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The Concept of Class Consciousness in the Fictional World of Mulk Raj

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Abstract:

This study examines the complex ways that Mulk Raj Anand, a well-known author in India, depicts class consciousness in his fiction. Through, the prism of Anand's works, such as *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, the complexity of societal dynamics and nationwide identity are studied. This analysis examines how showcase, class relations, and social realism connect in Anand's stories to elucidate how his characters deal with the day's issues. The study aims to explore how Anand's analysis affects readers' understanding of class consciousness and equivalence through a selection of works of investigation. By utilising a theoretical framework that corresponds sociological perspectives with literary investigation, this study extends our knowledge of how literature impacts and mirrors the collaborative consciousness of a nation. Prominent Indian author Mulk Raj Anand researched class consciousness in his texts, which reflected the socio-political background of India both previously and following autonomy. His books, such as *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, explore the efforts encountered by deprived groups and highlight the social injustices that transfuse society. Anand's depiction of people such as Bakha in *Untouchable* serves as an example of the problems faced by the lower castes, providing readers with a greater understanding of caste relations and encouraging empathy.

Additionally, *Coolie* portrays some of the challenges that the working class went through as it offers a complex sense of the exploitation and harsh economic times of the time. Anand started dialogues on national identity and the need for social reform through his narratives, in addition to documenting the problems of his time. His writings remain vital in revealing the characteristics of India's rich cultural and social complexity, making them priceless windows into the nation's changing consciousness.

Keywords: Class Consciousness, Untouchable, Realistic Narration, Inequality, Inhumanity.

Introduction:

Mulk Raj Anand is a pioneer Indian writer who was born in 1905. He was renowned for his profound understanding of human nature. He always focuses on the suffering of the lower-caste family. He deals with the harsh reality of inequality, injustice, exploitation, class division, and inhumanity with lower castes. In his trilogy, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves a Bud* (1937). In *Untouchable* the life of an untouchable named Bakha exposes the dehumanising representation of caste-based prejudice. This novel reveals the social understanding of the untouchable caste and how people treated them in a pre-independence era of exploitation. Mahatma Gandhi gave them one tag; “Harijan” means “Children of God”. Mulk Raj Anand uses realistic storytelling for Dalits/Untouchable. His major works reveal the harsh reality of society. His literature is an effective tool for interpreting and interrogating traditional socio-cultural norms based on his perception of class consciousness. His works are not only informative but also act as an argument for social transformation in society. The present literature of Mulk Raj Anand offers expansive interpretation using special attention on realistic society, caste, politics and national identity. Mulk Raj Anand effectively uses social realism to represent the complexities of Indian society. Many critics believe that the depicting of ordinary life is an easy way to identify readers with the characters and their challenges in his writing.

Mulk Raj Anand's examination of caste issues is very complex. As per scholars, his representation of untouchability in *Untouchable* reveals the dehumanising experiences that he encounters and is a powerful condemnation of the cruel caste system. The study explores the

numerous ways in which Anand's works deeply rooted notions and add to a broader debate on social justice. Anand narratives are considered to be representative of the socio-political context of the pre-independence era in particular to national identity. Experts highlight how his characters fight with identity. How the issue of different social classes represents an element of the more significant struggle to create one national identity.

Class Consciousness in the Fictional World of Mulk Raj Anand:

Marxist study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie* reveals a profound assessment of the story's representation of class conflict, inequality, injustice, exploitation, social division, suffering and socioeconomic systems. Marxist analysis of *Untouchable* will focus on Bakha's social status as an Untouchable/ Dalit and the economic exploitation from the society. The story illustrates the dehumanising impacts of the rigid caste system. Though, presenting the dark truths of Bakha work as a sweeper. Marxist theory provides the ability to discover how Bakha's marginal position is tightly linked with economic connection instead of having only the product of his religious beliefs.

Bakha is associated with the untouchable community, who are considered to be outside of the Indian social structure. They become so much more than even the lowest caste. His job is to sweep the streets and latrines for the upper-class people. When India conducts reforms, Bakha will remain stuck in his position for the rest of his life because he was born in an Untouchable/Dalit community. The whole book is set on a single day in Bakha's life, as his capacity to deal with the mistreatment that lower castes experience. Bakha is reported to work for another day cleaning latrines at his father's request. Bakha accepts an invitation from Charat Singh, a well-known hockey player, to visit him later in the day when he is cleaning his latrine. He promises that he will give Bakha a hockey stick.

Rohini, his sister, goes to obtain some water for Bakha. She goes over to the public well. The upper caste Hindus believe that touching an undercast/Dalit will pollute the well, Sohini is not allowed to even touch the well, because she belongs to the untouchable community from the village. A preacher was ready to provide some water but he had one condition for her to come to tomorrow's temple and clean the temple courtyard. After sweeping the streets, Bakha moves through the street. When he accidentally touches a Brahmin Hindu, that man shouts that Bakha has contaminated him. A crowd gathered and the man started abusing Bakha. The man slaps Bakha before a Muslim truck driver breaks up the fight. Now

imagine the man's condition and his mental situation suffering from many problems. Sohini appears crying in front of her brother. She is attacked by the priest who invited her to clean the temple, blaming her for polluting him with her touch. Sohini said that when she was cleaning the waste he touched her breasts and sexually attacked her. It was only when she rejected him that he began shouting that she had touched him. Bakha tells her to go home and that he will handle the food gathering from society. The biggest question is that in a public place is preventing a role that no one touches dalit. In private places, a preacher touches Dalit as a sexual object. Such a kind of mentality does have that time? Bakha is present at his friend's sister's wedding. One of his friends advises they take revenge on the man after he tells one of the two about the man who hit him. Bakha thinks about it, but he realises that if he reacts, he will get himself and his family into problems. There is not a judicial path available to the Untouchables.

Bakha joins a street hockey competition after collecting his hockey stick from Charat Singh. A fight occurs among the two teams during the game, and rocks are thrown at each other. A small youngster gets hit in the head by one of the rocks. He gets picked up by Bakha and brought to his mother, who describes him as a street sweeper. She cries that he has polluted her son despite his attempts to help. Bakha's father is upset at home since his child has been missing all afternoon. He removes Bakha from the home. As Bakha arrives at a train station, he learns via a rumour that Mahatma Gandhi is scheduled to make a speech there. Bakha remains until Gandhi shows up. In his address, Gandhi criticises the caste system and exhorts the populace to emulate his peaceful protests. Although inspired by the speech, Bakha lacks the expertise to judge if Gandhi's recommendations are realistic. After the speech, Bakha overhears a debate over the merits of Gandhi's speech between two intelligent men, a lawyer and a poet. Gandhi's goals, in the attorney's opinion, are naive and unrealistic. It is rare for tradition to be abandoned, thus in his opinion, the caste system will continue to exist despite calls for change. Given that the flushing toilet is claimed on the way to their town, the poet is optimistic that the barbarism of the caste system will be ended.

The book *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand is now considered an iconic work of modern Indian literature. The book criticised the social, economic, and social consequences of over two centuries of British rule as well as India's strict caste system, which had long separated the nation's citizens into groups based on race and occupation. At the height of an unpredictable decade marked by India's combat to define itself and fight for independence under the moral

leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the novel was published. *Coolie* achieved popularity in 20th-century Anglo-Indian literature because Anand was one of the first well-known Indian writers to incorporate the phrases and style of India's native people into writing that was otherwise written in English. Anand presents an image of the struggle to maintain one's humanity and dignity in the face of poverty, hunger, and disease with the life and death of Munoo, a 14-year-old orphan from north central India's hill country who works his brief lifespan to secure a decent job and a living wage.

“Oh baby, you have eaten my life! You can’t rest even while I am talking business to anyone! May you die! May your liver burn! May you fade away! You of the evil star! Now, what is the matter with you? What do you want? You...”
Coolie, 1936, pp 25

The phrase “eaten my life” may describe how it is all-consuming and how the demands of the work seem to extend throughout every part of the writer's life. The statement that one cannot get any sleep while having business talks could indicate that one is always thinking about the issue, even when having unrelated conversations. Words of intent, like “May you die! I believe your liver burns! “May you fade away!” could be magnified statements reflecting the obstacles and emotions. The allusion to an “evil star” may represent the perceived bad impact or challenges. “Now, what's the deal with you? “What do you want?” might be the writer's way of conveying their frustration and appealing for clarity or a solution, similar to how they would clarify the challenges that they ran into when conducting their research. All things considered, these phrases could serve as an imagery of the highs and lows of emotions.

A Comparative Analysis within the Framework of Marxist Conceptualisation:

Untouchable: The play deals with the theme of caste-the rigid social system peculiar to India. Bakha is the lowermost caste (“untouchables” or Dalits) whose labour and existence were considered sinful by higher castes. There, as in class structures in capitalist civilizations, the work of Untouchables consists of division of labour and social stratification, though this is not quite an economic class under Marxist theory. Bakha and those like him have to carry place menial work and suffer constant humiliation, while the upper castes enjoy all facilities and control the resources. The caste system can be compared to class oppression from a Marxist standpoint, in which the bourgeoisie-like upper castes take advantage of the proletariat's labour

for their own gain. However, caste determines social status and labour duties in *Untouchable*, but economic links are the main factor determining class in Marxist theory.

Coolie: Unlike any other character in the film, Munoo, the main character of the film, suffers through a different, more blatant manner of economic oppression. Desperately poor as growing up, he is engaged as a factory worker, domestic servant, and a rickshaw puller. Every job he has exposes him to a capitalist society that is only concerned with him as a source of profits and royalties. This book compared to *Untouchable*, is more prosperous in terms of the class system imposed by the capitalistic society in which Munoo is the proletariat while the Indians and British capitalists are the bourgeois. Since Munoo's life is affected by the class relations, the relation of *Coolie* with the Marxist class theory is easily traced. This is the perfect example of how capitalism is inhumane and dehumanizes such individuals by turning them into marketable goods devoid of rights.

Similarly, it can be argued in both novels that the British colonial rule further worsened the plight of the oppressed classes. In *Untouchable*, British rule is a distant presence but serves to supporting the caste system whereas in *Coolie* British colonizers come to India to capitalise on the working Indians, In this case, recalling Marx's understanding of imperialism, which is seen as the last most matured stage of capitalism in which the ruling class takes out its expansionist ideas to underdeveloped nations in search of oppressed classes to further expand their capitalist economy.

In *Coolie*, Munoo's experiences as a factory worker represent a broader colonial economic order in which Indian operatives are subsumed within the dynamics of world capitalism, facing both internal and external oppression. The British, like the Indian bourgeois class, sees Munoo as an aggravating lump of flesh in her sympathising labor, which meets the class exploitation of colonialism. This complements Marx's belief that colonialism is a means through which capitalist exploitation is globalised and thus the formation of a world-class the proletariat.

Conclusion:

Anand's works can profoundly impact how readers view national consciousness and identity. Through his writings, readers can have a deeper grasp of the nation's identity by gaining a sense of its historical, social, and cultural backgrounds. Readers may feel an impression of everyday experience and shared heritage as a result of Anand's inquiry into a

various themes, individuals, and historical settings. Anand's texts examine the nuances of national identity that might lead readers to reflect on how they individually relate to the more incredible story of the country. The influence might go beyond pleasure and work as a spark for dialogues and critical thinking about identity, neighbourhood, and shared values. Also, readers might experience a sense of unity or a shared destiny as a result of Anand's depiction of the characters and events, which may help to shape a collective consciousness. His narratives contain an emotional resonance that might inspire emotions of pride, empathy, or awareness in readers, leading them to reconsider their views on national identity and the structures of society that shape it. In conclusion, Anand's writings have the power to profoundly influence readers by affecting their conceptions of national identity and consciousness and promoting a sophisticated awareness of all of the parts that go into making up a country.

Ultimately, a thorough reading of Anand's writings reveals a profound exploration of national identity, providing readers with a thorough understanding of the complex web of cultural, social, and historical facets. Through his novels, Anand examines the specifics of the national context and the human experience, offering a comprehensive portrayal beyond conventional storytelling. How pertinent Anand's writings are to understanding national consciousness is demonstrated by their capacity to arouse emotions, initiate dialogue, and require critical thought. His works engage readers by resolving the ambiguities around recognition and encouraging them to consider the broader social implications and challenges associated with fostering a feeling of shared identity. In summary, Anand's contributions are invaluable for understanding the nuances of national identity and going beyond words on paper. His publications provide readers with the chance to examine and debate the complex subject of identity, which has a lasting impact on people's perceptions of what it means to be a citizen.

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