

Re-evaluation of Literature in the context of Religion: A Study of Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

Prakash Eknath Navgire

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College
of Home Science (Autonomous)

SNDT Women's University

Mumbai.

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand is the most famous name in the Indian writing in English. He takes the downtrodden society as the prime subject for his novels. The most of the fiction talk about the concern of lower caste and the inequality of them in the society. The current research paper focuses on the religion that plays the vital role to define the life of many people. The religion not only mend the relation with each other but guides each other towards the tolerance to accommodate. In the re-evaluation of the religion the research paper makes it clear for the reader that the different religion has the capacity to love each other. In the most of the cases the religion has internal issues and that affects the life of own people. The Hindu have many of the sub caste and due to lower and upper they torture the lower caste and treat oneself the superior one. Though Bakha is a lower caste but he is Hindu person but always get the inferior treatment throughout his life. The exploitation of upper class towards lower caste like physical, mental, social and religious never allow them to enter in the main steam of society. The work of Mulk Raj Anand gives the light on the characters of real life which suffers due to the caste issue and the provide the answer with the help of one religion to another.

Key words: caste, Mulk Raj Anand, lower caste, upper caste, religion, Hindu, Muslim.

Mulk Raj Anand is the most famous name in the Indian writing in English. He is notable to write about the caste system and somewhere the caste systems are come from the religion. The religion of people divides themselves among the classes and culture. The Indian nation is the most affected nation due to the traditional customs in the nation. He is known for the writing that has the good reader beyond the Indian readers. His almost all the fictions are world wide accepted by the people. He gains the international fame like R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao with his contemporaries. Mulk Raj Anand take the oppressed class as the major theme of his novels, and in that the role of religion to develop and shape communities is vital. The oppressed class was the victim from many years and Anand takes them for the discussion in his fiction to bring it in the main stream of society. Each work of art talk in relation with the betterment of the oppressed and get them the fare policies in the life of them for the progress. His best contribution in the field of literature make him liable to receive the most civilian honour Padma Bhushan on his name. His education was the most tough job for him but works on all the odds and he got the best colleges for the education form London, he achieves his Ph.D degree from the University of Cambridge. Anand's literary development

mostly done at the place of London among the scholars and academicians. His marriage is the most important issue of his life and he marries with the actress and later divorced her.

Mulk Raj Anand's own family issues are responsible to drag him to write about the caste system. His most famous novel *Untouchable* (1935) creates the wave in the field of literature and presents the life of Bhaka and his suffering due to the untouchable. Bhaka presented a toilet cleaner in the fiction and his interaction with upper caste and the treatment he receives from the upper caste is presented in the fiction. The writing features make him an Indian Charles Dickens. His good friendship with E.M. Foster is very useful for his because Foster writes the introduction of his novel and gives an excellent remark on it. Anand make his mark for the freedom movement in India and abroad, he work for the India's freedom movement at the same time for the Spain's Civil War. Anand works as the script writer for BBC in relation with World War II. His friendship with many people like renown author Gorge Orwell make him a good writer and give him a proper direction to write the best novels.

Anand's many of the famous novels give his good fame in the literary carrier they are *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), *The Big Heart* (1945), *The Lost Child* (1934), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), *The Road* (1961). His many of the works are from the different array of literature like novel, short stories, poetry and essays. The many of the critics divides his work of art from the Indian soil and foreign soil when it was written. Anand even writes the novel which is based on the life hs own gives many autobiographic elements in his fiction. Anand receives the Sahitya Academi Awards in the year of 1971. In the argument of the current research paper is to re-evaluate the religion in the context of Mulk Raj Anand's novel. The religion is the prime subject of his writing and with the help of religion Anand bridge the gap of Hindu and Muslim. Another aspect he presents through his novels is that the religion also divides and unites the nation. Religion is the strongest task force to unite the people of different class and culture's people. When we think in relation with the nation India we can find that the religion plays the most vital role in the day todays life of each human being. The nation is so diverse in relation with culture and religion and each person need to happy with different religion so we can maintain the sovereignty of nation. This is the observation in the world that India is happy due to the tolerance of country in relation with another culture and religion. The most of the population is divided among Hindu and Muslim community and at the same time other minor religion are numerous in the country. The novel *Untouchables* is set in the backdrop of the colonial era. The most of the Indian's are the great followers of the religion and the society was divided among the lower caste and upper caste.

Manmohan Krishna Bhatnagar's book *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A Critical Study* (2000) make it clearer for the reader about the quality of Anand about the social issue and his command to present the religion as the big source of change in the society. The book also divides the different work of Anand's from various perspective make it present for the new reader. The caste is the basic concept that gives the idea of religion and that is well handled in the works of Anand. The re-evaluation of the religion gives the good stand for the both the religion Hindu and Muslim. This is the observation that in many of the literature the both religions are contradictory presented and many of the times there is no room for the friendship but in the relation with this fiction *Untouchable* we can see the good friendship among Hindu and Muslim. The novel *Untouchable* set in the village of Bulashah that is the imaginative creation of Anand. He uses this village to narrate the story of Bakha. Bakha takes birth in the lower caste family who works to clean the toilets of the upper caste society. The

actual work of the Bakha's family is to clean the village as a sweeper. In the village among the sweeper's family Bakha's father is the head of the community. Every day the work Bakha is to clean the latrines of the upper class, many of the time he gets the scolding from his father for the work. The upper caste never gives good treatment to Bakha in his life, though he works very well in their houses. Many of the times he observed that due to the negative feedback about him from the upper caste people his father does not treat him well in the house.

The upper caste Charat Singh agrees to give Bakha a good hockey stick if he gives the good service at his house. He wants Bakha should clean the bathroom well from his house and one day he calls him after the cleaning to collect the hockey as the gift. Bakha never gets the good treatment in his life from the upper class so becomes very happy to see the hockey as the gift. The life changing incidents happens in the life of Bakha that change his thinking for the society and he realises that his lower caste is the big victim of exploitation. He narrates the unfair treatment to lower caste in the simplest way to get the clean water. Many of the time, in the most important need the lower-class people need to wait in the queue for hours to get the water with separate line among outcaste. He even writes there is a jealousy among inter caste also. Though all of them are marginalised but do not give good treatment to each other. He observes the rude nature of Gulabo with his sister Sohini many of the places in the fiction. The upper caste treats the lower caste inferior but at the same time greedy to have sexual relation with lower caste. Pandit Kali Nath calls Sohini to the temple and sexually exploits her. The nature of the Kali is worst in this relation because a person who stays in the temple and does the crime in the temple which is most pure place of god. This indicates the worst nature of upper caste families and at the same time the innocent nature of lower class. Sohini and Bakha do not get the proper help from the people in the severe crime of Kali Nath. Lakha his father makes Bakha to work in the village and many times forces him to work in the village. In the nature of Bakha he never disappoints his father work so humbly in the village which assigned by his father. In many of the incidents it makes clear for the reader that both the communities Hindu and Muslim are pro supportive for each other. Bakha's touch to the upper caste make him get the ample of beating from the people of the village. The traditional rule of the upper caste is when any of the lower caste goes from the road he has to make the sound of his approaching so the people leaves the road. In the beating all the upper caste people beats him but the Muslim community person comes to his rescue in this situation. This is the incidents when we can see the equality among the different religion when they realise the pain of others. It can be seen from the broad perspectives also that both the religion lower caste and Muslims are minor in the country that might attracts towards each other's.

The exploitation of Sohini and ill treatment to Bakha brings the matter in the light that the lower caste is the most exploited community in the India. Though Sohini is exploited in the temple but later she is accused by the Kali that she pollutes him. This makes no identity and equal rights to lower caste in the society. The rude society is worst for him when he begs for the food in the village, he observes many of the time people avoids to give him food or force to do extra work for them. One day a lady from the upper caste forces him to clean the gutter where her child leaves the waste that makes his feel disgusting and leaves the place without food with empty stomach. The caste affects the last generation more than the new generation, so many of the times Lakha tries to persuade Bakha's mind in favour of upper caste. Lakha wants his son should follow the tradition and be a good follower of the traditions. In his stories many of the time he tells a good and generous story to his son Bakha about the upper caste helpers. Lakha wants the goodness in the mind of Bakha against the upper caste. If

Bakha goes against the upper class then they will kill him might be due to that he gives this knowledge to him. The idea of eating waste food of upper caste makes him more anxious in his life. There are many thoughts make him alone in the world and sense him as the outcaste, though he knows all others are wrong and ill-treat him and his sister but he can't take revenge as the outcaste. This makes Bakha more cripple and ignorant about himself. The attitude of Bakha changes about the caste when he gets the good treatment from Muslim person and in the other incident when the Singh gives him a respectable treatment at his home. Singh gives him his own things to touch and handle and allows him to move in the house that make Bakha very happy and somewhere see the life positively.

The lower caste is low due to the work of the people but in the reality, they are Hindus, then also one Hindu does not give good treatment to another Hindu. In the fiction the other two religions Muslim and Sikh are more incline to help the Hindus though they are lower caste. In this relation both religions are very differently portrayed by the Mulk Raj Anand, he blurs the boundaries of the upper and lower religion among the people. This is the way the religions are effectively used in the fiction to present the equality among the people. The 'giving hockey' is the symbol of the of taking lower caste into the main stream of the society. The mixing of Singh's behaviour with Bakha also suggest the mingling integrity among the two different religions. The good nature of Bakha makes him the victim of his father's anger and one day forces him to leave the house.

In the basic nature of upper caste, it is not possible for them to see the success of lower caste, in the wining game of hockey Bakha gets a lot of disrespect and hatred from the people of upper caste. Bakha run away form the house to get the peace in his life and meet the white officer. The nature of Britisher and his wife make him force to leave the house of colonel Hutchinson. Bakha's search for equality begins with leaving the house and he meets Mahatma Gandhi, who fights for the equal rights or equality of untouchables. Mahatma Gandhi wants to eradicate the untouchability form the nation and create the equality. The new generations flushing toilets may give relief to untouchable this thought make Bakha happy and he is so eager to share it with his father. The entry of Mahatma Gandhi in the life of untouchable is very important because before Gandhi no one even thought about the untouchable and its grievous nature that affects the life of thousand untouchables. The Hindu's are discriminating the own people which are called lower caste due to the work nature. The caste in India are divided from the period of Aryans on the basic and skills of work. The differentiations of the caste as Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are done on the basis of work nature but with the time it is misrepresented by the people and made the life troublesome for Shudras.

The lower work decides the low status of the Shudras and make them feel ashamed for themselves that was the thinking of upper caste. The thinking of the upper caste is not changed after the division of society. The upper caste creates the hypocrisy and treat the Shudras the most undesirable human being to live. The own Hindu community is felt the gluttony against another lower caste Hindu. That establishment of the thoughts are so much imbibed in the mind of the people that, it is not ready to wash away from their mind. The nature of Hindu upper caste is terrible with lower caste Hindu but in the relation with Muslim they always treat Bakha well among them. Bakha observes in the society that Hindu considers Muslim as the inferior or outcaste but the same Muslim people come to rescue him at the time of fight. He narrates the nature of Hindu person who sells betel-leaf always throws the cigarettes towards Bakha when he buys form his shop, at the same time the Muslim allows him to use his hukkah to light the cigarettes and touches him. This all makes him think

the nature of own Hindus and outcaste Muslim. This is the way Anand represents the relation of religion form his novel. In the abusive attack at Bakha he gets the proper help from Muslim Mohammedan who is the simple tonga walah in the village.

Bakha remember all the Muslim people who helps him in his life or their good nature itself is a great support for him. The outcaste treatment he never finds in the nature of any of the Muslim person like Jehangir, Naimat, Asmat, Ali Abdulah, Hssan and Hussein. Bakha also see the other people from the Muslim community who are against the agenda of Mahatma Gandhi. There are many incidents in the fiction which talk about the connectedness among the Hindu and Muslim people. This is the best message Mulk Raj Anand wants to give form his best and most celebrated novel want to give. The ability of Mulk Raj Anand is so creative and appealing to the reader that what he writes that touches to each reader of any period of time. The wiring gives the feel of liveliness to the reader. He has the narration quality to present the picture of the outcaste and the reader feel sympathy towards it.

The author Cowasjee Saros writes in book *So Many Freedom, A Study of Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand* (1977) that "Anand is deeply concerned with social problems and that he is continued to the eradication of the evils which infest modern society. Is this a deplorable aim of an artist? Is Untouchable a propaganda because it reveals the exploitation of the poor by the rich? Propaganda is a term given currency by the bourgeois critic and loosely used in India to caption any work where the author's intention is plain". This is the quality of the Anand that many of the critics contributes for the different aspects of his works. Mulk Raj Anand also writes in his works about the reality of his work that most of his characters are from the realistic experiences, he makes it clear in his 'preface' that, "All these heroes, as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories were dear to me, because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth. And I was only repaying the debt of gratitude lowed them for much of the inspiration they had given me to mature into manhood, when I began to interpret... they were flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood, and obsessed me in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist's soul. And I was doing no more than what a writer does when seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of his life". This makes the picture clear for the reader that all the novels are the representation of realistic society. And that gives the right essence of the society.

Works Cited: -

- Anand, Mulk Raj. "Untouchable. 1935." *Bombay: Kutub Popular, nd Print* (1986).
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Across the Black Waters*. Orient paperbacks, 2008.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Apology for Heroism*. Popular Book Depot; Bombay, 2013.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Coolie*. Penguin Books India, 1994.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Letters on India*. G. Routledge & sons, Limited, 1942.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *The Hindu view of art*. Routledge, 2019.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *The sword and the sickle: a novel*. Lucas, 1986.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *The village*. Ind-Us, 1979.

- Arora, Neena. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of His Hero*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2005.
- Baer, Ben Conisbee. "Shit Writing: Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable, the Image of Gandhi, and the Progressive Writers' Association." *Modernism/modernity* 16.3 (2009): 575-595.
- Bald, Suresht Renjen. "Politics of a revolutionary elite: a study of Mulk Raj Anand's novels." *Modern Asian Studies* 8.4 (1974): 473-489.
- Berman, Jessica. "Toward a Regional Cosmopolitanism: The Case of Mulk Raj Anand." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 55.1 (2009): 142-162.
- Bhatnagar, Manmohan Krishna, and Mittapalli Rajeshwar, eds. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A Critical Study*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2000.
- Cowasjee, Saros. "Mulk Raj Anand: The Early Struggles of a Novelist." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 7.1 (1972): 49-56.
- Cowasjee, Saros. *So many freedoms: a study of the major fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*. Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Fisher, Marlene. "Interview with Mulk Raj Anand May 19, 1973, Khandala." (1974): 109-122.
- Harrex, S. C. "Western Ideology and Eastern Forms of Fiction: The Case of Mulk Raj Anand." *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1982. 142-158.
- Khan, S. A. *Mulk Raj Anand: The Novel of Commitment*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2000.
- Mohan, TMJ Indra, ed. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A New Critical Spectrum*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2005.
- Mukherjee, Arun P. "The Exclusions of Postcolonial Theory and Mulk Raj Anand's 'Untouchable': A Case Study." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 22.3 (1991).
- Narasimhaiah, C. D. "Mulk Raj Anand: The Novel of Human Centrality." *South Asian Review* 15.12 (1991): 18-30.
- Paul, Premila. *The novels of Mulk Raj Anand: a thematic study*. Sterling, 1983.
- Riemenschneider, Dieter. "An Ideal of Man in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels." *Indian Literature* 10.1 (1967): 29-51.
- Verma, K. D. "An Interview with Mulk Raj Anand." *South Asian Review* 15.12 (1991): 31-38.