

VISION OF MAN IN THE NOVELS OF MULKRAJ ANAND

Mr. R.S.A. Susikaran
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Oxford Engineering College,
Tiruchirapalli, Tamilnadu,
South India – 620 009.

ABSTRACT

It is often mistaken that the novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two leaves and a Bud* and *The Old woman and the Cow* are all the tragic vision of the writer with a pathetic temper. But on a very close insight it is crystal clear that it is not a tragic vision but a comprehensive vision. “Sweeter are roots of adversity”. To uplift the downtrodden to the highest pinnacles of dignity, by eradicating the social evils through social reformation form the corner stone in Anand’s novels. A strong wave of protest for this reformation in seen often in the novels of Anand.

This article attempts to underline the view point that a ‘participant observer’(sufferer), despite the possibility of being victim of indignation and self-pity can reveal the truth and gauze the density of agony more pungently in comparison to ‘non-participant observer’ (sympathizer). “Truth is always stranger than fiction” is an age old dictum. The relation between truth and fiction is somewhat like history and myth respectively. Fiction like myth is weaved in and around fact, history and truth but also being governed by man (author) and milieu (society/ environment)

Meenakshi Mukherjee says “Anand’s ardour for social revolution, his conviction in salvation through socialist doctrine, is undisguised in his novels” (Meenakshi Mukerjee 1971, 36). Every painful incident has a positive outlook like the morning abuse of Bakha’s father (*suar ka aulad*, *haramjada* – son of a pig, illegally- begotten); the slap on the face as he accidentally touched a caste Hindu, disapproving eyes of shopkeepers who sold jalebis to him, behavior of charity bread giver woman; recollection of the story about the doctors’ refusal to give medicine to his father when Bakha was ill, the temple incident of Sohini and aftermath; Bakha’s hesitation to take sweets from Ramcharan, abuse of the house wife because he carried her injured child, quarrel between Colonel Hutchinson and his wife when Bakha was brought to his residence. But if one analyze there are also good Samaritans in the novels of Mulkraj Anand.

The problem of untouchable is a crucial one because India is a caste ridden society. The problem still lingers in Indian society. *Untouchable* is an evil that dies hard. It continues to exist

in some form or other in various parts of the country. Millions of Indians are not even allowed to draw water from community wells in villages. They are segregated. They are still being tortured. One cannot eradicate the practice of untouchability in the rural areas. We the social deformity in the Hindu society has survived all the reforms and revolutions.

Even in this twenty first century communal clashes strikes the headlines in daily newspapers. What one may react about was once said by K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, who remarked, “Almost thirty – six years after Anand’s novel and twenty four years after Independence the problem still defies firm and final solution!” (Iyengar 1983, 338).

The endless existence of caste consciousness in India is therefore obvious. It is evident that religious, social, political, legal and even technology has failed to cure the incurable disease in the Indian society”. Amaury De Riencory remarking on the rigidity of the caste system in India in Rao’s *The Indian Anglican Novel and the changing Tradition* says, “Caste is the final mechanism of Hindu life, implying the complete identification of every man with his social role and consequently the mutilation of his individual personality” (Raja Rao 1972, 37). This continues until the economic empowerment of an individual is made to subsist on his position in the division of the social hierarchy.

From the novel ‘Two Leaves and a Bud’ it is quite true that ‘Lack of money is the root cause of all evils’, Hunger a dreadful curse to Mankind. ‘Poverty drives them into the caves’- (The Hindu, Wed 26 June 2002) which reports about the pitiable state of hundreds of tribal’s in Kodaikanal Hills, in dire need of food, shelter and education. Despite the Central and State Governments pumping in crores of money for upliftment, they have been exploited by the government officials who treat them worse than bonded laborers. Hunger forces them to fill their stomach with tubers available in the hills. Situations are clear that there is a long gap between the have and have-nots. Vision for the under privileged is important than concentrating on the next generation science and technology advancement. Coolie is clearly anti-bonded labor in its instance, yet bond labourship and child labor is rampant and appears to be well on its way into twenty first century. Literature or legislation? Which will it be to ultimately change society? Can one depend on literature to awaken social conscience and the voluntary forsaking of undesirable attitudes and practices in society; or does it take legislation to enforce the change? Then again when if legislation fails it is the work of literature to appeal to the emotions for a change of heart

It is true and shameful that the social deformity due to the stringent caste and class system and the cruelty of imperialism is brought out through Anand’s vivid narration of the hero on the novel *Two leaves and a Bud*, Gangu unable to spend for the last rituals of his wife carries the implication of the demand of imperativeness and moral binding on the part of the Indian readers towards the society in need of some change at least in the life of the down trodden people.

Scientific education, a Marxist outlook, effectively putting an end to capitalist exploitation, and a voluntary acceptance that the society deformed is in need of revolution in an organized way to rectify the various social wrongs, are the social outcomes of industrialization and mechanization. This is just what John de la Havre in Anand’s novel *Two leaves and a Bud* notes down in his diary:

“Why didn’t it occur to anyone the simple obvious thing that people don’t need to read Marx to realize here? The black coolies clear the forest, plant the fields, toil and garner the harvest, while all the money grabbing slave driving soul less managers and directors draw their

salaries and dividends and build up mono policies. Therein lies the necessity of revolution in this country” (Anand, 106)

R.T. Robertson, the Canadian scholar, has impressively remarked in an unpublished paper that all commonwealth literature is artistic recreations of two historical experiences: the affinity one feels towards ones homeland and the affinity that one is forced to entertain towards the invading culture. The physical and psychic disturbances of wandering between two worlds must make for creativity in exceptional minds. A new content discern in literature which not only bears out a radical revolutionary character but also for social transformation. Anand writes in his essays” Why I write?” “The truth should become imaginative truth without losing sincerity. The novel should interpret the truth of life, from felt experience, and not from books”, (Gowda 1966, 57) this is a clear that the purpose of novel is to change mankind and through mankind, society. Hence it is clear that this dissertation brings out a comprehensive vision of man than tragic.

The reader of this thesis clearly finds out that education to be a powerful instrument of social reconstruction, which was denied to the downtrodden. One can analyze that Anand looks into the emotional problems of the sufferers who are perhaps non-entities in the eyes of the society. Anand is aware of their great potential which often remains unrealized as they are trapped by a callous society. Through Anand’s realistic presentation he tries to create in the reader’s mind an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils. His object is not merely to shock his readers by representation of reality but to stimulate their comprehensive vision and consciousness. Anand presents the familiar twentieth century world of time and space in his fiction and he also links it with the moral universe which ignores neither despair nor delight. His prediction for the picturesque is to be viewed seriously because his landscape is not simply landscape in time and space but also a psycho-space, reflecting some area of his romantic nature. The double consciousness of time and eternity in the fiction of Anand is in final analysis a benevolent concept. His obsessions concern with the actualities of socio political life is amply compensated by his subliminal self. That is why when his conscious self tries to fix the universe into a socio-political order his subliminal self will not extinguish itself by such absolute constraint. This duality of response gives his pattern of despair and delight a meaning and significance that is subtle. We have explored the pattern of tension and harmony between his conscious self who is rooted in hope and the subliminal self, which comforts, consoles and sustains the novelist.

Reality in fiction is inexhaustible and perpetually changing to human consciousness. The function of literature is not only to record reality but also to illuminate and create new possibilities. In Anand’s novels the burden of description is as important as the burden of values. There is a both descriptive and prescriptive tendency that is reading between the lines a tragic vision for a comprehensive vision, which gives order and coherence to his design by modifying the raw experiences. Anand’s fiction is not a mundane recording of a pattern less and unattractive universe. The relation between his fiction and truth is complicated. Anand does not fix us firmly in the contingent unromantic and unexciting reality. Each hero of Anand contains within him “something of the promethean over-reacher”. Anand does not write harsh unaccommodating realistic novel. He imposes his own structure and patterns on the things as they are. These structures make actions in his novels meaningful and the fates of the heroes tolerable. Anand struggles to sustain meaning and pattern within the limits of realistic style. We can understand that Anand like his hero isolated himself from his society, grew inward and discovered the possibility of meaning and pattern in his fiction.

The fight between the individual and the society will not be complete if we leave Anand's 'The Old Woman and the Cow'. The status of women in Indian society is still very low. Though the women enjoy franchise and equality of economic opportunity before the law, they do not have full status in the eyes of male driven society. They are still subordinate and ill treated. They should be given equal rights and treated on with equal footing with men. Anand strongly condemns the society which sticks to myths and age old stories imprisoning women. This is clear from K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar 'Anand reveals more of his humanity and compassion and loss of his disgust and anger with current reality' (Iyengar 1983, 352).

The protagonists of this novel experience the severity of all kinds. The fight of the woman in the novel means the conflict between the social reality and the liberalization of herself. Anand in the 'The Old Woman and the Cow' is a new upsurge in opposition to the old orthodoxy. The novel end with Gauri moving away becomes a heroic act of resistance against the orthodoxy. Gauri becomes a dominant character revolutionary who stands for the redness of heart and not for the blackness of hatred.

Anand's woman characters are very traditional, confined since he considers them the apostles of love, warmth, and of security. Anand puts them more voice to oppose their silent sufferings, Gauri, the heroine of the novel becomes conscious of her individual talent and self esteem and she defies the traditional society and decides to live freely and fearlessly. Gauri's struggle for survival can be viewed as individual's self discovery and self actualization. Gauri did not sulk and she rejects the narrow world of orthodoxy and slams the door against her husband. She does not allow her cultural conditioning to deform her into an image of self surrender. She does not annihilate her identity. Her life is a pilgrimage of hope and faith, and her inner transformation delights us.

Anand's novel gives us a courage and hope to vision of man. He deals with man's relationship with man. He does not deal with the relationship of Man with God or the Super Natural Forces. Anand is aware of the pathetic conditions of the millions of people who suffer from poverty and squalor. He is bold enough to write the epic of their suffering. Anand wants to go straight to the heart of the problem of human sensibility in the present complex, the tragedy of modern Man. To explore the sensibility of all human beings, whether in the factory, in the village square or in the drawing room. He deals with the sensibility of the suffering of the mass of India. He deals with the attitudes of not only downtrodden but also those of others who were in the grips of the changes that were taking place in India. Anand could only present heroes as protesters but they are not victorious. It is in the hands of the readers. Anand's vision is a vision of comprehensive potentialities in man's life.

On a complete viewing of Anand's novels, he thinks that a novelist alone can give the total awareness of life. He alone can renew and change it. He feels that it is his duty to raise the Untouchables, the Coolies, the Peasants and the oppressed people to the level of human dignity and self respect.

Man has the power to control nature for man's benefit.

'Belief in man's power to master nature through a rational technology is evident in every novel of Anand. While others in the village take the filth and drought and misery as inevitable. Anand's non conformist heroes rebel against the existing conditions because they have faith in the possibility of controlling nature for man's benefit' (Meenakshi Mukerjee 1971,75)

Man has the will to do wonders in the world which is clear from the novel 'The Old Woman and The Cow'

“...the seasons will be changed by man. There will be water from the wells, with electric pumps.... And medicines will renew the earth” (Gawri, 155)

Old people sit and groan to each other. They mourn their fate. But Anand's young people protest and long for a better order of society. The village people like Bakha, Munoo and Bikhu and the city labor leaders like Anant and poets Iqbal, Dr.Mahindra 'look forward towards the future to a more perfectable world' Anand's victim heroes are made to rebel against the social mechanism.

'Anand believes in the intrinsic merit of individual quite apart from his caste and profession, and he has never tired of propagating universal brotherhood through his novels' (Meenakshi Mukerjee 1971, 77)

The insights Anand presents constitute his comprehensive vision of man. It is comprehensive in the sense it embraces not only the oppressed but also the oppressors. His vision of man is impartial in the sense it brings out the good traits among the good members of the oppressor class. But the sensibilities only reveal a human nature which is essentially Indian, a nature torn between the aspirations to rise above one's self socially, economically and spiritually and century's long apathy that keeps him reconciled to his so called God given situation in life.

CONCLUSION

Hence Anand's vision of Man is essentially comprehensive. His novels present the picture of the tragic yet optimistic vision, a conflict between his willingness to rise from the socio, politico, religious backwardness and his ingrained habit of accepting things as they are while presenting the novel he puts forth his view of Man.

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