



PORTRAYAL OF HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVES BY MULK RAJ ANAND

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ABSTRACT:

This paper is an attempt to trace the humanitarian elements and perspectives in the novels of Indian English writers. For this purpose it deals mainly with the famous novelist and author Mulk Raj Anand and his incomparable novel "The Old Woman and the Cow". After a brief description of the story and the characters, the various aspects of humanitarian perspectives in the novel are analyzed and dealt with in detail. Different characters in the novel, their nature, behaviour with the major one, how they conspire to ruin and torture the helpless woman etc. are portrayed and the myriad shades of humanitarian perspectives they embody and exhibit throughout the story are delineated.



KEY WORDS: humanist, perspectives, inception, multifarious, feasible, penchant, compassion, enlightenment, combatant, appeasement.

INTRODUCTION:

Indian writings in English had achieved a great depth of fame, name and importance in the realm of literature since its inception. There are many writers of Indian English on the scene, be it novelists, poets, dramatists, short story writers etc. in ancient times Indian writers in English were very few but with the arrival of the English men and their stay and rule in India and the onset of the Colonial Period, the number had increased tremendously. Undoubtedly, these new writers have tried their best to excel in every genre of writing and had achieved quite a creditable performance and carved a niche for themselves with their successfully creative depiction of multifarious themes. As it is not feasible to deal with all the Indian English novelists and their works in this paper, only one of them has been selected and his famous novel "The Old Woman and the Cow" has been preferred for this purpose.

Humanism of Mulk Raj Anand

The novelist Mulk Raj Anand was particularly chosen for this paper on account of his being the most famous humanist of modern times. Moreover he is an internationally hailed Indian novelist in English. He is a humanist to the core and some of the major characteristics of Anand's humanism are as follows: Always he upheld and emphasized the dignity of man overlooking factors like caste, creed and wealth. He was so zealous to use compassion as a living value. He strongly believed and proclaimed that art and poetry are the supreme tools for making possible the development of mankind. He was immensely popular for his crusade against superstition, feudalism and imperialism. Another prominent factor is that Anand's themes and characters are created with the major intention to bring back to life

the contemporary social situation as experienced by the individual himself. In many occasions it is seen that the writer's character finds himself in an unenviable circumstance. He realizes that he had become a victim of feeble traditions malignant customs such as a defied social order or a cruel administration.

Anand can most rightly be described as a humanist to the core. It is this constant faith in humanism that had enabled him to become a lovable man with infinite charm and several interests. Thus, in essence, he is a true friend, a tireless worker, an excited organizer, a prolific writer, a relentless champion for the cause of the poor and the meek, a savage combatant against inequality and injustice and above all a trustworthy humanist with unceasing faith in man and creative arts.

The Purpose of Anand's Characterisation

It has already been mentioned above that Anand is a great humanist. Many of his characters have well acclaimed position in Indian English as well as in different spheres of literature. Anand has a clear intention while depicting his characters in his unique and typical fashion. The goal of his characterization was none other than to touch and awaken the humanist chords of the readers' heart. For this he portrays graphically the helpless characters grappling with their fate in their pitiful and hapless condition.

Another appreciable aspect of Anand's characterization is that he is a ruthless critic of all that is worn out and decaying, namely, dehumanizing and degrading traditions, customs, manners, out dated social and political institutions, reactionary thoughts, ideologies etc. he has a great yearning for delineating the soul of Indian thought and her culture. He could accomplish this most efficiently as he was the store house of a profound knowledge of the Indian mind and the outdated social systems and institutions that had undermined her fabric.

The Technique of His Characterisation

Mulk Raj Anand was in possession of a peculiar and unique style of his own in depicting his characters. Truly, he was gifted with a penchant for exposing the contemporary situation through an analysis of the predicament of the men and women he portrays. He could achieve this easily and exactly as he had witnessed India in her myriad shades of enslavement, caste, poverty, religious archaism etc. It won't be an overstatement to claim that through the different characters of his works, Anand salutes the enduring heroism of the poor and the oppression women are forced to undergo. A closer look into the lives of his women characters reveal that all of them are the victims of habit, where man is ascribed the pride of place and is assigned with the social-cultural confirmation of female banishment.

The Old Woman and the Cow

Anand is extremely popular for creating diverse novels and a plethora of characters. But this paper deals only with the novel "The Old Woman and the Cow". In this book Anand beautifully narrates the story of Gauri, a meek and gentle country woman who endures silently the entire quantum of the injustice and hardships imposed on her. There are many characters like her mother, mother in law, Kesari and even her husband Panchi who trouble her constantly. Fortunately for her, the meeting with the enlightened Colonel Mahindra paves the way for a transformation in her dull and dry life and also in her attitude to life. Under the influence of this man, Gauri becomes glowingly conscious of her intrinsic worth as an independent individual. Gauri "the gentle cow" is married to Panchi, "the holy bull". In course of time her husband Panchi also tries to free himself from the debasing influence of his uncle and aunt and the whole village was keen on finding fault. But, as usual, he fails and this very combat and effort of his, just like Gauri's fate, attracts the attention and arouses the sympathy of the readers.

Humanistic Note in The Old Woman and the Cow

There are diverse aspects and perspectives humanism noticed in the novel "The Old Woman and the Cow". Anand's humanistic note is obviously reflected in the novel's strong plea for the identification and approval of women's rights. In the conventional socio-cultural set up of India, women remained unrealized, trapped, caged, oppressed and suppressed. The major principle of Anand's

humanism is that women need equality with men. He quite confidently voices his strong opinion that Indian women have every right to be treated equally with men folk of our country. While analyzing the major character of the novel, Gauri's life, it is noticed that her entire life a tale of torture and trauma. She is utterly powerless and just groans and moans under the distress male chauvinism. She is tortured and accused of being an inauspicious creature responsible for the mishaps of the family as well as even the draught in the village.

Panchi, being a bad husband, does not consider the veritable predicament of his wife Gauri and easily becomes a victim of Kesari's machinations. Kesari quite successfully makes him to believe that Gauri is really inauspicious and immoral. Later on, Gauri, like an animal or an object, is bartered away by a malicious and licentious uncle Amru and a greedy mother Lakshmi, all for money. On account of the fever and unhealthy condition of Gauri, she is shifted to Dr. Mahindra's hospital where she encounters a ray of hope for the first time in her life. Her contact and experiences with the reformist and gentle natured Mahindra effects a sea change in Gauri's life. Therefore, her transformation from a gentle cow to a self-willed woman with her own individuality takes place here. With immense hope, she goes back to Panchi her husband who doubts her virginity. As usual he scolds and strikes her and orders her to leave his house.

In this part of the book, Anand has captured and pictured quite realistically and beautifully the transformation of Gauri. Now, she is no longer a passive creature to tolerate such despicable and rude behavior. The writer portrays her as a symbolic representation of the modern woman who is quite conscious of her rights and individuality. Thus Gauri is no longer a gentle cow who silently suffered all the abusive behavior meted out to her by all of her family members and relatives. Quite boldly and convincingly, she leaves her husband's house and his life forever and embarks on a journey ... a new life completely devoted for the dejected, poor and wretched sections of the society.

Another aspect of the humanistic note in "The Old Woman and the Cow " is the stress it lays on the demand for deserting pain and barbarity and its exercise on appeasement and softness. This has been accomplished through the portrayal of a true scene of the gloomy plot against which the tragedy takes place. Anand has drawn the picture of Gauri meeting with savage suffering wherever she goes. Still she faces all these severe tests in her life with equanimity. It's really very heart rending to note that the only humane characters Gauri meet are Rafiquechacha and Dr. Mahindra. It's a really laudable effort on the part of the novelist as to how he tries to combat against man's age old faith in charms and omens, his material power, possessions, money, karma, God etc. The novelist clarifies that all the above mentioned notions serve as a great obstruction in the development of man and his progress.

CONCLUSION

While analyzing the novel in detail, it is seen that, at the outset, the novelist shares with us a realistic picture of Gauri's sufferings. For her inherent qualities of endurance and isolation, she is depicted as a cow. With the entry of Dr. Mahindra in the scene, Gauri awakens to the reality that the key to her salvation are not her endurance and obedience to the age old corrupted systems and traditions of the society, but in fighting against it with all her might. Hence the novelist in this novel questions and fights against the evils in the then prevalent society like falsity, hypocrisy, savagery, insensibility and the lack of love and compassion. In this novel, Mulk Raj Anand very efficiently and successfully delineates the whole process of the change of a woman Gauri from a mere puppet in men's hands to an independent and self-sufficient woman who asserts her equal rights with man and demands recognition. One of the most significant aspects of the writer's humanism as portrayed through this novel is the emphasis on the enhancement of woman's condition and significance. For him, man is the chief exponent of humanism. According to the novelist, the real meaning of humanism is "illumination or enlightenment in the interest of man, true to his highest nature and his noblest vision". Thus after a detailed analysis of Anand's novel "The Old Woman and the Cow", it can be rightly concluded that the novelist's top priority here was to delineate the humanitarian perspectives thoroughly in this novel and he has given the best picture possible of these elements through the main character Gauri and her plight.

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