

HUMANISM IN THE NOVELS OF MULK RAJ ANAND

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Introduction: Mulk Raj Anand is known as a novelist and short-story writer. He occupies a prominent position in the world of Indian English Literature. But Anand is multifaceted personality: he is poet and essayist, a professor and educationist, a pacifist and social worker, an art critic and a critic of music, sculpture, dance and drama. What lends light to all these facets is his inalienable trust in man and his deep love for him, in a word, his humanism which inspires and informs all that he writes and does. In fact, Anand's philosophy of humanism is of such pivotal significance in the entire corpus of his writings that one of the most pertinent ways of viewing, his fiction is from this angle of his humanist philosophy "Humanity is not the highest Godhead: God is more than humanity but in humanity too we have to find and serve him".

Shri Aurobindo : The term humanism is something ambiguous and comprehensive to denote. It is doctrine that emphasizes distinctively human interest and ideals. Humanism is a way of life which relies on human capacities and natural and social sources. It is an attitude which requires the acceptance of responsibility for human life in this world, emphasizing natural respect and recognizing human independence. The humanist holds fast and essential and genuine values of life. Encyclopedia Britannica defines humanism, "as any system of thought which assigns a prominent interest to the affairs of men as compared with the supernatural or abstract". Various humanists uphold or interpret it with different ways. Historically, humanism was a renaissance doctrine which stress the essential worth, dignity and potential of men. The renaissance humanism raise human dignity by knowledge and human salvation dragged mythical element into the background. The best expression of humanism can be stated in man's doing his duty even going beyond it, i. e. when he develops the qualities for human welfare. In the contemporary world naturalistic humanism has gained much popularity. It is closely affiliated to naturalism. Later on Bertrand Russel familiarized realistic humanism. The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre introduced his existentialism in the new brand of humanism. Evolutionary humanism of Julian Huxley has considerable influence on modern era. The Marxist branch of humanism presents the thesis that human progress depends on class struggle and revolution. Another type of humanism, liberal humanism emphasizes the human qualities of love, compassion, mercy and integrity as the precondition of meaningful and positive life. Every branch of humanism has some distinguishing quality. Modern India also produced several humanists like Rajaram Mohan Roy, M. K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Radhakrishnan etc.

The objective of this paper is to present the various traits of humanism in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand specially, evolutionary humanism. He combines himself the virtues of humanist, rebel, a leader of men, patriot, social worker and active organizer. He was greatly influenced by evolutionary humanism of Julian Huxley. Huxley's humanism is based on astute understanding and brilliant interpretation of Darwinian Theory of Evolution. Huxley pleads that, it is man alone who is responsible for the accomplishment of the further progress of this evolutionary process. It rests entirely on man to decide and direct the path of his future evolution. Evolutionary humanism is the new religion that Huxley suggests for contemporary man. It is naturalistic as opposed to super naturalistic; for it believes that even spiritual forces just like material forces, form a part of the cosmos. It believes that all aspects of reality including man, his belief, system, science and art are within the gamut of evolutionary process. He considers art, science and religion as the three great fields of man's activity, in which he is able to transcend the mere material business of making a living. His humanism is based on the tradition of scientific humanism. It is certainly in a position to solve most of modern man's maladies and holds immense promise.

Anand is mainly in the tradition of scientific humanism. According to the world-view he holds, the world of nature, the cosmos exists and operates according to natural laws. Man is part of this universe. He must try to achieve harmony with nature. Anand like Julian Huxley believes in the evolutionary concept of the universe and rejects the dualism between nature and spirit and the body and mind. Again like Huxley and Corlis Lamond, Anand's summarily dismisses such perilous theories of determinism and pre-destination, original sin and human depravity. For he thinks that, these ideas have been serious impediments in the path of man's progress and self-realization. He is one with naturalistic humanists in discarding all supernatural thoughts as mere myths, no longer tenable in the modern scientific age. He believes in the here and now, in the flesh and blood and not in hell or heaven or rebirth. He also refuses to believe in the idea of a personal God or Gods. Should the idea of God be considered too much deep-rooted in the minds of common men. Anand would fail to see God in man, as he has made it clear in one of his letters, "God has been dead a long time. Men are Gods or can become Gods".

Mulk Raj Anand, the great Indo-Anglian novelist projects his philosophy of humanism through his novels. Anand's insistence is on the dignity of man irrespective of caste, creed and wealth. His plea for the practice of compassion as a living value, his conception of the whole man, his crude against superstition, feudalism and imperialism are some chief characteristics of humanism. Anand's philosophy of humanism believes the theory of the whole man which forms the key stone in the arch of his comprehensive historical humanism. He pleads for the all-round growth of man. His philosophy is an inevitable enemy of fascism, feudalism, imperialism and all other similar tendencies which come in the way of man's efforts to achieve freedom. According to him, art is as much a tool in the service of man kind as science is, so he aborts the doctrine of art for art's sake. He emphasizes the importance of education. So he said woman also deserve the equal footing with man. His humanism is a criticism of existentialist philosophy which considers this universe as merely meaningless and absurd and denies social structure. He upholds the view that casteism is a heinous crime and serves blow to the concept of the dignity of man, so it must be rejected. He celebrates life with the understanding born of his, "Journey through hell" in various novels.

Woman according to Anand's humanism deserves to be treated on an equal footing with man. He deplores the fact that a majority of Indians still respect Manu's injunction that woman can have freedom at no stage of her life. Woman can no longer be considered a mere child-breeding machine, never to be allowed to stir out of the four walls of home. She can no longer be treated as chattel. In fact, it needs to recognize that woman is as important as man in the great task of social reconstruction. Anand's humanism places man in the center of all things. It also believes in the ethical equality of all men. Therefore, it cannot sanction any distinction between men such as division of caste, creed and race which are obstacles for human beings to grow to their full height and dignity. The pernicious system of untouchability finds its wildest denunciation in the work of Anand. In the novel, "Untouchable" we find Anand condemning not only the age-old evil system of caste but also that of Karma. Here Anand's humanistic vision reveals in rejection of casteism as a cruel evil, the practice of which results in suppression of untouchables. The climax point of this novel is that when Bakha, the central character, "touches" the Lalaji, is especially significant for the slap dealt on Bakha's face is symbolic, showing the same instance of treatment of Negroes in the USA. The several actions and destiny of the central character here take shape under the pressure of social forces. So the fate of man is totally controlled by man and society.

The theme of untouchability find its reverberations in Anand's other novel, "The Road". The heroes of both the novels are untouchable boys whose vivacious spirits refuse to be dampened by the flagrant humiliations and tortures imposed on them by caste Hindus. Anand's repeated assertion is that societies'

progress depends solely on man's own efforts and not on blind reliance on God or Gods is amply vindicated in this novel. Bhiku and Dulisingh prove this by building the road with the help of their brethren rather than relying on God. It reveals the optimistic humanism of Anand. Anand believes that poverty is a cruel evil and cruelty is itself a deadly evil. We see in "Coolie" how these evils of poverty and cruelty crushed a bud of youth before it could bloom to any extent. Munoo's tragic life indicates man's inhumanity against man. The novelist suggests that Munoo deserves a better deal. It is the duty of society in true humanitarian spirit to sympathize with the underprivileged and unfortunate Munoo's living as sub-human life. Economic exploitation of the simple village farmer is presented in the novel, "The Village". Anand wants the eradication of the prejudice against the underprivileged and underdogs of the society and pleads for the betterment of their lot. The entire novel makes a passionate plea for giving the so-called scum of society a fair deal. This is in keeping with Anand's philosophy of humanism.

The problem of exploitation also touched upon the novel, "Across The Black Waters". He presents the ruthless denunciation of war which is only a dignified name of cruelty and cold-blooded violence. In "The Sword And The Sickle", we find Anand carrying on his ruthless crusade mainly against evil of Landlordism. The novel also reveals how Anand's humanism denounces the evils of war and cruelty, hunger and poverty, religion and superstition. Feudalism is the main target of Anand's criticism in "Private Life Of An Indian Prince". Anand's disbelief in God, trust in man and belief in the concept of "body-soul" are the subsidiary tenets of Anand's humanism which implied here. Anand's evolutionary humanism like Julian Huxley's considers man as being 'body-soul' and disapproves of the idea of separate existence of body and soul. Nor is a dichotomy between matter and spirit admissible. "Old Woman And The Cow" shows his strong plea for the recognition and acceptance of Women's rights. Anand's disbelief in Christian conception of sin, his insistence on the value of tenderness in human relation, his usual reproof of uncritical belief in superstition, karma and God, these are some of the other humanist ideas that form the basis of this novel. It reveals Anand's anxiety for the amelioration of woman.

All these novels prove that Anand as a committed humanist launches a revolt, a creative struggle in order to bring about a new society. He was quiet aware of the malaise and backwardness of his Indian society. It is against this misery that he wanted to pronounce his revolutionary ideas. His chief concern for suffering humanity makes him a humanist writer and his commitment to the philosophy of humanism form the very basis of his creative enterprise. He tries to create in the readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils. To stir the springs of tenderness in them and to activate them for the removal of those evils, in order that a desirable just social order may come in to being by putting humanistic perspective. Anand has become the most ever democratic of writers that India has ever produced. It is right that Dr. Iyengar quotes about him, "Anand wrote of the people, for the people and as a man of the people".

References:

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