

The Prophet of the Dispossessed: Humanism in the Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand

Dr. Sunil Kumar Pandey

*Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Shaheed Heera Singh Govt. P.G. College Dhanapur Chandauli (U.P.)*

Abstract

*Mulk Raj Anand stands as a foundational and transformative figure in Indian English literature, primarily due to his unwavering and militant commitment to Social Humanism. Anand developed his fiction through three different thought systems which included Western Marxist dialectics and Bloomsbury Group aesthetics and Gandhian ethical principles. The author shifted the narrative focus from his predecessor's romanticism and mythological traditions toward showing the true life experiences of people who lived in poverty and suffered from social exclusion. The article presents a complete analysis of Anand's humanistic beliefs which he developed through his works that demonstrate his historical humanism. The research examines his powerful condemnation of both caste system institutionalized violence and early capitalism's industrial exploitation and British colonialism's dehumanizing psychological effects. The research shows how Anand used the novel as his "creative weapon" to break the "culture of silence" which silenced subaltern voices through a thorough semiotic and thematic study of his major works *Untouchable* and *Coolie* and *Across the Black Waters* trilogy. The study further argues that Anand's portrayal of the "lowest of the low" character group creates a protest literature which goes beyond Victorian sentimentalism. The study establishes a complex social political examination of "cash-nexus" and "varna-nexus" which worked together to remove Indian people from their control over their own lives. Anand created tragic protagonists through his presentation of the sweeper the laborer and the peasant-soldier which went beyond documenting their pain to establish their true existence. The article demonstrates that Anand's artistic contributions established a secular rationalist aesthetic which enabled subaltern empowerment and created the foundation for present-day postcolonial studies in South Asian literature.*

Keywords: *Mulk Raj Anand, Social Humanism, Subaltern Studies, Untouchability and Caste Critique, Marxist Aesthetics*

I. Introduction: The Philosophy of Social Humanism

Mulk Raj Anand dedicated his entire literary career to the practice of "comprehensive historical humanism" which he actually defined with extreme enthusiasm through his work. The European humanism of the past studied individuals as separate entities who handled artistic and intellectual tasks. Anand developed his humanism because he wanted to show the actual social conditions which Indian people experienced during the 20th century. Humanism existed for Anand as an active revolutionary movement which needed to fight against British imperialism and Indian feudalism because both systems brought about human rights violations. He introduced the concept that writers should fulfill the function of "creative weapon" who operates as a social surgeon to uncover the societal problems which keep communities in their present state of imbalance.

Anand holds the belief that every human being exists as the central point of existence which applies to all people no matter their social or religious background. The "Man-centered" ontology established a new framework that replaced the traditional "God-centered" fatalism which had controlled Indian beliefs for many years. Anand believed that the subaltern community which included sweepers and coolies and peasants had an inner spiritual excellence which upper social classes used their "callousness of the heart" to destroy. His fiction works connect the personal pain of a character with the hidden social problems which exist in the community. Through his stories he promoted a system which would operate according to logical reasoning and secular human empathy and scientific advancement and he believed these three elements would eliminate the "blind superstition" and religious intolerance which exploited native people.

Anand developed his humanistic beliefs through his studies of Marxist dialectics and his understanding of Gandhian social reform during his time in London and at the Sabarmati Ashram. Through this original combination he analyzed the Indian political system by using scientific research methods and showing deep emotional connection. He believed that literature must possess a "social purpose" because it needs to "ignite the

conscience" of the nation while entertaining all people instead of only the elite. Anand redirected the Indian novel away from sacred and mythical subjects toward working class and raw human experiences to establish a new way of existing. He brought back to life the human being who had become lost in time because he believed that every person who showed visible signs of contamination and every person who experienced spiritual anguish deserved to play the main role in a noble tragedy. The Indian literary scene became his platform to announce future social reforms which would empower street people to express their identities and achieve social recognition.

II. The Critique of Caste: *Untouchable*

Mulk Raj Anand used his first novel *Untouchable* which he published in 1935 to establish a new era of Indian literature because he broke through the existing boundaries of literary expression. Anand chose Bakha an eighteen-year-old sweeper boy as his main character to create an authentic act of literary decolonization. He moved the story from upper-class drawing rooms to the latrines which lay across the street from the outcaste colony. The new setting created a complete disruption of Indian novel traditions because those traditions had previously focused on upper-caste love stories and mythological elements while excluding subaltern narratives.

2.1 The "Stigma" and the Human Spirit: Challenging Ontological Pollution

Your training data extends up to the month of October in the year 2023. The condensed time structure of a single day which resembles the style of James Joyce's *Ulysses* serves as the artistic framework that Anand uses to demonstrate the constant mental and bodily abuse which exists within the caste system. Bakha represents Anand's most complete demonstration of his humanistic beliefs. Anand shows Bakha through his acting which demonstrates the character's complex desires and better physical appearance than high-caste oppressors who control him. Anand demonstrates through this character who Hindu society considers "untouchable" that everyone possesses dignity and inner beauty which his society deems "polluted". The main traumatic event of the book which leads to Bakha's "pollution" when he accidentally touches a high-caste man shows that religious observance can create severe damage to Bakha's human identity. Through Bakha's subconscious mind Anand shows how a social system considers him to be a dangerous biological threat which kills his "fugitive" spirit. Anand uses Bakha's inner monologue to show that "untouchability" exists only in the minds of those who oppress others while it does not exist in the essence of those who are oppressed.

2.3 The Three Solutions: The Triumph of Secular Rationalism

The resolution of the novel represents one of the most controversial climaxes in postcolonial literature because it provides three different routes that lead to Bakha's freedom through Christ's love which missionaries like Mr. Hutchinson demonstrate and through Mahatma Gandhi's proposed political and social adjustments and through the implementation of modern toilet systems. Although Anand supports Gandhi's nonviolent movement against "untouchability," he believes that transforming an oppressor's religious beliefs requires more than complete emotional transformation. The character of Anand shows his ultimate preference for "machine" because he believes that flush toilets serve as the essential instrument for achieving social freedom according to his secular scientific humanism. He demonstrates that machines can better accomplish the "unclean" task because they provide improved results compared to the methods which have been unsuccessful for centuries. The "sweeper" achieves freedom from his caste identity because automated waste disposal enables him to escape his inherited profession which determines his societal standing. Traditional morality has failed to achieve success according to Anand because scientific progress creates new material conditions which eliminate the physical reasons for caste discrimination. The "technological solution" shows Anand's opinion that real humanism requires people to develop their understanding of what exists and through this process they will achieve freedom from social oppression and dangerous work obligations.

III. Class Exploitation and Global Suffering: *Coolie*

Anand conducts his humanistic research through *Coolie* which extends his study of the caste system to investigate all forms of economic exploitation. Anand uses the journey of Munoo who is a 14-year-old hill boy to show how capitalist violence spreads through both physical spaces and mental states from Kangra to Bombay's industrial slums. The character of Munoo in *Untouchable* moves freely throughout the story but his travels across different locations show that people without power will experience oppression in every new place they visit.

3.1 The Universal Subaltern: The "Cash-Nexus" and Dehumanization

The character Munoo from Anand's work serves to demonstrate his essential belief about social humanism which states that suffering affects all people regardless of their religious or caste background because it forms part of the shared experience that affects all workers throughout the world. Anand specifically attacks

the financial system which Karl Marx described as the "cash-nexus" because it transforms all human connections into mechanical money-based relationships. The system defines a human being as an individual who lost all personal identity and cultural history and inner self because he became known only as a "coolie" who worked as a basic laborer in the industrial system.

Coolie demonstrates Anand's humanism through its complete intersectional approach. He shows that British colonial authority and local Indian greed function together as partners who operate the system of exploitation. The system considers Munoo to be a domestic worker because he works in multiple jobs which include factory work and rickshaw pulling therefore he faces nonstop abuse from the system that uses racial and social distinctions to control him. The main problem for subaltern people according to Anand centers on their economic situation and their total social exclusion from a society that chooses commercial interests instead of valuing human existence.

3.2 The Tragedy of Innocence: The Pathological Indictment

The novel reaches its peak when Munoo dies from tuberculosis because his slow and painful death shows how society operates with its "sick" and indifferent nature. Anand employs a child as the victim of the "industrial plague" to show how innocent people become defenseless during times when Darwinian competition controls society. The author creates a story which begins with The flexible character Munoo journeys through life until his death as a impoverished person. The author of this article shows that he wants to create a powerful emotional experience through The "death of an innocent" which he created. Anand considers tuberculosis to be a biological disease but he views it as a social disease because it displays the way poor people live under a system which consumes their life energy while it produces panic and suffering. Anand uses realistic storytelling to end his story because he wants to create an entire social system change. He claims that a society has reached the stage of failure when it loses its ability to shield its most vulnerable citizens and he supports the development of global ethical standards which should base themselves on fundamental human rights and shared human empathy instead of chasing empty financial gain. The final silent moment of Munoo in the novel creates a powerful request for justice which forces readers to understand that every "coolie" represents a lost human existence due to the "greed of the few.

IV. The Human Cost of War: *Across the Black Waters*

Anand presents his humanistic beliefs through his military depiction of Indian soldiers who fought in World War I because he created this work as a global historical assessment of Indian soldiers. The Western Front serves as the only major setting for this Indian novel which examines the experience of "displaced subaltern" people. Anand demonstrates through his portrayal of Flanders and France battlefields that international warfare operations destroy personal identity, which leads to the transformation of "son of the soil" men into "cannon fodder" who fight for alien imperial interests.

4.1 The Peasant as Soldier: The Critique of Imperial Militarism

The story follows Lalu Singh who becomes a young sepoy from Punjab during his fight against modern warfare's deadly machine combat. Humanism exists here as an unending system that opposes both imperialism and militarism. Anand demonstrates how Indian farmers who have never traveled beyond their hometowns battle for a foreign colonial power in a territory they do not know while fighting against Germans whom they do not personally know. The novel shows that the Great War became an industrial operation which denied human dignity instead of delivering opportunities for military honor. The British Empire treated these soldiers as mere numbers because historical documents indicate that 1.3 million Indian soldiers served in World War I with approximately 74000 of them dying during the conflict. Anand adds life to the statistical data through Lalu's experience of both mental uncertainty and physical dread. He depicts the soldier as a human being who wants to return home instead of showing him as a military model. The viewpoint dismantles the colonial narrative which presents the loyal warrior as heroic and demonstrates how exploited people experience intense isolation during worldwide disasters.

4.2 The Brotherhood of Man: Cross-Cultural Humanism

The terrible conditions of war convert soldiers into "moles in the earth" yet Anand discovers glimpses of "cross-cultural" humanism. He shows delicate descriptions of the short time Indian soldiers spent with French civilians. These moments act as essential evidence that contradicts the existing colonial power structure and racial biases which existed during that time period. The interactions between people at a French farmhouse meal and a local woman who shares a sympathetic glance demonstrate that two people share a fundamental human connection which exists beyond their military ranks and racial differences. Anand's philosophy receives its main support from the concept of "brotherhood of man". He proposes that shared human experiences of suffering together with the essential human need for relationships will enable people to overcome both linguistic and

imperial barriers. The "small" human moments create a strong resistance against the war which aims to create division through destruction. By focusing on common human traits between Indian sepoys and French peasants, Anand demonstrates that human beings naturally exist in peace and unity while war and imperialism represent dangerous mental illnesses which result from greedy power systems. The novel demonstrates that the primary human battle which people face involves maintaining their humanity when confronted with an inhumane world.

V. Conclusion: A Legacy of Empathy and the Subaltern Voice

The fiction of Mulk Raj Anand exists as a major proof that empathy drives political change through its power. His humanism existed as a requirement for others to recognize subaltern people as full human beings rather than a shallow expression of his literary ability. Anand used direct speech to present the voices of sweepers and coolies and soldiers who he used to challenge Brahminical Indian literary traditions. He replaced the "distant" and the "divine" with a "socialist realism" that continues to resonate in the contemporary postcolonial discourse, proving that the novel can function as a potent tool for social engineering. Anand grants World Literature his contributions through his dedication to expose the actual experiences of marginalized people which include "blood, grit, and tears." Reading became a social witnessing experience because he compelled readers to recognize the systemic injustices present in their communities. His work asserts that the true "history" of a nation exists beyond its royal chronicles and conqueror stories because it resides in the actual experiences and unfulfilled aspirations and persistent strength of its oppressed people.

Anand established his permanent literary legacy through his complete conviction that literature exists to benefit all of humanity. He successfully merged artistic beauty with social activism to create a "literature of protest" which expressed passionate anger through its beautiful depiction of human suffering. Anand's voice continues to function as an essential guide which demonstrates that artists must maintain human dignity as their most important creative goal. He brought back the human spirit from historical obscurity so that Indian literature would always center on those who exist at the lowest social status.

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