

Existentialism in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand



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by **T. Pushpanathan**

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PREFACE

Existentialism is a 20th century philosophical term which is centered on the analysis of existence and of the way humans finds themselves existing in the world. The notion is that humans exist first and then each individual spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature. It is a sophisticated philosophy that deals with the definite attitude of looking at life, recently has been simplified and applied to all sorts of people and activities that are tenuously connected with existentialism. The philosophy begins from man and his existence as a subject and not an object. The existentialists think passionately about man's existence and treat him not only as a thinking subject but an initiator of action and a centre of feeling.

Mulk Raj Anand, a young and recalcitrant Indian decided to take writing as a profession. He rose to prominence with his maiden novel, *Untouchable*, (1935) depicting the cries of lower classes of people. His portrayal of Bakha created havoc in the intellectual minds. Anand advocated the cause of the downtrodden and the underprivileged through his writings at a larger level. He wrote a score of novels, hundreds of short stories and numberless articles ranging from art, literature and painting. The wide spectrum of Anand's fiction offers a kaleidoscope of love and hate, hope and despair, denials and deprivations. His fiction has a tinge of existential anguish 'where the mind is not without fear and the head is not held high'. The crisis of identity and the consecutive struggle to regain it either through revolt or release (death) is a perpetual question that amuses and bemuses Anand's characters.

The major theme of his writing includes his empathy with the suppressed class. He seems a crusader against all sorts of

injustice. The real test of man is to treat him above the barriers of all kinds. His writings portray social conditions of his age. Most of the characters of Anand's fiction have a progression and they are existentialists. Mulk Raj Anand may deny of being an existentialist but most of his works show him infected with the existential ideologies of Jean Paul Sartre and Heidegger. His novels are not only the realities of his times but a reality for all the times to come and go. And therein lays his existential exuberance.

The life of an author influences his works. The crucial events of Anand's life played a key role in shaping the author that he is today. It was his feeling of loneliness that made him fond of mountains and valleys. He was equally sensitive to the daily round of his mother's rituals, prayers and songs. The spiritual affinity between Anand and his mother is expanded in fictional terms in many of his novels. His mother's influence permeated the very core of his being. His father's subservience gave Anand unmitigated despair. This was like cancer in his heart. The contrary pulls of his parents generated a tension in his consciousness. His escape to Bombay was the culmination of his despair. Anand himself admitted that he tried to give poor people his own exuberant passion by joining in the burning and melting that goes on in life at its intersect. In absorbing life, one can understand its disequilibriums. Anand considered literature and art as the instruments of humanism.

This book is an attempt at exploring the use of existentialism in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand.

T.Pushpanathan

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T.Pushpanathan

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T. Pushpanathan has been working in SCSVMV University since 2009. On his credit, he has 22 papers in International Journals, 28 papers in National/International conferences, four books, 37 Editorial/Review/Advisory Board memberships, 15 Professional/Academic body membership, Five Awards and many more. He has completed his research work on essential communicative competencies for manufacturing employees. He is guiding many M.Phil. Research scholars in the field of English Language Teaching. He has expertise in training the language skills of employees from academics and industry domain as well. He convenes ELT@I Kanchipuram Chapter using which organising many workshops/conferences in SCSVMV University and extending his academic support to many schools and colleges in terms of delivering lectures.

The logo for Lulu, featuring the word "Lulu" in a stylized, dark blue, cursive font. The letter "L" is particularly large and decorative, with a flourish that extends over the "u".

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