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# INDUSTRIALISM: A DEVOURING DEMON OF WORKING CLASSES IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S

## *The Big Heart*



\* K. Ranjith Rao \*\* A. Komuraiah,

\* Asst. Professor of English, Vaagdevi College of Engineering, Bollikunta, Warangal, A. P.

\*\* Senior Lecturer of English, Trinity Colleges, Karimnagar, A. P.

### A B S T R A C T

*"I wrote this novel at the end of World War II in London when the machines of Western Civilization had nearly destroyed the world. I was convinced that if India also went the same way, after freedom, without controlling the machine, but allowed it to become instrument of exploitation, then we would also produce the same horrors....I was thinking of Gandhi's natural rejection of machine. I wanted to show that though we can't reject the machine altogether, we have to control it, as a driver controls a railway engine" -Mulk Raj Anand (1973: 121)*

Mulk Raj Anand is an Indian novelist and short-story writer. He is known for his realistic and sympathetic portrayal of the Indian poor. He has written more than ten novels which deal with human problems and human sufferings. They reveal the problems—the exploitation of the poor, the impact of industrialization, colonialism, caste, creed and race relations. He explained the misfortunes of the down-trodden, dispossessed and the poor with compassion. One of his best novels, *The Big Heart* is his "perceptive treatment of the complex Indian problems in a little over two hundred pages" (Saras Cowasjee, 1977: 23) It deals with a tragic conflict between tradition and modernity. He has set up the theme to unfold various sociological problems besetting the caste ridden Indian society. Margaret Berry (1971: 49) points out that "it is as of special importance as in no other novel has Anand so attempted to organize a whole social, economic and political picture" He predicts malevolent and unhealthy outcome of industrialism and full scope morose picture of 19th century Indian craftsmen. Alastair Niven (1977: 81) too adds that the novel includes "humanitarian social, cultural, economic, political problems inherent in Indian predicament"

Instrument of exploitation on human beings and human power is the core theme in the novel. It is a bitter critic on industrialization. As Mahatma Gandhi thinks that western civilization may reduce India's culture and tradition, Anand also surmised that human power will be degraded by industries. Regarding this, Stephen Hemenway (1975: 14) comments that "Anand's uniqueness lies in his intertwining of the political and religious philosophical aspects of the East-west dichotomy"

The protagonist, Ananta, is a man of heart and says that "There is no talk of money, brothers; one must have a big heart." (19) He is the coppersmith, who

returns to his home Amritsar after worked in Bombay and Ahmedabad. He brings with him Janaki, a young widow who is suffering from tuberculosis at an advanced stage. The people of coppersmith community live in Kucha Billimaran. There are two streets, one is Bazaar Kaserian which represents of tradition where finished products are sold and the other is the ironmongers market which is a symbol of modernity. As industries and companies came into existence, there is no work for the coppersmiths and artisans.

Ananta welcomes the machines as "the fashionable vilayati bride" (40) He opposes the machines and Puran Singh Bhagat, an idealistic poet, lends him support. Chaudhary Gokul Chand, the Chandri of utensil sellers' community, sets up a factory with the help of Lala Murli Dhar, the headman of the thathiar coppersmith brotherhood. As the thathiar do not know how to work by the machines, they are thrown out and they become penniless and jobless. As the workers have scanty work, they strike in front of the factory gate and demanding to provide work for them. Ananta knows the futility of violence and thinks of a union as the best idea to combat their problems. Finally Ananta tries to create the awareness among the workers by giving some speeches. He plans for a revolution that is not 'destructive'. He hopes things will change and all the workers will get jobs but unfortunately the workers, who are frustrated and get lured by the words of Sathyapal, a leader of student union and Prof. Mehjid, start believing that one must kill, not to protest. Ralia, a drunkard and friend of Ananta, also comes to the factory where workers are disturbing and creating chaos. He goes out of control and starts to destroy everything whatever he sees. Ananta tries to persuade Ralia but he is in vain. As Ananta requests him calm down, he hits with a rod on Ananta's skull till his skull "cracked like a pitcher" Finally, he has been taken into

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custody. Puran Bhagat Singh takes care of Janaki who lost a noble man. She says "He is dead....And all my life has ended with his going....Everything has ended for me in his death. O God, let the earth open up and swallow me!" (212)

Ananta believed that machines will helpful to the development of a country and it will not destroy the human work. The machines should provide the work for the people. Since it would obviously diminish the work for the people, industrialism becomes a devouring demon of working classes so he wants to make the people to realize that a control is desirable in the transformation of the society from traditional to modern so that the basic values of the social governance are not lost out. The death of Anata is a symbol of change which refers the modern day's people who need the work in technical line also. As Mulk Raj Anand was influenced by Gandhi, Tagore and Gorky's writings, he thought that industries should not make the people poor. He wanted Ananta to bring the situ-

ations on the positive path with non-violence mode but the people are attracted towards the violence without thought. Anand give a message through this novel that machines are bringing benefits for the poor people who know the traditional work.

**Notes:**

Alastair Niven, *The Yoke of Pity: A Study of the Fictional Writings of Mulk Raj Anand* New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1977. Margaret Berry, *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971. Mulk Raj Anand *Author to Critic: Letters of Mulk Raj Anand to Saros Cowasjee* Ed. Saros Cowasjee, (Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 1973: 121-2) Mulk Raj Anand, *Big Heart* London: Hutchinson International Authors Ltd, 1945.

Saros Cowasjee, "The Big Heart: A New Perspective," *Kakatiya Journal of English Studies* 2:1 (1977): 23-31. Stephen Hemenway, *The Novel of India 2* (Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 1975):12-20.