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## Thematic Structure and Techniques in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

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In the present study, an attempt has been made to analyse and interpret the thematic patterns and techniques of Mulk Raj Anand's novels. The greatness of his fictional art lies in his ability to translate human misery and predicament into a live and pulsating reality. As an extremely sensitive and aware person, Mulk Raj Anand felt acutely the wide gulf between the 'haves and the have-nots'. The sheer insensitivity of the mighty and powerful ones of society towards the unfortunate poor baffled him. Even as a child he resented the orthodox restrictions levelled against the outcastes and low caste people. As he matured his emotional apprehension of reality shaped his intellectual response as well. Thus making his presentation not just emotional but also rational. His novels, therefore, embody the entire world of man and society. They depict the subtle aspects of human relationships which generate actions and reactions.

The novels of Mulk Raj Anand within their complex of thematic structure and techniques invite immense possibilities of explorations and insights. Apart from the countless number of studies undertaken on Mulk Raj Anand, the thematic aspects of his novels, even in their traditional classification offer multiple interpretations and insights. Man and society form a variegated fabric of life. Within the complicated structure of society lie the joys and sorrows of man. Mulk Raj Anand with his exposure to various social theories and philosophies has incessantly attempted to present a just and righteous vision of life. His novels deal with socio-economic aspects of life. As a progressive writer sympathising with the Sarva hara (the deprived class of society), Mulk Raj Anand envisions a world of love and human concern.

Ever since human settlements came into existence, the issue of equal distribution of various resources among human beings has caused grave concern. The relationship between master and servant, husband and wife, parents and children, have assumed several shades. The strong exercise their power over the weak in terms of money and social status. In a country like India where the caste-system is still very strong, the issues of untouchability, child labour, exploitation of factory and tea-garden workers form a very prominent thematic pattern in Mulk Raj Anand's novels.

The greatest contribution of Mulk Raj Anand to Indian English fiction is his vast coverage of various themes and their explication in an innovative and imaginative manner. The pre-independence period was marked by several events. The entire country was passing through a period of multifarious changes at every level of society. Struggle for freedom was the governing event but it engendered in people a determination to seek social justice in every sphere of life. Mulk Raj Anand's novels reflect the fast changing social climate of India.

The thematic design of a novel depends largely on the author's concerns of life. The human concerns which engaged Mulk Raj Anand intensely were deeply related to discrimination, orthodoxy, social disparity, untouchability and the highhandedness of the powerful and the rich. The themes of his novels depicts these concerns in an intensely artistic and realistic manner. Mulk Raj Anand weaves the plots of his novels to reveal the stark reality of life and also generates a positive view point. To Mulk Raj Anand, the world in general and India in particular, was fraught with social injustice. He focused acutely on the wide and deep divide between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. His themes dwell upon the subtle aspects of discriminations which underline his strong preference for humanism. It is this enlargement of feelings, heart and mind which govern his thematic pattern.

Mulk Raj Anand is, no doubt the pioneer in this field and has dealt with themes of poverty, hunger and suffering of Indian masses in a number of his novels and short stories. However, Bhabani Bhattacharya, R.K.Narayan, Kamla Markandaya are other novelists whose novels centre round the Indian masses, but Mulk Raj Anand has attained a universal significance in this regard. Mulk Raj Anand is a committed writer with a social purpose. In the words of Saros Cowasjee:

"Anand is deeply concerned with social problems and that he is committed 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.

The present paper deals with the main thematic aspects of his major novels namely *Untouchable*, *The Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Big Heart*, *The Lal Singh Trilogy*, *The Road*, *The Private Life of An Indian Prince*, *Lament On the Death of A Master of Arts*, four autobiographical novels - *Seven Summers*, *Morning Face*, *Confession of A Lover* and *The Bubble*. The themes of his major novels are untouchability, hunger, poverty and suffering of Indian masses. In order to have a thematic appreciation it is necessary to be familiar with his major novels, such as *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves And A Bud*, *The Big Heart*, *The Road*, *The Private Life of An Indian Prince* and his other novels.

In his novels – *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *The Road*, *Two Leaves and A Bud* and the *The Big Heart* – Mulk Raj Anand emerges as the champion of the underdogs and a crusader against social distinctions and man-made barriers which divide humanity. He vehemently condemns the insensibility, self centredness and lack of human sympathy and understanding in the upper strata of society for the poor and the exploited. He is both a realist and humanist whose fundamental aim is to establish the fundamental oneness of mankind.

Mulk Raj Anand's love for novelty and originality enables him to carry the tradition of Tagore and Premchand Bankim and Sarat Chandra to new heights. Mulk Raj Anand, has definitely modernized the Indian novel giving it a new shape. Mulk Raj Anand, made a departure from the tradition of Indian fiction. He succeeded in interpreting the soul of India to the west in the form they could easily understand and appreciate. His interpretation of India is based on realism as his protagonists are based on the real characters with whom he freely mixed for play and friendship, paying no attention to their caste, class or creed. As Mulk Raj Anand himself acknowledges in the 'Preface':

"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 owed 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."

Mulk Raj Anand's first novel *Untouchable* deals with the problem of casteism in general and untouchability in particular, in vivid artistic terms and its artistic power is evident in every page of the novel. *Untouchable*, lays bare the humiliating experience of Bakha who challenges the Brahminical attitudes of high caste people. His biting satire against the high caste and the rich exposes their double standards. Sohini is otherwise an untouchable, yet the high priest of society do not hesitate to desire sexual pleasure from her body. In this novel he attacks casteism. He says casteism is a crime against humanity and everyone who believes in human dignity should actively try to eliminate it.

One of the social concerns that recurs frequently in his novels is the inequality between the wealthy and the poor. He expresses his deep sorrow and sympathy for the unfortunate poor and their inability to cope with circumstances. He poses these problems of social iniquity at large and also attempts to seek resolutions to the social conflicts. His novels also aim at wiping away social barriers and orthodoxy, casteism and communalism. His themes depict the complex social structure of society which is devoid of humanism.

Mulk Raj Anand's second and third novels *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, are directed mainly towards the evils of class system. These novels show that class is a greater evil than caste system. The tragedy of Munoo in *Coolie* and exploitation of

Gangu and the ill-treatment of his beautiful daughter, Leila in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, present this truth.

*Coolie*, is a heartrending saga of human suffering. Munoo's travails and tribulations are sharp pointers to man's sadistic pleasure in torturing child domestics. Munoo represents those numberless children whose childhood is lost in endless physical labour. Love, care and fund are strange words for them. Mulk Raj Anand takes up the theme of human suffering again and again.

In his famous novel *Two Leveas and a Bud*, Mulk Raj Anand vehemently attacks the British tea garden owners and Indain merchants for their inhuman treatment of the labourers. As a creative writer, he firmly believes in exposing the ills and evils of society to create a better understanding among people.

Mulk Raj Anand in *The Village Trilogy*, shows the evils of superstition, orthodoxy and war. *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters* and *The Sword and the Sickle*, present the struggle of a sensitive Punjabi peasant boy, Lal Singh first against his own people. Then as a soldier in British Indian Army and at last as a freedom fighter. In these novels he shows that superstition, belief in Karma, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are enemies of healthy social life. They should be totally removed from the mind of the people by rational thinking. In his opinion, war is the greatest plague that can affect humanity. It destroys not only states and families but also international harmony and world peace.

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *The Big Heart*, supports the demand for industrialization made by the social and political groups in India. But he supports it, not without reservation. He could foresee the disastrous consequences of industrialization, if it ignored the welfare of the traditional village handicraft. Mulk Raj Anand supports industrialization he believes that it should be introduced judiciously. It should serve the needs of the people but at the same time preserve the ethnic and cultural aspects of the concerned society. Reconstruction of society, eradication of poverty should be the main concern of industrialization.

One of the best work of Mulk Raj Anand, after his return to India is in his novel *Private Life of an Indain Prince*. This novel pictures the dramatic changes that were taking place in the whole fabric of life in India – especially the life of the Indian Princes. The protagonist of the novel Victor, happened to almost all the Princes of India when they had to give up their kingdoms. They had to pass through the same psychological stress and strain. The novel clearly shows Mulk Raj Anand's characteristic merit as a novelist with a sociological imagination.

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Lament on the Death of a Master of Art*, is not one of Mulk Raj Anand's masterpieces the novel's greatness lies in its deep and authentic search for illumination and in its powerful and appealing theme. In his novel, he protests against the drawbacks and limitations of our system of education which harvest on frustration and disappointment. The novel *Lament on the Death of Master of Arts*, exposes those aspects of our education system which stand as a major road-block to our national goal and prosperity. Mulk Raj Anand is of the view that the education system should be reformed to suit the needs of the times.

In almost all his novels, from *Untouchable* to *The Bubble*, man is the central figure. All his novels are novels of responsibility, of involvement, of creative tension and its resolution, of profound humanism and moral values. Mulk Raj Anand's main aim is to reveal an ideal humanistic vision of life. As the pioneer and exponent of nativization technique, Mulk Raj Anand enjoys a superb position. Mulk Raj Anand, employs fictional technique as a means of communicating his humanistic vision of life. He adopts the epical or dramatic or episodic or picaresque form as his subject demands. He expresses his view that, every theme requires its won form, technique and experience. One cannot accept the conventional forms of another literature or classics in newer situations.

In conclusion it can be said that Mulk Raj Anand has used his imagination and creative skill to transform facts into fictions to present a realistic vision of life. He has organized his material with great care and skill. His novels definitely evince a thematic unity. Mulk Raj Anand's literary contributions map the pre-independence and modern India. His novels universalize issues which concern every man and every county. He produces a tragic vision of life but also finds resolutions to the problems it presents. In his novels he envisions a world permeated with love and good will.

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