



## Philosophy of Humanism in Anand

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### Abstract

Anand's insistence on the dignity of man-irrespective of caste, creed and wealth, his plea for the practice of compassion as a living value, his conception of the whole man, the profound importance he attaches to art and poetry as instruments for developing the whole men, his crusade against superstition, feudalism, and imperialism these are some of the chief characteristics of his humanism. Enough food, clothing and shelter are the basic needs of any human society. Starvation, disease and unemployment are factors which stifle the healthy growth of a nation, and so they must needs be removed root-and branch. Anand also wants all this to be achieved through the resources made available by scientific and technological advance and not through bloodshed and war. This paper is an attempt to study the philosophy behind Anand's humanism and how it can be achieved.

**Keywords:** humanism, social institution, whole man, social convention, education

### Introduction

Humanism means love for Man, the whole Man with all his weaknesses, instincts and impulses. It may be defined as "A system of thought in which human interests, values and dignity are held dominant. Humanism implies devotion to the concerns of mankind; it is an attitude of mind that concentrates upon the activities of man rather than upon the supernatural world, the world of nature or the so-called animal kingdom. The history of western humanism goes back to the Renaissance when it arose as a result of the study of the ancient classics that emphasised things human and of this world as contrasted with the medieval pre-occupation with the supernal and in the other world". (Anand, Untouchable 47)

The type of humanism that Anand envisages for this nation can be better understood and appreciated if it is studied in relation to the background of his life. Anand was born in an India which was groaning under the imperialistic rule of the British. Old values were crumbling and new ones were seen nowhere near the horizon. Religion had become a matter of meaningless ritual and the arid pujapath, Fatalism and superstition dominated the minds of the poor masses.

Anand's central preoccupation in his writings is with humanism. He regards art and literature "as the instruments of humanism". (Sharma 17) The creative artist should have ardent love for human beings, especially the downtrodden and should offer them his own exuberant passion. This enables the writer as well as the reader, to maintain the equilibrium in his life and live cheerfully even in the face of the tragic events of the world. This humanism was, in Anand's case, the compulsion to write books. He came to grasp it under the influence of Marx, Guru Nanak, Gandhi and others, and it was the outcome of the synthesis of the best in Asia and Europe. In *Apology for Humanism*, he states his position as a humanist:

I believe, first and foremost, in human beings, in Man, in the whole man.....  
The Humanism which I prefer does not rest on a Divine Sanction.....but puts its faith in the creative imagination of man, in his capacity

to transform himself, in the tireless mental and physical energy with which he can, often in the face of great odds, raise himself to tremendous heights of dignity and redeem the world from its misery and pain (PP137-41)

Anand, like most other humanist, starts with a declaration of his immense faith in the Protagorean dictum "Man is the measure of all things". By this he means that he believes in measuring the value of all values and all actions in relation to human personality. Man is the maker and breaker of worlds. He is an entity in whose constant attempts at renewal and adaptation lays the beauty of life. Anand admires man, and even adores him. But this admiration does not blind him to man's weaknesses. He does take cognizance of man's greed, lust, selfishness, cruelty, and insensitivity. He firmly believes that man is potentially capable of rising from these lower passions to magnificent heights of splendour.

In fact, the most significant contribution of Anand to the philosophy of humanism is perhaps his theory of the whole man which forms the key-stone in the arch of his comprehensive historical humanism. He pleads for the all-round growth of man, for the development of all his faculties and this must be geared up to serve the cause of the total development of other individuals in society. Man attains total manhood, says Anand:

"by integrating his personal satisfactions and continuous creative self-development through significant creative work with the hand, the heart and the brain, such as may contribute to man's renewal to the welfare of the community and express the love of life the awareness of death and thus balances the essentially unstable and the maladjusted human personality involved in the inevitable conflicts of existence in this universe". (Is there, 160)

Anand's humanism implies in its essence that tenderness or compassion is a powerful force, the liberation of which enables man to emerge from the encircling gloom of violence, greed, jealousy and narrowness and live intensely and fully. The 'whole man' should be our aim, and the individual's

development is after all inextricably bound up with the development of the society as a whole. Anand writes:

“The urge towards the attainment of the complete man entails, as it has always done, the exercise of compassion and understanding with a view to removing wrongs and for the creation of tenderness among men.”(The writer’s role, 55)

While Anand's humanism has much in common with different varieties of humanism, it owes its origin as well as development to his pre-occupation with the whole man and his writings are frankly inspired by his love of man. This is made clear by Anand himself.

“.....as may media as a writer were the memory and imagination and the substance of my work the whole of my varied experience, the theme of my work became the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationship, rather than one single part of it. ” (Apology 78)

Anand recognises the importance of education as a vital social institution. He wants free primary education to be given to all Children. There must be opportunities for the pursuit of further studies or to learn a trade.

Anand's humanism, his concern for the underdog of society, is reflected in all his novels, but *Untouchable* and *Coolie* particularly significant in this connection. In these novels, Anand deals with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for better life. Almost both of his subsequent novels are a variation on the same theme and are intended to bring home to the reader the plight of the over-burdened peasant who is powerless to fight superstition and social convention and is balked at every step in his aspirations for a better life. According to Paul Varghese 'Untouchable' is a socially conscious" novel whereas *Coolie* is a "politically conscious" novel. 'Coolie' tells the story of the experiences of Munoo, an orphan, from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab till he dies of consumption in Simla. The novel thus comprehends the whole of India spatially. 'Untouchable' is concerned with the feelings of Bakha a sweeper boy and his experiences in the course of a single day in the town of Bulashah. Both novels, however, focus the attention of the reader on certain very social and political problems affecting life in India. So the world of the novel is a microcosm of India. These two novels, it cannot be denied, have served the useful purpose of arousing the conscience of the educated Indians to the problems of untouchability and economic and social injustice in India.

Anand's humanism, as stated above, is an amalgam of the best of Asiatic and European knowledge and traditions. G.S. Balarama Gupta rightly discovers in his humanism the Protegorean concept of man as the measure of all things. Anand points to the growth of the humanist values in Buddha, the medieval Hindu saints, Islam, Guru Nanak, Rammohan Roy, M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru. (Is there 152-54) Really, his concept of comprehensive humanism is not in any way, strikingly original knowing it fully well he plainly says: "... by humanism I do not mean anything more or less than what it has always meant illumination or enlightenment in the interests of man, true to his highest nature and his noblest vision".(Prolegomena 7)

Anand's humanism places man in the centre of all things. It also believes in the ethical equality of all men. Therefore, it cannot sanction any distinction between men, say, division of caste, creed or race which are positive obstacles for human beings to grow to their full height and dignity. His humanism recognizes the fact that pain and cruelty are two other serious maladies of the world. But he believes that they are not unavoidable. With the aid of advancing science and technology and with the practice of love and compassion for the weak and the lowly, it is not impossible to reduce and even remove most of man's misery and unhappiness.

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