

Economic, Social, Political and Feudal Exploitation: A Thematic Study of Mulk Raj Anand's Novels'

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand portrays the wide spread evil of social, political, economical and feudal exploitation of the low caste poor in Indian society. There has always been a conflict between 'the rich' and 'the poor', between 'the ruler' and 'the ruled', between 'the high caste' and 'the low caste', between 'the exploiter' and 'the exploited'. The exploiter represents the violence and the exploited represents the non-violence. It is against the norms of humanity to hate others only because they belong to low caste. It is inhuman to think that they have no right to be clean only because they clean the dirt.

Keywords: - Exploiter, Exploited, Social Inequity, Down-Trodden
Introduction

Exploitation gives birth only to anger and disillusionment. As there is limit of everything, there is also a limit of exploitation and one day it results only in violence and disaster. The rich are growing richer and the poor are growing poorer. The rigidity of the high caste youth fills the heart of the low caste with hatred. They think themselves as misfits in this so called high caste society in which they have no right to own property, right to education and right to lead a honorable life. They become angry and want to shake the whole earth and make a place for them where they may lead a peaceful life, where they will have to tolerate no insult.

Mulk Raj Anand's first novel 'Untouchable' deals with the evil of casteism in general and untouchability in particular. It widely exposes the social exploitation of the low caste people. It shows the problem of social inequity at large. This novel aims at wiping away social barriers and orthodoxy, casteism and communalism. It highlights the complex social structure of society which is devoid of humanism. 'Untouchable', lays bare the humiliating experience of Bakha who challenges the Barhamincal attitude of high caste people. Bakha, the central character of this novel, is the representative of all the down-trodden society in Pre-Independent India. He is the son of Lakha, the jamadar of the sweepers. He wants to rise above his caste by westernizing, yet he only receives insults. It is the story of a typical day in the life of a Bhangi, mixed with hunger, hope, humiliations and setbacks. Bhangis are not permitted to take water from a well, food is given to them by throwing and if they touch anybody by accident, they are severely punished as Bakha is slapped by the person. His heart is burned with anger but he finds himself helpless. The irony is this that the upper-class does not find any untouchability when they molest girls or women of untouchable community. In fact, casteism is a crime against humanity and everyone who believes in humanity should try to eliminate it.

His next novel 'Coolie' portrays the miseries of the Indian coolies under poverty, hunger, and the various kinds of exploitation. This novel is a heart rending saga of human suffering. Munno, its central character represents those numberless children whose childhood is lost in endless physical labour. Love, care, tenderness, financial security or fund are the words they never know throughout their life. Munoo travels from one part to another but his life is never free from exploitation. We move and follow the misfortunes of the hill boy Munoo, first with his uncle and aunt in his village, Bilaspur, then with the Bank Sub-Accountant's family and at Sham Nagar where he works as a domestic servant; from there he runs away and finds his benefactor Prabha and his wife in the Cat Killer's lane in the old city of Daulatpur. From here he goes to Bombay to work as a mill labourer. Here we find the glimpse of economical exploitation of the workers who are forced to live in unhygienic chawls and indulge in never ending dispute between the capitalists and the labourers. From Bombay, Munoo is carried in Simla by a Eurasian lady to become her rickshaw-puller. At last he dies

Manisha Agarwal

Lecturer,
Deptt. of English,
N.K.B.M.G.P.G.College,
Chandausi

of tuberculosis which is aggravated by his having to pull the rickshaw for his mistress. Death is the only end of all his miseries. The question is whether the poor or the weak have no right to live in this world.

Anand's 'Two Leaves and a Bud' deals with the miserable life and the plight of the tea-plantation Coolies. The hero of the novel Gangu, a Punjabee boy, who belonged to a village near Hoshiarpur in the Punjab crosses India horizontally and is taken to the Macpherson Tea-Estate in distant Assam. Anand very well describes the luxurious life, romance and dissoluteness of the white managers, who are the cruel instrument of exploiting the coolies and their women folk. Gangu has become a labourer with his wife Sajini and his daughter Leila. The plantation owner, a white man, named Roggie Hunt attempts to assault his daughter and when her father intervenes to rescue her, the white man shoots him dead. Her mother falls a victim to disease. Roggie Hunt is brought to court but the Jury acquits him. This shows the political exploitation of the poor. Government and Judicial system is wholly in favour of the rich. Only money counts in this world. Poor have no right to have justice.

The novel 'The Sword and the Sickle' also deals with the exploitation of the Indian peasants by the British Colonialist and the Indian landlords. The sword that is a symbol of force is born to suppress whereas the sickle is a symbol of suppressed. In this novel we see the sign of rebellious attitude in the character of Lal Singh who fights for the right of peasants. He takes an active part in the first war, captured and is released later. The other character Lalu in this novel also wants to break every chain. The period at background of the novel is a transition period that marks a political and social change in the history of India. This may be called as a social protest. Lal Singh who becomes a victim of feudal exploitation tries hard to change the destiny of peasants who are treated like animals by the landlords. Light is thrown on the poor plight of peasant through Count's speech. He says,

".....whether empires come or empires go, the peasant is a slow person who goes about with a bowed head under a merciless sky and always continues to do so.....there are so many of them, that the loss of a couple of lacks through death makes no difference". The Manager of the Nasirabad is freed by the court though he kills the son of a tenant because he is rich yet we hear the voice of rebellion when Sukhua slaps the landlord. It appears as an eruption of volcano. This indicates a change at hand.

In the novel 'The Road' Anand points out that the attainment of independence has not made any change in the poor condition of the untouchables. They have become a little rebellious as they are still treated as underdogs in this so called modern society, Bhiku, the central character of this novel tries hard to fill the gap between the low and the high but is failed at last. Though untouchability has been abolished by law, it is not abolished from the heart of high caste people. The prejudices of caste-Hindus still exist and will continue to make human beings like him, suffer. Only the incident of constructing the road to facilitate transportation of milk from Govardhan to Gurgaon

creates a great fuss between the caste Hindus and the low caste untouchables. The huts of the untouchables are set on fire. Bikhu is severely insulted again and again yet Anand also presents Dhooli Singh as a social reformer who always tries to help untouchables. But novel is not ended with the union of the two classes. These problems are very deeply rooted. The stubbornness of the high caste youth compels the low caste to think about going far away from this high class society. They are dying to gain a little respect but are failed at every attempt and the reason is they are poor. Only money can make a difference in this so called modern society and poor are highly exploited in every way in this world. So we may say that Mulk Raj Anand very keenly brings forth the saga of exploitation of the poor through his novels.

References

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