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## Characterization of Mulk Raj Anand's Novels

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**Abstract:**

*All characters of Mulk Raj Anand's novels are remarkable for intimate touches of fidelity to life and intense realism. He has written about the suffering and tragedy of the downtrodden and the poor whom he has actually seen and known in his childhood and youth. Mulk Raj Anand in his novels represents a departure from the tradition of Indian fiction in which the bottom dogs had not been allowed to enter the pages of the novel act as protagonists. He allowed the poor and underdogs to enter the pages of his novels. His characters are from the lower strata of society, like the sweeper, the peasant, the plantation labourer, the city drudge, the sepoy and the coolie, and treat them with sympathy and respects as human beings. 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, creed or colour. He poses problems of social inequality at large and also attempts to seek resolutions to the social conflicts. The resolutions that he proposes are the empowerment of the weak and the development of social consciousness and awareness for social growth.*

Characterization means the creation of imaginary persons so that they seem life-like. He is a person in a literary work. Characters in books are not real people but figures who have been specially created by the author. The word "character" derives from the Greek word charassein, meaning to mark with a cut or furrow. Through Characterization an author gives life and meaning to his character. He thinks and behaves according to the distinguishing quality of the character which he has created. The role of characterization are: (1) the explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by action; (2) the presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader can deduce the attributes of the actor from the actions; and (3) the representation from within a character, without comment by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character's inner self. One of the things that make characters different from each other is the range and richness of their lives. Some characters are lightly sketched, while others are very detailed. Readers respond to these characters in different ways. How the character is created controls how the readers respond.

Through *Untouchable* Anand presents his long preserved feeling of protest against Indian caste system. His method of protest was quite different from that of others. Instead of writing a tract against untouchability as suggested to him by Mahatma Gandhi, he wrote a novel. Thus, he, at once, became more human and could reproduce contrary emotions and shade of feelings through his characters. Anand shows the pain, and the agony of untouchables and their suppression by upper caste people. Bakha is portrayed as strong, hard working, dedicated toward his work and inspired by Britishers, therefore he is dressed up in their costume. The whole novel involves a single day's event in Bakha's life. He is humiliated by people of upper caste at almost every step for being an untouchable. Through him also Anand presents, how the feeling of untouchability is deeprooted in their soul that he is prevented by an imaginary wall from taking revenge for the insult of his sister Sohini. The character Pandit Kali Nath shows that how the people of upper caste, use religion for their own sectarian benefit and suppressing the people of lower caste. Lakha's character is presented as of a person who considers untouchability as the part of his life and thinks that all the people of upper caste are not bad; some of them are kind-hearted also. Bakha gets some relief and support from Charat Singh who not only appreciates his work but also treats him humanly and inspires him too. Mulk Raj Anand sees that the novel develops along the character in action with his strict fidelity to the facts of life and a variety of the social mores. This makes the novel at once a significant social document as well as well as a symbolic projection of the whole saga of human suffering. Bakha is put to a complex realities of social forces, and the incidents in which he finds himself unwittingly implicated, are keyed up to bring out the pain in the life of the protagonist. Anand maintains a steady distance and uses every significant event in the service of art to cast more light on the character and the incident.

Anand in his second novel *Coolie* sensitively portrays the Indian life, with all its time-tested social customs and traditional taboos. Though the novel is meant to give a cross-section of the people, the poor and the rich, the bewildered and bedevilled it, in fact represents more than the Indian social life. Anand projects once again, the plight of the miserable pitted against the backdrop of social malaise. He looks forward to the development of the novel aided by the fictional contingencies of realistic and naturalistic determination. Munoo is the central character in *Coolie*. He is one among the millions of coolies, tested and formulated by a myriad force of class distinctions, exploitation and dehumanization. In *Coolie* it is the class distinction, which differentiates the individual's attempt at self survival. The four phases in the life of Munoo, his experiences in the house of Nathoo Ram, his life at Daulatpur as a worker in a pickle factory, his escapades in Bombay, where he becomes initiated into the profession of labourer in a ginning factory and then on as a worker in Sir John Cotton Mills, and finally, his stay at Simla with Mrs. Mainwaring where he succumbs to tuberculosis, all form the main patterns of the narrative. The story of Munoo is quintessentially the story of every exploited individual in India and the patterns of his life are intended to show the pitilessness that lies embedded in the lives of millions of people who are condemned to lead a life of an unending saga of social depredation. The secondary characters of the novel *Coolie* are Daya Ram, Ganpat, Jimmie Thomas. They all represent the exploiters class. Ganpat a goat-faced partner of Prabha Dayal, is devil-like character when he deals with his labourers. Jimmie Thomas exploits the miserable and skeleton like coolies in terms of loan interest, rent, damaged cloths and price for giving job and so on. To him the coolies are only swine. Mrs. Mainswaring also represents the exploiters class because all the time she ill-treats Munoo. The character of Prabha Dayal is of a kind-hearted person because when as son as he finds Munoo, in the train, he becomes compassionate towards him and takes him to his place, Daultpur.

*Two Leaves and a Bud* is the story of Macherson Estate in distant Assam. The central character of the novel is a middle-aged man Gangu, who is the very archetype of beleaguered humanity. The narrative centers round the basic conflict between the exploiter and the exploited, the one collectively represented by the Indian indentured laborers, and the other by the British colonizers. There are massed polarities too implied in the novel, the exploiter and the exploited, the black and white, the good and the bad. Most of the Indian characters presented by Mulk Raj Anand are naive and innocent victims of British colonialism. In the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the characters of John de la Havre, Narain and Miss Barbara are the social commentators, as it is through them that Mulk Raj Anand presents his social criticism on the evils of capitalism. These three characters look at capitalism from three different angles. John de la Havre exposes with anger the exploitation by the English of the poor Indians. Narain narrates the story of misery experienced by the victims of capitalism like him. John De la Havre and Barbara are pegs on which Mulk Raj Anand openly hangs his criticism of the English. The character of Reggie Hunt who represents the exploiters class is typical. He not only exploits the tea plantation labourers, but also glorifies this exploitation.

The *Lalu* trilogy (*The Village*, *Across the Black Water* and *The Sword and the Sickle*) marks an important phase in Anand's career as a novelist and as a revolutionary idealist. Anand delves into the historical part with a view to re-interpreting the significant events between 1939 and 1942. The trilogy gives an incisive analysis of the tense, fear ridden and war-torn world, both in Europe and Asia, out of which these novels were fashioned. Anand also endeavors to show his personal aspirations and involvements into the narrative pattern such that they acquire the epic amplitude and immensity. Each of the novel retains its separate identity while tending to conform to the narrative continuum by virtue of its projection of the global vision of India. The first novel traces out the development of the protagonist Lal Singh, from 'innocence' to 'experience' and also successfully renders Anand's indictment on war, poverty, religion and various types of social taboos which gives pain to the Indian society. Anand successfully blends, in the trio logy both content and form into the plasticity of his vision and hints at the possible restoration of sanity and wisdom which were perforce lacking in the Indian society. The trilogy is also an intense politico-sociological document intended to project on congeries of conflicting forces which impinge on the consciousness of the hero as he gropes for identity. While Anand's protagonists in his earlier fictional experiments like *Untouchable* and *Coolie* become mute witnesses to the diurnal drama of pain and unbridled social mayhem, in the trilogy *Lalu* comes into the open and reacts sharply to the changing patterns of life and fights valiantly with the ironical forces of a society which try to intimidate him. He neither succumbs to the rigidities of the caste-system nor surrenders before the sacrosanct religious customs; he is much more bold and venturesome than Anand's earlier heroes like Bakha, Munoo and Gangu since he is cast in an entirely different mould. *Lalu* is a revolutionary by instinct, and by conscious choice, and he has the never-to-flout all religious and social regimentations which have, according to him become fetishist in the ever changing social contest. He even becomes a relentless crusader, a dedicated soldier and an arch revolutionary, gearing up his unbridled strength to galvanise the inarticulate masses into organized incendiarism against all forces of ruthless repression perpetrated by the new rich, landlords and religious fanatics.

Through the character of Nihal Singh, who is the father of Lal Singh, Mulk Raj Anand presents that the main hindrance to the progress of the society is the unwillingness of people to accept modernization. Nihal Singh shows that the enemies of modernization are the people themselves who are unwilling and who do not want to give up their old ways of life and who protest against anything new though advantageous.

Through the character of Sardar Bahadur, Anand represents the typical class of landlords. After seeing his daughter who is playing with *Lalu* he loses his temper and abuses him, takes hold of his daughter and drags her away. The next day police comes to *Lalu*'s house with a summon to arrest him on the charge of theft. Behind this incident the mam culprit is landlord Sardar Bahadur, who wants to punish *Lalu* for playing with his daughter. Loknath is like the capricious, blood-thirsty drill instructor, which dislikes *Lalu* from the

very beginning, and always abuses him for every slight mistake. Muhammad Ali, the Mullah of Nandpur mosque, Lal Singh's mother Gujri, show the ritual-ridden social life, religious fanaticism and superstitious belief of the villagers. Uncle Kirpu's character gives relief by his humour and citation of pain-petalled proverbs. Uncle Kirpu reduces the bitterness of war in the novel and other characters like Dady DhanDo, Havildar Lachman Singh who reappear in *Across the Black Waters*, are kind-hearted and sympathetic persons. Lalu receives compassionate treatment from them. The character of Maya in the trilogy gives some moments of relief and love in the life of Lalu.

Once again Mulk Raj Anand raised the issue of casteism through his novel *The Road*, the protagonist Bhikhoo is an extension of the character Bakha of *Untouchable*. He is present as a victim of casteism. Such people are not allowed to come into physical contact with the 'twice-born' or permitted to enter the temple for coming into contact with the God of all. *The Road* portrays not only the suffering of the untouchables but also of the magnanimous caste Hindus who try to awaken the conscience of the members of their own community against the evil of untouchability. Dhooli Singh in *The Road* is a social reformer and a staunch disciple of the Mathma Gandhi who fight for untouchables with great courage. Pandit Suraj Mani, in the novel reminds us of Pandit Kali Nath of *Untouchable*. The upper caste people refuse to touch the stones quarried by the untouchables. But they are ready to enjoy the yield of the field tilled by them. They use religion for their selfish ends and follow double standards in life. Through the character of Rukhrnani in the novel, Mulk Raj Anand comments on the evil of dowry and her love toward Bhikhoo even in the face of hostility from her society.

*The Big Heart* is one of the most endearing of Anand's novels, for it succeeds, through in a limited measure, in projecting the miserable plight of India's "lost generation". The protagonist Ananta epitomizes all the qualities of a big heart, which are not untypical of a praise-worthy hero. Anand seems to believe that only through traumatic shifts in the fortunes and an expose to the larger realities of life that man can achieve burnished purity. Anand reaffirms his faith in human perfectibility of life that his character achieves epiphany which is denied to his earlier protagonists. Anand conveys his message of a proletarian revolution, whose self sacrifice transcends all barriers of casteism and narrows sectarian and class politics. A scrutiny of the novel reveals the fact that it is conceived as a tirade against the feudalistic order which impedes the individual betterment and smothers his inner potential for growth. The main thrust of the novel is on the class conflict between the traditional artisans and capitalists, collectively symbolized by the factory owner Murlidhar. The struggle for collective freedom is also in a way struggle for liberalism. Ananta who defies the introduction of machine replacing man, is typecast in the role of a saviour who dies at the altar of the Machine, which is the Capitalist's stooge and invention. The main theme of novel is selective industrialization, which will not prove disadvantageous to any section of society. *The Road* and the *Untouchable* deal with the effects of casteism, while *The Big Heart* through the character Lala Murli Dhar and Gokul Chand, points up the tensions within the high castes themselves whose sense of caste superiority spoils their interpersonal relations on the basis of equality.

*Gauri* is the only novel of Mulk Raj Anand with a woman protagonist. The old title of the novel was *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Mulk Raj Anand was not satisfied as the focus of the novel is not on the shameless old woman in the novel, Laxmi and his cow, Chandari, but on her virtuous, cow-like gentle and patient daughter, Gauri. So the author renamed the novel *Gauri*. Through the character of *Gauri* he not only eloquently exposes the hypocrisy of our society, but it also tries to explore the ways for the emancipation of women. It also tries to give voice to a strong protest against ill-treatment of women. Women, instead of leaving themselves at the mercy of their husbands or family members, should come forward and choose the path of their emancipation. The other character in *Gauri* is Panchi (the husband of Gauri) who is an example of male chauvinism. The technique of contrast adopted in the characterization of Panchi and Gauri brings out the nobility of Gauri as against the meanness of Panchi. Another character in the novel is colonel Malvindra. Like Dr. John de la Havre, endorses the novelist's proletarian views. Anand use him as his mouth piece. He provides protection and care to Gauri and plays a very important role in her transformation and emancipation. The other women character in the novel is Kesaro, the mother-in-law of Gauri and Laxmi, the mother of Gauri. Through her Mulk Raj Anand shows, how a woman is enemy of another woman and makes the life of Gauri hell. She is an example of typical mother-in-law. The mother of Gauri, Laxmi, is very mean character who, in order to pay the debt, sells his own married pregnant daughter to an old man.

In *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*, Mulk Raj Anand makes a philosophical search into the past of the protagonist Nur. With the help of Nur he comments on the defective educational system of the country. The novel is seen through the eye of Nur, a tuberculosis patient who is dying slowly but surely. He shares the agony of his past and defective education system with his old school days friend Gama

In *Death of a Hero*, Mulk Raj Anand seems to have recalled from the hinterland of his memory the story of Maqbool, who sacrificed his life for the sake of his country. The character, placed during the first invasion of Kashmir by Pakistani raiders in 1947, Maqbool sherwani is presented as a patron-saint of secularism by Mulk Raj Anand. He is portrayed as patriot and his nationalism is not based on religious fanaticism. The nation is his God. He protests against the evils which had been thrust upon their society. Therefore instead of saving his life he faces the situation and fights against it. The novel ends with a message that the task which he has not fulfilled, would be taken up by the future generations who would see to it that a millennium of happiness is promised forth.

*The Private Life of an Indian Prince* is in the nature of "psychotic odyssey" of an Indian prince Victor, who undergoes traumatic shifts in his life. The novel is set against the back drop of the post independence era, when the princely states were being merged into the Indian Union. The central character is Victor, the crown prince of Shampur, who becomes the victim of his own hubris. The prince is described as a spoiled individual, given to alcoholism and womanizing.

Mulk Raj Anand autobiographical novel breaks the vice of reticence and overwhelms the readers with the expressive emotional honesty in all the four volumes *Seven Summers* (1951), *Morning Face* (1968), *Confessions of a Lover* (1976) and *The Bubble* (1984). His confessions in these novels are secularized rather than sacramental. In the first novel, *Seven Summers* Anand dramatises his own experiences through the first seven years of life and presents an intense soul searching account of his real life. Krishan Chandra is the protagonist of the novel and his early perceptions and impressions form the palpable substance of the story. The novel purportedly deals with the life of Krishan in his formative years. The central motif of novel lies in the exploration of the theme of 'innocence' and 'experience'.

The second novel *Morning Face* is deemed to be extension of the theme of *Seven Summers*, with the confessional promptings carried to a point of artistic nearness. It comes round to the expression of his felt experiences, interspersed with' the brilliant tableau of contemporary history and politics. Set against the backdrop of pre independence days, it traces out Krishan's progression from uncertainty to self assurance. Whereas *Seven Summers* simply records the impressions of the hero, from the child's point of view, in *Morning Face*, Anand charts out his hero's slow but confident initiation into the mainstream of national politics into umpteen encounters and epiphanies. Protagonist of the novel Krishna grows up into adulthood, he becomes involved in love and sex. In the dedicatory note, Anand warns the readers against possible identification of the first person with the novelist. He desires very much to retain the autonomy and individuality of the hero, and his personal experiences. The "I" in Anand's novel is neutral and the narrative is seen through the perspective of the hero's motivations and actions, though one feels the presence of the omniscient narrator looming large in the background.

*Confession of a Lover* is the third autobiographical novel. It focuses its attention on Krishan's translation to intense role playing as a poet and as a lover. When he comes under the influence of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, a poet philosopher and becomes initiated into the evanescent world of poetry, he falls into the love of a Muslim married woman, Yasmin, and at the end of the novel Krishan finds himself in the self- imposed exile in London.

In the fourth and last autobiographical novel *The Bubble* (1984) Krishan's consciousness is wafted into new areas. Through various events and situations Anand's characters, undergo the process of self discovery. The women character in *The Bubble* Irene, brings transformation in Krishan's character and gives new meaning and direction to his life.

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