that "it too seems to have begun with un-heroic".

Infect, Indian literature in English came to be written when India was engulfed by innumerable and enormous, social, political and religious evils. The nation was under the suppressing yoke of foreign rule. The British rulers subjected the poor Indians to slavish, subhuman existence the rigid class and caste structure of India itself caused intolerable sufferings to people. The exigencies of the situation demanded an exposure of these evils and agitation against them. The World was unrealistically and hopelessly dismal. To relief the gloom, he provides a ray of hope in the form of these selfless, benevolent, and beginning savior characters. The presence of savior heroes in these novels, according to the Anand, is not intentional, but is a conational to life. About the savior figures he absorbs "actually the saving graces were not created in the novels with the intention to show every time that there is one character that may retrieve the situation. In life there are always such people. And in the presentation of contraries of good and evil, the leafs hope against despair. Despite

Anand's assertion that the people like his savior characters are found in life, the fact remains that in the fictional world of Anand, many times these savior characters appear unwelcome intruders. Every often they appear to happen have been forced in the novel with the purpose to preach. They are often used as lifeless instrument to voice Anand message and often they preach the message so overtly that authorial presence is all too palpable. Unable to conceal his purpose in the vile of art, try to "put his thumbs in the scale, which, according to Lawrence is immoral on the path of the novelist.

Anand's choice of characters, both sufferers and saviors is consistent with his theory of literature and life. Anand has not given a well-organized theory of literature, nor does he feel the need of formulating one for writing literature. As Anand absorb "people who say I have no theory of friction are mope or less correct. And yet one does not need to formulate a systematic theory to write friction or to react at its various impressions, to enjoy its flavors and even to write some criticism of one's own." Anand realizes that the social content of the Indian novelist is different from that of the European writers. He wants that "we have, however, in our newly emergent societies, to understand that we are not the middle classes of Europe and America. we must see our self as we are, we are struggling about the days contempt of the caste order, emancipating our minds from the submission to our man rule, we are dimly becoming aware of nature of our hopeless resignation in the past to the unknown faith, the supreme God Vishnu who will not wake up to help us, because the Kalyug is not yet over." In such a period of transition Anand felt that "the old world was dead and gone only lingered in the minds of the sentimentalists who always dote on the past. And the old humanism, of which is old world was the product was a spent force," but people were still grouping for mooring in change world because the "individual disrupted by the commercialism which resulted through the industrial revolution that science had helped to perfect. And the ordinary human values, love, justice, beauty, prayer consequently perverted and destroyed. Like Mathew Arnold and felt torn between two worlds- "one dead and the other powerless to be born".

In this period of confusion, Anand felt that one could depend more on art and literature for solace than on religion and philosophy. According to him "literature, music and art are better able to fulfill the needs of our time than religion and beauty is better worth worshipping than God or a Deity for whom the sanctions lie in the institutions of a few mystics."

The fact that Anand uses literature as a means to modify society has led critics to dub him as a propagandist, despite his repeated emphasis on the fact that Indian content demands art with purpose. He boldly accepts the negative appellation, as he observes: "All art is propaganda.

The art of Ajanta is propaganda for Hinduism. The art of Ellora is propaganda for Hinduism. The art of western novel is propaganda for humanity against bourgeois. Gorky as a humanist dared to speak of man, man's condition, not only to say how awful it is, but he also suggested what man could be. And thus he did propaganda for man." Anand, a great admirer of Gorky's fiction about Squalor and dirt, regards him "the prophet of new literature." And he tries to do in India what Gorky and Dostoyevsky had done in Russia.

Anand's concepts of literature as closely related to life are a by-product of his humanistic ideas. It is his own ardent love for human beings and his pity for the suffering, wretched, downtrodden humanity that lead him to believe that all writers for the sake of man and the function of literature is to enable man recognize his dignity. Anand calls his humanism "comprehensive historical humanism" and discusses it in detail in his *Is There a Contemporary Indian Civilization? Apology for Heroism, Hindu View of Art, and Prolegomena to a New Humanism*" incorporated in *Lines Written to an Indian Air* with many scattered remarks in his articles, essays and letters. His humanistic faith has been discussed with minute observation by Margaret Berry in the *Mulk Raj Anand: The man and The novelist* and Balarama Gupta in his famous *Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of His Novels in Humanist Perspectives*.

Anand is a "comprehensive historical humanism" because he derives much from the history of Indian religious and philosophical thought and blends it with modern scientific ideas so that his theory achieves universal significance and comprehends the whole of mankind. The traditional values which Anand wants to be operative in modern times are universalism, "intolerant-tolerance" and compassion. Universalism has been inherent in Indian tradition since very remote periods of his history. Anand traces this element in the Vedic hymns in the "simple universal values of mankind, in their worship of nature and their bold speculative outlook about the meaning of creation." Anand is intolerant of orthodoxy and irrational taboos of Indian religious thought, but he is full of admiration for the human values which have percolated through traditional history to modern periods.

Anand is an admirer of humanistic philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. But he does not accept the ideology of any one of them unconditionally. He owes much of his love for the down-trodden humanity to Mahatma Gandhi and his synthetic approach towards the ideologies of east and west to Rabindranath Tagore. He is full of praise for the socialistic pattern of society as preached by Jawaharlal Nehru and stands for his humanism laced with a scientific approach, but he differs from Mahatma Gandhi's capitalistic ideas and from the spiritual sanctions which Tagore and

Gandhi find for their philosophies. He wants to strike a combination of Gandhian love for humanity and Marxian gospel of classless and casteless society. He admires the ethics of Tagore based on a deep study of eastern and western cultures but he does not approve of spiritual sanction in his philosophy.

Anand pins his hope on ameliorations of mankind on *karma* and *bhakti yoga* that dead against fatalism of another Indians, he wants men to organize themselves and dedicate themselves to the cause of mankind. It can be possible if there is a feeling of brotherhood among man and if they selflessly fling themselves in the arena to fight against all those forces which condemn them and their breathe to sub human life. This feeling of brotherhood, again, can further by art and literature. Anand's faith as a humanist and his faith as a writer are well revealed in his speech delivered at the second Afro-Asian writers' conference held at Cairo:

“Our literature and arts are thus the weapons of the new concepts of man that the suppressed, disinherited and the insulted of Asia and Africa can rise to live, in brotherhood with other men. But in the enjoyment of freedom, equality and justice, as more truly human beings individuals, entering from object history, into the great history when there will be no war, but love will be rule the world, enabling men to bring the whole of nature under self-conscious control for the uses of happiness : as against despair.”

And he dedicated the gathering of the conference “to the task of healing the wounds of the insulted and injured, through full engagement in the widest areas of knowledge and action, so that all the tears of all the children can be wiped and in the words of the Spanish poet Garcia Lorca “the black boy come announce to whole of the world the beginning of the rain of an year of corn.” He reiterates his faith in the capability of artist to liberate mankind from the shackles of pain: “this, then, seems to me true mission of the writers today. To act as the conscience of the people be aware of their pain. To have a creative mission of all that efforts joy in life, to realise the vital rhythms in the personality, to make man more human, to seek appreciation of freedom from all forms of slavery and to give this freedom to other throughout the world – in fact to awaken men to the love of, liberty, which brings life and more life.” and that is what Anand himself is doing vigorously even at the risk being called a writer with propagandistic leanings.

Anand's humanistic philosophy is sufficient explanation for his choice of characters- the sufferers and the saviors. The sufferers reveal the real plight of contemporary India and the Saviors provide hope against despair. They reveal Anand's existentialism combined with a

streak of an optimistic attitude towards life. The relation between the two heroes however differs in various novels. The present study categorizes my paper on the basis of the relationship between the sufferer and the savior. The relationship depends on the suffering hero's own personality. When he is too passive and weak to fight, a savior figure is introduced from a higher stratum of society. When the sufferer attains maturity of sensibility and strength of mind, he himself fights for the liberty of all those who suffer like him. And when the plight of the sufferer is beyond redemption, and when he is a man of high social profile, no savior character is brought in. In other words, no savior characters are introduced when either the suffering protagonist himself is strong and combative enough to throw a challenge to the iniquitous and suppressive forces of society or when the conditions are so terrible as to be irremediable. In addition there are also some novels in the Anand canon which are fairly free from the shadow of suffering syndrome and therefore have a more disinterested aesthetic dynamic of their own. This study intends to trace the effect of the introduction of the savior characters on the overall aesthetic appeals of Anand's novels.

The greatness of Anand lies in his bold stride both in the choice and treatment of themes. He fearlessly chooses his protagonists from the "dregs of humanity" and tries to identify them with the so called high-caste and high-class people. Anand's delineation and use of the sufferer and savior characters is all his own, and to me, it seems to be a very important features of his fictional output, right from Untouchables. The present study proposes to analyze this essential component of Anand's fictional art and use.

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