
**NARRATING THE INNER WORLD OF THE SUBALTERN:
PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN THE FICTION OF MULK RAJ****ANAND**

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores psychological realism in the fiction of Mulk Raj Anand, particularly focusing on *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (Anand 1935; Anand 1936; Anand 1937). Although Anand is best known as a godfather of social realism in Indian English literature, this study indicates that his novels also display great psychological richness (Naik 1982; Iyengar 2001). Kumar (2000) explains that Anand, owing to its realistic fiction is not limited to external description of social conditions but also; through internal consciousness transcends the social visibility and individual pain of oppressed people. By employing narrative devices like interior monologue, symbolic representation, and acute psychological observation, Anand demonstrates topologically how caste discrimination, colonial domination, poverty and industrial exploitation are not merely material conditions but also a form of identity construction and imagination (Barry 2017; Eagleton 2008). His protagonists Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu aren't passive witnesses but sensitive human beings grappling with degradation, ambition, fear and revolt in repressive social systems (Cowanjee 1977; Singh 1999) This article locates Anand's psychological realism in relation to the paradigm of subaltern discourse, and argues that his fiction anticipates Dalit and postcolonial literature (Guha, 1982; Spivak, 1988; Nayar, 2008) which articulates the historical psychology of social exclusion. Anand's writing, in the end, is a synthesis of social and psychological concerns, and his novels are enduring meditations on human suffering, dignity and resistance.

KEYWORDS: Psychological Realism, Subaltern Consciousness, Caste Oppression, Colonialism, Social Realism, Marginalization.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Indian English fiction can be traced back to the twentieth century when colonial oppression, political turmoil, and social reform movements gripped the country. Mulk Raj Anand is one of the earliest and most prominent writer in this genre, who has given vivid impressions in his novels about caste oppression, colonial exploitation and economic inequality (Naik 1982; Iyengar 2001). Anand is often credited as the founder of social realism in Indian English literature, yet his writings also showcase a considerable preoccupation with psychological realism (Cawasjee 1977; Chandra 2004). Psychological realism is the literary technique that attempts to represent the inner life of characters, such as their thoughts, emotions, motivations and internal conflicts (Barry, 2017). Whereas external realism primarily concerns social and materialisation, psychological realism is preoccupied with how the external conditions of existence are internalised into consciousness (Eagleton 2008). Anand's fiction gives strong examples of this technique. His protagonists are not mere victims of social injustice; they have devastating psychological struggles that turn their identities and perceptions of self into battlegrounds. This paper contends that Anand's fiction gives us a profound understanding of the inner life of deprived masses and shows how caste hierarchy, poverty and colonial subjugation shape human existence in society as well as consciousness. However, the study emphasizes on Anand's critique of social injustice endeavoured in its closure by the means of psychological realism through a close reading of *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (Singh, 1999).

Theoretical Framework: Psychological Realism and Subaltern Consciousness:

Nineteenth-century European fiction established an emphasis on psychological realism, focusing on the subjective experience and inner consciousness (Mukherjee, 1990). But psychological realism takes on another dimension in India, which is layered over with a colonial and caste-structured society. In addition to oppression from the outside, in individuals at risk of abuse are planted seeds of inferiority and trauma (Gajarawala, 2013). The subaltern studies, for example, examined the historical exclusion of marginal sectors from dominant discourses on history as well as literature (Guha, 1982). According to the subaltern studies, there cannot be a voice of the subaltern because it is still dominated by 'mandarins' or ruling elites. Anand's fiction prefigures this theoretical approach by placing

marginalized characters — untouchables, coolies and plantation workers at the centre of his stories. Rather than seeing them as abstract social categories, Anand portrays them as psychologically complex individuals whose emotions and aspirations in turn demonstrate the human cost of systemic

Psychological Realism in Untouchable: *Untouchable* narrates the events of one day in the life of Bakha, a boy whose caste is that of an untouchable sweeper. The short period of time amplifies the psychological parallel between the two narratives, enabling readers to follow Bakha's emotional journey closely (Anand 1935). The defining moment of the novel comes when Bakha is publicly humiliated and slapped because he has accidentally "polluted" a caste Hindu. This creates deep psychological havoc in him. He oscillates between shock, rage, confusion and self-blame. Though he is aware that the situation is unjust, social conditioning has taught him that his inherent inferiority (Gajarawala, 2013). Anand painstakingly details Bakha's complex emotions — his shame, his yearning for dignity and admiration for the British soldiers whose uniforms confer power and respect. The novel Bakha's obsession with Western attire and ways indicates his psychological quest for identity and self-esteem (Cawasjee, 1977). The flush toilet introduced in the novel symbolizes an end to manual scavenging and stigma associated with it (Anand, 1935) which suggests a technological determinant around which the novel ends. It symbolizes an imagined form of psychological and social emancipation from caste-based degradation.

Psychological Realism in Two Leaves and a Bud: Anand turns his focus to colonial plantation labor in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Gangu the protagonist of this novel moves to a tea plantation with hopes, in a bid to improve his family's economic condition, but faces extreme exploitation and injustice (Anand, 1937). Gangu's psychological arc mirrors a transition from hope to disillusionment. He is drawn in beginning with naivety, only to be led through a series of realizations by the duplicitous nature of colonial agent recruitment promises. Anand sharply depicts Gangu's mounting anxiety, fear and bottled rage as he faces the violence of plantation life (Singh, 1999). Colonial adat operates not only via economic exploitation but also psychological domination. Plantation overseers here adopt their subordinate position and often see their suffering as the inevitable consequence of such (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Gangu's struggle between submission and rebellion shows how colonial power colonizes the mind as much as the body.

Techniques of Psychological Realism: Anand uses several narrative techniques for the psychological realism in fiction.

Close third-person narration lets readers experience events from the emotional vantage point of the protagonist. Even though the narrator is third-person, the narrative voice follows so close to what this character thinks that it reads more like first person (Barry; 2017).

Another key device is interior reflection. Anand often interrupts the narrative action to investigate the inner reactions of characters, disclosing what they are thinking, fearing and wanting (Eagleton, 2008). Use of symbol is also a major aspect in conveying psychological meaning. In the narrative, objects clothes, machines, and domestic spaces are imbued with symbolism that indicates aspiration or power, forbidden places of despair or oppression (Mukherjee 1990). Finally, Anand's rhetorical hammering echoes the psychological landscape of his novels. For example, descriptions of shame, anger, anxiety and hope enable readers to have emotional realities experienced by marginalized characters (Chandra, 2004).

Humanism and Ethical Vision: He is a humanistic philosopher, and his psychological realism follows closely from this. He avoids writing about marginalized communities as faceless aggregates and chooses to portray the complexity of each character on an individual basis (Cawasjee, 1977). His protagonists Bakha, Munoo and Gangu have emotional depth, ethical sensibility and the desire for dignity. Anand invites readers to empathize with people suffering from oppression and to acknowledge their humanity through his protagonists' internal struggles (Ahmad, 1992).

Intersection of Social and Psychological Realities: One of the distinctive characteristics of Anand's fiction is a combination of social and psychological realism. Mukherjee (1990) notes that external structures of oppression like caste hierarchy, economic exploitation and colonial domination shape the inner life of characters. Caste discrimination yields internalized shame, poverty breeds insecurity and alienation, while colonial rule instils feelings of inferiority and fragmented identity. Geroe 306 Anand illustrates the commonplace nature of social injustices not only in maintaining physical mood, behaviour and ability (Gajarawala, 2013).

Contribution to Subaltern Representation: Way before subaltern studies became an academic field, Anand's fiction gave narrative space to the marginalized (Guha 1982), marginal voices whose experiences were largely ignored by mainstream literature. By embodying the psychological lives of untouchables, coolies, and plantation workers, Anand anticipates later Dalit and postcolonial writers whose work foregrounds the link between

social exclusion and psychic suffering (cf. Spivak 1988). His novels are also important because they show the emotional toll of systemic injustice, and his characters know that dignity and self-worth matter.

CONCLUSION

Mulk Raj Anand's novels are well known for their hard-hitting social critique, bringing caste oppression and colonial exploitation, as well as economic inequality to wider attention. Yet, they also provide much deeper insights into psychological realism through the interiors of marginalized characters. In *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, oppression is configured not only as an organizational form but also as existential reality that imposes upon the oppressed subjectivity a pathological self-understanding. Employing narrative techniques that include interior reflection, symbolic imagery and close third-person narration, Anand reveals the emotional complexity of characters who are grappling with humiliation, aspiration, fear and resistance. His psychological realism elevates social critique into an empathetic investigation of human consciousness. In the end, Anand's fiction insists that marginalized people have not just "physical bodies" that are subject to labor and violence but minds that can reflect, possess dignity, make moral judgments. In documenting the inner world of the subaltern, Anand also establishes himself as a pioneering figure in social realism and as one of the most sensitive chroniclers of psychological experience of oppression in Indian English literature.

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