

Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand; Two Novelists with Same Vision

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Abstract – This paper, while making a modest endeavor to work out a comparison between the two acclaimed Indian journalists and social democracy, Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand, aims at penetrating the grounds and parameters of their delineation of the reality. Premchand and Anand have commanded gigantic regard in the literary realms and have been estimated as leading figures in their particular fields by faultfinders and scholars. The present thesis is a humble and novel attempt to make sense of how these two stalwarts have reflected social realism in their novels as also to make a thorough, comparative and critical appraisal opposite their art and ideas. It is trusted that it will introduce the two great authors in another viewpoint, profiting scholars of both English and Hindi literature. Since the domain of their novels is extremely vast, the investigation deals with a chose bit of it. So far as crafted by Premchand are concerned, a special reference has been made to his novels *Sevasadan* (1918), *Kayakalpa* (1926), *Gabon* (1931) and *Godan* (1936). The novels of Mulk Raj Anand *Coolie* (1936), *two leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Road* (1961) and *The Bubble* (1984) have been worked out keeping in view the destinations of the examination.

Keywords: Stalwarts, Subcontinent Contemporary Milieu, Industrialization, Clashes, Humiliation.

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I. CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL POLITICAL

It is always meaningful to study and interpret the growth of an artist's mind and art in the light of the age in which he lives since a writer is essentially a product of his time. He, consciously or unconsciously, takes up a definite stance on the social, political or other problems influencing the people of his age. Asghar Ali Engineer, (1930) "A creative process is the product of the sub-conscious and the conscious process which helps objective reality to be reflected in a work of art." The novelists who form a distinguished group in the intelligentsia become the beacon of the social and political consciousness of their age. According to Suresht Renjen Bald:

Novels tend to present an intimate view of life while providing a holistic picture of the perceived reality. They transport the reader into a particular setting to involve him/ her in the lives and thoughts of a set of characters. The development of these fictitious characters, however, occurs against a background of the institutional life of a country. (Suresh p.1)

The capacity of an author or an artist, in general, is to hold the mirror to life around him. The social, political and economic conditions discover articulation in the literary works of an essayist which is extremely all

around reflected in his separate themes. A consummate artist grasps the totality of the situation and sees through all its contradictions without which no target reality is ever established. Whenever found in all their

Complexities, they furnish a creative artist with massive potentiality.

Literature uncovered the contentions, propensities, patterns and drawbacks of an age and creative artists are instrumental in the exploration and interpretation of the various social, political, cultural, and economic aspects of the contemporary society.

The primary half of the twentieth century saw the intensification of the Freedom Movement in India while the literary artists also realized that literature also had a vital task to carry out in it. Premchand (1880-1936), a famous Hindi and Urdu author and Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), a celebrated Indian English novelist are the two journalists whose works faithfully and overwhelmingly exemplify in them the general population's frame of psyche in the contemporary society as well as speak to the radical changes taking place in the socio-political existence of this nation along with other essayists like Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, G .V. Desani, Aubrey Men on

and others. Amid the period in which they began their separate literary careers, the Indian culture was reeling under the baneful routine of the British rule which was extremely humiliating, as well as exceptionally merciless. It was an era of significant emergency in each field of life. Being touchy, they couldn't remain aloof from the voice their profound anguish. Prior to an analysis of their individual works, it is essential to peep into the social feeling of these scholars as also the status of the general public since they shape the backdrop of their fictional form. K.R. Srinivas (1985) "Social life in a nation of the span of India is so loaded with vagaries and varieties that the novelist with an observant eye and an understanding heart will locate the material spread out before him to be literally inexhaustible." This examination therefore, makes an unassuming attempt to understand the central social factors which had a formative effect on these two literary virtuosos. To make a legitimate investigation of the contemporary milieu of the two outstanding authors, it will be helpful to partition it into three phases: The age of Indian Resurgence and Revival (1857-1914); The Post-World War I India and Gandhian waves (1914-1947); and the Post-Independence period (1947 - present occasions).

Phase I (1857-1914)

In the aftermath of the First War of Indian Independence of 1857 and the subsequent British supremacy, there was a considerable frustration and disillusionment in the contemporary Indian society. S.N. Gupta opines:

The hunger of the masses and the discontent of the classes were the seed-beds of revolution. The Indian people had developed distaste for the Company's rule during the course of a more than hundred years as they had been reduced to the position of slaves in their own country. (S.N. Gupta, 1989, p 3)

It only aroused those sentiments of national awakening which hitherto lay dormant. This revolt shattered the delusion of interminable power which the British rulers, in their smugness, had been hugging to their bosom and this embittered them even more towards the native Indians. It sowed the seeds of animosity in the British which resulted in more atrocious attitudes towards the natives. The liberal hopes of the Indian leaders for democratization and a radical transformation of the country were shattered to pieces. Moreover, the cruelties perpetrated by both the sides during this great event left inveterate scars which were never to heal completely.

Phase II (1914-1947)

After the end of the World War I, the winds of revival and awakening started blowing even more steadily across the Indian subcontinent. The event that left a tremendous mark on the Indian nation in this phase occurred on April 13, 1919 at Jallianwalla Bagh,

Amritsar. Approximately, twenty thousand unarmed people including women and children had gathered there to protest against the biased Rowlett Act passed by the government which B.N. Puri (1988) "sought to try anyone of anarchical crime by a court of three judges without the right of appeal". The meeting culminated in indiscriminate firing by General Dyer, the British Officer-in-Command and the death of several hundred innocent people. The brutality at Jallianwalla Bagh shocked the entire nation which was echoed with vehement condemnation from every quarter. During all these upheavals in the aftermath of the World War I, Mahatma Gandhi took up the reins of the Congress in his hands. He evolved his own type of policies and principles and mode of leadership by trying out new ways of struggle which were basically and essentially non-violent.

The Non-cooperation Movement gained tremendous popularity all around the nation. However, a violent occurrence at Chauri Chaura police station forced Gandhiji to withdraw the agenda of Non-cooperation Movement. But the Movement had ushered in a new era in the political life of the country. R.C. Vermani, (2000) "Apart from the intelligentsia, a large number of Indian peasants, workers, artisans, shopkeepers, professionals, white collar employees participated in the movement. The movement became a multi-class movement. For many, it was the first contact with modern world of nationalist politics and the ideology of nationalism".

Phase III: Independence and After

The achievement of the Independence on August 15, 1947, ushered in a new era of challenges and changes in Indian life. Even after the achievement of freedom, the problems at various levels of social, political, religious and economic spheres still strongly persisted. In fact, M.K. Naik, (1982) "During the first twenty-five years of its independence the nation underwent experiences which would have all but shattered a country with less inner strength and talent resilience".

As millions of Indian children from poor families are compelled by economic destitution to join the labour force, the grievous problems of child abuse and child labour have also been growing tremendously in the independent India. Tarkinson Nancy reveals:

Despite hectic planning, welfare programmes, legislation and administrative action in the past decades, a majority of the Indian children continue to remain in distress and turmoil. In most families, the parents neglect them, the caretakers batter them and employees abuse them. (Tarkinson Nancy 1976 p. 104)

Independence has also marked the evolution of some new trends in the socio-economic set up of the Indian society. These new modes in the Indian social

scene have caught the attention of many writers in the Post-Independence era. The most tremendous change has been brought by the rise in the cities in this era. Due to the installation of industries and modern means of living in the cities, there has been a massive migration of village population to the cities. Expansion of higher education, new avenues of employment and infrastructural inputs like roads, electricity, irrigation, etc., have attracted more and more villagers to turn to the cities and thus formation and expansion of cities has drastically continued.

II. NOVELS OF PREMCHAND

Hindi fiction was in its infancy when Premchand appeared on the scene. It was mostly concerned with the stories of miraculous happenings. Even the social novels dominated by historical vein which appeared occasionally, had little literary worth. Through his literary output, Premchand gave to Hindi fiction a new social awareness, a new sense of purpose. He brought Hindi novel very close to life with faithful reflection of reality in it. A celebrated author as he was, Premchand had an uncanny desire to mould life in accordance with his vision. His sensitivity towards the harsh and ugly truth of life made him a people's writer who wrote about the life of common folk in a language they could understand well. In the words of a critic:

It is with Premchand and his contemporaries, that literature walked out of the opulence of drawing rooms and the lights of civil lines into the bleakness of village 'chopals' and obscurity of small town by lanes. With him, Urdu-Hindi Fiction became truly declassified thus paving the way for the school of 'Social-realism', popularized by the progressive writers' Association of which he was the first president. (Faiz Mohammad Faiz 1986 p.2)

In the earlier phase of his vocation as a novelist, Premchand's main preoccupation was with the social abuses which had so grievously debilitated the Indian society. His early works were mostly concerned with the conflicts in the ranks of the middle-class society and he stood for the urgent reforms. Premchand was also well aware of the intense, pitiable condition of the poor and the middle class Indian women because of centuries of subjugation to orthodox beliefs and male domination. Right from the early nineteenth century, the position of Indian women became a matter of main concern for the social reformers, intellectuals and conscious citizens. Many of Premchand's novels bring out the glumness that had filled the lives of Indian women subject to the oppression of the ruthless society.

As a keen observer of life, Premchand was mindful of the utter woeful predicament of the Indian women due to some dreadful practices like untouchability, child-

marriages, dowry and sex-abuse. Therefore, they were subject to intense agony:

During the period when Premchand wrote, the matrimonial system of Hindu society had become so polluted and hopeless that any reform seemed nearly impossible. Very rarely could parents welcome a daughter, even if she was born after seven sons. Owing to the increasing hold of dowry, mis-matched marriages were quite common since some parents were compelled to marry their young daughters to old men. Some were forced to die in agony and desperation as there was no scope of having an equal match (Pramila Batra 2001, p. no. 45)

Sevasadan (1918), Premchand's first novel brings to the fore the fatal consequences of the system of dowry, an unscrupulous practice eating up the vitals of the middle class society which is compelled to make a show of the standard it actually cannot maintain without adopting unfair and corrupt means. The novel, which brought Premchand immediately into limelight, portrays how the ferocious evil of dowry sometimes leads astray the suffering women from the path of virtue and throws them into the cesspool of ignoble profession like prostitution. It was the avowed social commitment in Premchand which made him deal with the acute sensitive issue of prostitution in his very first novel.

Having a profound knowledge of the contemporary life Premchand understood well the transitions which the Indian society was undergoing during his age. He was fully aware of the way in which the life of man was entangled in the mire of the prevalent socio-economic system, predominantly in the urban setting, which caused an increase in desires and emphasized ostentation and self-display. It created facile illusions and values of deception causing decomposition of human values. The universities set up by the British were the prime agents in the propagation of these putrid values among the urban classes in India.

Being a member of the middle class family, Premchand instinctively understood the unfulfilled expectations and aspirations of different segments of the middle and the lower middle classes which experience a clear reflection in his novels. His criticism of the middle class must be seen against the background of his deep dissatisfaction with contemporary society, its values and norms. He tried to go beneath the crust of the society and exposed its inner structure and working, which in turn, was responsible for the misery of the working class, its exploitation, as well as the various social evils prevalent among this major section of the society.

Gabon deals with a wide range of issues-economic, moral, social and political, especially concerning the urban lower middle class. If, on the one hand, it delineates the artificiality of life created by unpalatable western values, on the other, it turns to the subject of foreign rule and the various ways in which the British resorted to repression. However, the plot of the novel is located chiefly in the story of a couple, Ramanath and Jalpa. Through the story of this couple, the author has focused on moral degradation of the younger generation which under the influence of western education had succumbed to temptation of glamorous material life for the achievement of which they did not hesitate from putting their morals at stake. Premchand believed that this weakness of such individuals was responsible for their sufferings while those who maintained their ethical sense emerged victorious even amidst adverse circumstances. V.S. Narvane has rightly remarked:

There is an important place in Gabon for the human individual, the person who is more than just a member of a community. Individuals make or mar themselves through their own strength or weaknesses, their own efforts or indolence. (V.S. Narvane 1980 p. 145)

Ramanath, an educated young man, loves new lights and fashions. He is a low-paid clerk in the terminal-tax department. After his marriage to a beautiful girl of a well off family, he tries to show off riches, which he doesn't possess, to his wife, whom he sincerely loves and who, he knows, loves ornaments. To impress his wife, he indulges in tall talks and moves with upper class people. To maintain a false standard he starts accepting illegal gratifications and brings a costly necklace on credit for his wife. In order to save himself, he keeps on telling lie after lie, as to uphold one; he has to tell several others. Things come to a delicate pass when he fails to pay off the money.

Premchand's masterpiece *Godan* (1936), is the classic on an Indian peasant. It is a novel with a difference in regard with its richness of variety and form. Through this novel, the aim of the author is to give a realistic account of the collapse of the Indian agricultural civilization of that age. Premchand has always treated the peasants as a class fighting against the tyranny of nature and the callousness of man. He was well aware of their being victims of an oppressive bureaucracy, ruthless landlords, selfish capitalists and hypocritical priests. He knew that all these classes had connived to grind down the helpless peasants to a living death.

Godan embodies the story of two parallel plots coinciding at many places. Within the framework of the tragic story of the peasant Hori, Premchand relates sometimes with restrained satire and at other times with pathos, the story of the affluent people of the city, some of whom benefit directly from the sufferings and toil of the poor in the villages. The word *Godan* refers to the Hindu custom of presenting a cow to a Brahmin when a death has occurred, in the hope that such a

present will open the gates of heaven for the departed souls. Hori, a poor peasant, toils hard every day to support his wife Dhanika and his three children, son-Gobar and daughters-Bona and Rupa. His long-cherished dream was to possess a cow. He does get hold of a cow for a few days, but due to his ill fate, it is poisoned by his envious and quarrelsome brother, Hira, who disappears afterwards.

III. NOVELS OF MULKRAJ ANAND

Anand's initial reputation as a novelist was that of a champion of the underdogs and his admiration of the school of realism made him better equipped to handle themes in which emotional appeal resulted from an over sympathy for the underprivileged section of the society which was subjected to long standing irrational denial. Talking about social protest in Anand's earlier novels, Shyam M. Asnani observes:

Mulk Raj Anand, like Premchand in Hindi and Sarat Chandra in Bengali, passionately concerned with the hardship of the life of villagers, their poverty, squalor and backwardness coupled with gross ignorance and the cruelties of caste, took upon himself the task of attacking social snobbery and prejudice. The Indian life that he depicts in his novels is that of waifs, the disinherited, the lowly and the lost. (Shyam M. Asnani, 1985 p. 10)

Two of his earlier novels, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* are an in-depth study of the exploitation of the underprivileged by the baneful rise of capitalism, industrialization as well as class-consciousness in the early thirties. These novels portray in artistic terms Premila Paul (1983) "the yawning hiatus between the haves and the have-nots, the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled".

In *Coolie* (1936), Anand has presented a deeply moving picture of the proletarian hero as a helpless victim of the social milieu: Munoo, an orphan hill boy, is forced to leave his idyllic village in the Kangra valley so that he may work and bear his own load. He sets about to see the world but his first contact with reality at Sham Nagar shatters his dreams. As a domestic servant in a house of a minor clerk, he is subjected to the accusations of the shrewd and vindictive housewife. The persistent nagging and the frenzied rage of his employers at one instance make him flee from their services. He next finds himself at a primitive pickle and jam factory set among the dark alleys of the town of Daultpur. The friendly and affectionate proprietor is bankrupted by the thievery of his partner and is hurled back into the rank of the laborer from where he had sought to rise; with a result that Munoo is forced to leave his job. Out on the streets again, Munoo becomes a coolie and has to serve as a beast of burden which is made more difficult by the desperate competition from other coolies for getting the chance for work. Munoo is rescued from this toil by an elephant driver in a

circus who helps him reach Bombay, the city of dreams.

Ananda's next novel *Two Leaves and A Bud* (1937) returns to the subject already broached in *Coolie* of the savagery of capitalism especially when combined with colonialism. In the Pre Independence India, capitalism was identified with colonialism as the Britishers were proving to be the most vicious capitalists. According to Margaret Barry, one of Ananda's critics:

Amanda's pre-1947 novels quite naturally attack the English Starker at every turn, as the major source of India's ills, the pressure of corrupt social institutions, the exploiter of Indian labour and wealth, the tyrant over civil liberties. The most direct accusations occur in Two Leaves and a Bud. (Margaret Berry, 1971 p. 67)

Deeply moved by the abject poverty and the pitiable working conditions of India's toiling masses, and wanted to write a bitter and angry book to sear the conscience of the nation. This novel describes the pathetic condition of the laborers in tea-gardens where the poor Indian coolies worked as slaves along with their wives and children. It is an appalling tale of crushed humanity and their size and tears. Since most of the tea plantations in the Pre-Independence Era were owned and governed by the Britishers, the administrative strategy and policy were consonant with the larger administrative tact of the British rule in India in general. N.K. Mishap and Sabina Treaty while examining the novel state, A tea-estate in Amanda's *Two Leaves and a Bud* is a world within a world that projects ethnic intolerance, suspicion, cruelty and exploitation of the poor laborers by the Britishers who perpetuate sort of 'Internal colonialism

The Road exemplifies those aspects of untouchability that have hardly received any attention. These aspects lead to questions that arise from the ego: dynamics, the questions which are more psychological than sociological. The high caste Hindus were so much enamoured of their elevated social position, that they harbored a sort of fear concerning the possibility of the untouchables being able to 'buy' the higher status as a result of the air of change owing to various reasons. A sense of insecurity had been generated by the new conditions which prevailed as a result of the enlargement of avenues of employment for the untouchables, such as road-building. This is the reason why landlord Thakur Singh and Pandit Surajmani try to obstruct the road being made by Bhikhu and his friends. They feared that if the condition remained the same, soon they will have to give up their higher status and accept the untouchables as their equals.

IV. CONCLUSION: COMPARATIVE VIEW

The understanding of the contemporary milieu of these journalists acquaints us with the overall state of affairs in the nation. In the political field, it was the most earth shattering age as there was a serious clash between the outside guideline and the National Movement. Indeed, even inside the National Movement, there was an outrageous contrast between the leaders adopting peaceful and the vicious approaches. In the social field there was a clash between the feudal and the capitalist interests. The new capitalist culture was attempting to destroy the old feudal values of our nation. The ascent of industrialization increased the pace of clashes between the national and the remote capitalists as well as between the recently developing class of specialists and the industrialists. Also, the economic disparity continued increasing due to

- selfish and capricious strategies of the Britishers and their personal stakes in the economic set up. Amidst all these gatherings were the Indian peasants who endured at the hands of various powers of
- exploitation because of which the entire agricultural structure was nearly disaster. Above all, this phase of the Indian history also saw the shattering of age old religious values and the ascent of communalism.

The detailed analysis of the chose novels of the chose novels of the two authors see both Premchand and Anand as the most delicately aware of the pulverizing impacts of such vivacious pulls between the dynamic and backward powers in all the circles of Indian life. After seeing the shameful realities of the life around, it was nevertheless natural for them to be drawn to the situation with the reformatory zeal. Their pens waged twofold battles for the emancipation of these individuals from the imperialist grasps on one hand and against the hidebound religious dogmas and various prevalent social ills on the other.

Premchand epitomizes and reflects in his works the whole social structure amid the time of pressure and tempest. His novels mirror a clear image of the issues and values which oversee the life of the peasants, the laborers, the dark horses, the unprivileged including the untouchables from one perspective and the white collar classes, the landlords and the industrialists on the other. The keen investigation of his novels draws out his universal knowledge that has honestly displayed various dynamic aspects of the general public in which he lived.

The system of social realism has been utilized with a considerable accomplishment in Premchand's absolute first novel, *Sevasadan*. After a careful examination of the novel, one feels, that the author's broad depictions of social disasters, and the tragic situations which arise from them, are in reality successful, heart-ripping and blending. The reality of an articulate subservient state of the Indian ladies in the simultaneous era develops through this novel. Suman's predicament reveals the inhuman point of view of the general public towards the weak and the unfortunate, specially the woman in all her vulnerable structures. A smallest lapse with respect to an Indian woman could damn her and her family for the entire life. The novel gives us an exhaustive perspective of the decadent and appalling state of the Hindu society as seen by the author. The portrayal of the narrow-mindedness and narrow mindedness of the first class who were totally wiped out as far as free reasoning after traditions slavishly, makes us consider over the somewhat similar contrite situation that exists even today.

The impressions of the contemporary occasions are also expressly obvious in Premchand's novel *Ghaban*. An analysis of this novel unveils not just the mists which had over shadowed the Indian political firmament yet in addition the economic disparity which was at the foundation of the social disintegration, affecting filial ties. The defilement rampant in administration, judiciary and the police department is efficaciously reflected in this novel. *Gabon* has also uncovered the discouraging development of the artificiality in life caused by the unpalatable western values in charge of the economic extravagance and breaking of the old familial bonds. The portrayal of one of the characters as a classic example of the *Satyagrahi*, and the encounters narrated by him, fill in as the bleak notices of what the opportunity contenders faced amid the opportunity battle.

On the off chance that social realism can be named as a necessary component of Premchand's works, in any case, it rises most effectively in his last novel, *Godan*. This novel effectively fills in as a living portrayal of a poor peasant's life and the social, political as also the economic factors affecting his prosperity. The tale of hardship of the protagonist Hori has faithfully anticipated the inauspicious image of the ceaseless agony faced by the average Indian peasantry. The sheer realistic portrayal of the appalling truth of a poor farmer's life bothers the reader with a sentiment of extreme ghastliness. A solid analysis of the novel apprises the reader of the various means and types of exploitation to which a poor, ignorant and vulnerable Indian farmer was uncovered amid the British era. The tyranny of the Zamindars, the barbarity of the cash loan specialists and the meanness of the industrialists along with the carelessness of the administration, have been clearly delineated as the major factors of a farmer's persecution.

Anand's next novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, has drawn upon the real life account of the plantation labor in the British owned tea estates in Assam. An intensive investigation of this novel amazingly unveils the unpleasant truth of the wrongs unleashed under the pretense of the socialized authorities amid the British guideline. It realistically uncovered that although the British laws had abandoned slavery, it used to enter through the back entryway under the name of the contracted labor. The denied state of the laborers, their merciless exploitation and the perpetual doubt which existed among them and their British masters, all these rue some presentations actually portray the strains which marked the relations between the natives and the imperialists in the PreIndependence times. The glaring inequalities and the sharp contrast between the life of the exploiters and the abused have (also been clearly reflected in this novel.

Anand's literary crusade proceeded with its voyage of anticipating social realities even after the Independence. Presently, his novels took upon the task of anticipating the genuine state of the democratic set up in the nation. In this light, his novel *The Road* extends the grisly reality of the failure of the administration in many parts of the rural India where it couldn't guarantee the practical prohibition of the detestable practice of untouchability.

Nonetheless, all things considered, these essayists have delineated remarkable correspondence as far as their thematic preoccupations and destinations are concerned. In the internal realms of their realism there can be seen an anguish of soul-debasing curses of poor people and enduring Indians. They have portrayed the contemporary reality as well as composed against all sorts of reactionary inclinations of their age and in this way made a solid analysis of the situations. Each item and each character of their fictional world appears as the genuine replica of the real world encompassing them. Their article was to create in the readers a critical awareness of the dehumanizing social shades of malice, to mix the springs of delicacy in them, and to activate them for the removal of these disasters all together that a desirable or a simply social request may appear. In this way the noteworthy task that Leo Tolstoy performed for the improvement of realism in the nineteenth century Russia was to a larger degree performed by Premchand and Anand in the Pre-Independence India.

Novels in the hands of these scholars develop like ballads which are to be judged not only by their themes but rather by the better reasonableness they summon and the artistic awareness they create of oneself and the life around. Perhaps this is the reason attributable to which they acquire a universal contemporaneity. It is the dynamism of these prominently dedicated scholars and their knowledge into the future that makes them relevant for us even

today, and would keep on doing as such for many more generations to come.

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