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## Humanism in Mulk Raj Anand's novels

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### Abstract

Anand is called a champion of the down-trodden. He is the first novelist writing in English to choose as his raw material from the lower class life of the Indian masses. He presents a realistic picture of Indian society in his novels. In the choice of themes, he is unquestionably an innovator. He has felt the pulse of Indian society. He goes deep into the hearts of the poor and the down-trodden. He selects the lowest classes and the labouring classes to represent them in his novels. He pleads for the oppressed and exploited people in society. He has always felt that the less-privileged populations in a country like India has been deliberately kept at a level of sub-humanity. Anand's preoccupation with contemporary issues and his faith in humanistic ideals are best reflected in the course of the narrative of his novels. The problems that generally engage him in his novels are the exploitation of the poor, social discrimination based on race relations etc. As he is a humanist by conviction. He tries to project the problems, conflicts and aspirations of the underdog in Indian society in a compassionate manner.

**Keywords:** Humanism, Mulk Raj Anand's novels, Indian society

### Introduction

Among the Indian English novelists, Mulk Raj Anand occupies an enviable position. He is a celebrated Indo-Anglian novelist with global recognition. He has written a score of novels, hundreds of short stories, a number of books on different themes and many essays and articles on varying subjects. He is loved and liked by millions of readers, throughout the English-speaking world, because of his aptitude for storytelling and his impassioned humanism. Anand is a realist. He is an artist with a mission and is inevitably concerned with man in society. He has a deep understanding of Indian masses. Mulk Raj Anand was born in 1905 at Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province (of undivided India). His father was a traditional copper-smith turned soldier. Mulk Raj Anand moved with his father when the latter's regiment was transferred from one place to another. Thus he got an opportunity of seeing many sections of Indian society in different parts of the Punjab and the then frontier province of India.

Anand learnt at first hand the conditions and the life of both rural and urban parts of the Punjab. Some of the low caste young boys were among his playmates at this impressionable age of his life. He had the direct and the first-hand knowledge of the treatment that was meted out to these low caste companions. Anand felt that it was his duty and the mission of his life to focus the attention of his readers on the innumerable wrongs, injustices and the injuries that were being continuously perpetrated on the young unfortunate underdogs of Indian society.

The scene of action of most of his novels, by and large, was laid in the villages and cities of the Punjab with which he was well familiar. He could easily delineate with realistic details the style and the language of their talk, their customs, superstitions, religious practices and their disabilities-social, economic and political from which the people of his novels suffered. Therefore, he confined himself largely to depicting the life and conditions of the Punjab, the area of his own experience in real life. In his own words, "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". He began by recalling the lives of the people he had known, and in his narratives introduced a whole new people who had seldom entered the realms of literature.

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The task was not easy and with remarkable candour and humility he confessed it. Mulk Raj Anand feels quite at home within his range, when he deals with such persons in his novels. In fact, it is the keen awareness of the human predicament that propelled him into creative writing. Therefore the themes which Anand has chosen for his novels are based on such problems as castism and human suffering caused by a variety of factors-political, economic, social and cultural. 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 these evils in order that a desirable just social order may come into being.

Anand's humanism is firmly based in his regard for man. His personal contribution to humanism is his theory of the whole man. He pleads for the all-round growth of man, for the development of all his faculties, and this must be used to serve the cause of total development of other individuals in society. Anand believes that by his own effort, Man can emerge from the encircling gloom of violence, greed, jealousy and narrowness, and live intensely and fully. Anand makes three suggestions to make human life full and happy in an international community. Firstly, a system of education so designed as to enable every person to achieve his potential to utmost; Secondly, an art which is truly humanistic and is therefore a valuable ally in the struggle to achieve the humanist ideal; and thirdly, a controlled and judicious use of modern science and technology for the good of the lowest and the poorest man.

Anand is a writer with a mission. He presents the tragic conditions of the poor created by caste system, economic disparities and various forms of exploitation. Again and again he returns in his novels to the themes of hunger, poverty, humiliation and social injustice *Untouchable* and *The Road* deal with the problem of untouchability. *Coolie* deals with the varied experiences of an orphan boy in different situations of life. While *Two Leaves and a bud* describes the pitiable condition of coolies in the Tea Estates of Assam. The themes of caste and class systems have been skillfully fused in *The Big Heart*. Anand is a social reformer, a romantic and a visionary.

Anand's humanism places man in the centre of all things. It also believes in the social, moral and spiritual equality of all men. Therefore, it cannot sanction any distinction between men, say, divisions of caste, creed or race, which are obstacle in the way of full development of human beings. Anand's humanism recognizes the fact that practice of love and compassion for the weak and the lowly, we can reduce misery and unhappiness. Anand reminds us of our ancient saints like Buddha, Nanak and Kabir when he pleads for the universal brotherhood of men.

Mulk Raj Anand shows his wide observing power of humanity in delineating his characters. He tries to represent those characters that he knew from early childhood. He shows in his novels that characters are not the product of circumstances. He knows the nature and sentiments of his characters. They are the true representatives of their respective creed. He does not give the sentimental portrait of his characters. His characters include waifs, untouchables and labourers. They are reflections of the people of real world.

Mulk Raj Anand presents the real feelings of his characters and brings out their merits and demerits. He has sympathy with his characters. He gives full liberty and freedom to his

characters to behave and act. He shows kindness towards common people in his novels. *Coolie* is the best manifestation of his love for common man in the society. He is deeply influenced by the stream of consciousness technique in which the character's perception and thoughts are presented as really occurring to him. With goodness of his heart, he shares joy and sorrow of common men in his novels.

Anand has sympathy with the working class. His novels serve useful purpose of arousing the conscience of the people. He demands upliftment of the poor and down-trodden with a missionary zeal. His compassion and sympathetic attitude towards his characters make him a real master in the art of characterization. In the delineation of his characters his aim is to emphasize the universal and not the particular. His characters live, speak and act like true persons without taking any influence of the novelist. He represents the varied moods of the common people of the society in his novels with due sincerity. The heroes in Anand's novels belong either to the class of the suffering like Bakha, Munoo, Gangu or to the sensitive groups of people who suffer seeing others suffer like Lalu and Ananta. Anand is aware of their great potential, which often remains unrealized as they are trapped by a callous society. In their struggle to free themselves from this situation and create an everyday life for themselves they became heroic.

Anand has exposed social evil in its myriad manifestations and has presented different layers of human experience in his fiction. His wide reading and travel have enabled him to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. Anand is not a follower of any particular political ideology. He has belief in human brotherhood and compassion for the poor and the down trodden. At the same time he is a social realist, and in his novels we find a truthful and moving representation of life.

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