
CHAPTER - V
CONCLUSION

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Mulk Raj Anand, one of the pioneer Indo-Anglian novelists in modern India. His uniqueness, consider, lies in his treatment of specific castes which according to him is the origin of evils in Indian Society. In this respect - in respect of dealing with lower castes in a direct language. Anand explains the function of a creative artist in these words :

"...the writer along^e, if he is honest and brave, is in a position to understand the world qualitatively,.. And, if he is possessed of true creative ability, he can transform his knowledge into a vision... of men in his own locality, and across national frontiers, and lead them to a universal awareness of life, thereby possessing them with the will to renew it and to change it."¹

Anand is definitely unlike other Indo-Anglian novelists. He doesnot fight shy in naming the oppressors's caste as well as the lower castes. He discovers however, that caste alone is not the only evil in our society. He finds that class distinctions are equally evil, and that the social order must be changed to give justice to the lower castes. In fact, in the Indian situation, the class-conflict becomes more complicated with a view to explaining aforementioned observations.

When we talk about Hinduism, we invariably refer to its caste hierarchy. Basically Hinduism is divided in four-fold Varna system, but in reality, the whole society is fragmented and splintered in hundreds of castes and sub-castes. They are water-tight compartments. Taya Zinkin says :

"A poor man can become rich and vice versa in the capitalism or class system but in a caste society under Hinduism there is neither promotion or demotion."²

This evil has existed in India for thousands of years; and it continues to exist in modern India too. As Jawaharlal Nehru writes :

'In the context of the society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy.'³

The movement of 'dalit' literature is a recent phenomenon which is the literature of revolt written various Indian languages. But Mulk Raj Anand is perhaps the first Indo-Anglian writer of a 'dalit' novel - Untouchable in 1935. The novel, for the first time, in English, brought to the notice of the world, the miserable plight of the untouchable community in terms of literary production. His Bakha is

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immortal in Indian fiction in English. The narrative of his humiliating experiences in the course of a single day focuses the world's because it is interrelated with caste distinctions. As Dr. Ranjee Shahani says, 'Anand describes the life of the humble and disinherited',⁴ is quite right.

Similarly, Anand is conscious of another class of human beings who are victims not just of caste or class but man in general, i.e. women. In quite a few of his novels he treats women as class by themselves. The familiar types of women characters like doting mothers, loving sisters, devoted wives, perverted and sexually exploited women etc.^{As}

Anand :

"...brings out well how the strains of the new situation modify, wrap or transmute into yet finer forms the traditional responses of the women."⁵

Thus, Anand is a champion of the downtrodden social groups including women. In this sense, he is socially committed writer. However, his 'commitment' does not detract from artistic achievements. It must be remembered that Anand is an art critic also, and, he ran the art magazine called 'Marg' for a number of years as its editor. In his 'social realism' is no less artistic than that of Emile Zola or Upton Sinclair. In fact, he is influenced not only by the economic theories of Marx and others, but also influenced by modern novelists like James Joyce and his technique of

stream of consciousness which he effected employed in a novel like Untouchable. Therefore, we find a fine blend of social commitment coupled with artistic consciousness in Mulk Raj Anand's novels.

In this dissertation, my attempt has been to analyse a group of his selective novels attention to the fate of the deressed classes in India. Anand round~~s~~ off~~s~~ the narrative with a suggestion of the situation to the problem of the untouchabls and indicating his 'hero' into a new consciousness of his position in the society.

Anand deals with the same problem of untouchability in The Road as well. Here, the irony is that the caste Hindus cannot tolerate the thought that the untouchables earn money in cash by working on the road. Caste Hindus refuse to 'touch' the stones even which have been 'handled' by the untouchable labourers. The road is a symbol which connects the village to the city, which facilitates traffic of village goods like milk to the city. Here the economic problem is made more complicated by caste considerations. The high caste Hindus complain that 'these chamar boys are earning wages and walking on the heart of our whole caste brotherhood'⁶ and the frighten by the possibility of the untouchables being able to 'buy' the status of the 'twice born' Hindus.

Anand's two novels, Coolie and The Big Heart deal with two complex issue of caste and class values. In Coolie, he

realizes that it is not caste, but class conflict arising but of the employer - employee relationship which is the root cause of poverty and suffering in the city as well as the village. In the urban situation, it is capitalism a new economic order which is the outcome of industrialization. Coolie is extremely significant novel as its hero Munoo passes through different vicissitudes to his grave in a touching tragic manner. His journey from his village to a small town and then to a big city - is a modern 'pilgrim's progress' which ends in a tragedy. As the reviewer of the Spectator writes :

"Munoo is a universal kind of figure. He is the passion not only of India but of mankind."⁷

In The Big Heart, Anand intermixes the caste issue with class values. The principle of contrast and parallelism is based in this novel. The coppersmiths are divided in subcastes. Those who produce brass utensils working with their hands are 'thathiars' opposed to those who sell the finished products of the utensils and who are called Kaseros. But Kaseros consider themselves superior to the thathiar and intermarriage or any other financial communication between the members of these castes is not tolerated. Similarly, industrialization on the scale of introducing machinery in manufacturing brass utensils renders, the thathiars jobless creating unemployment among them. The intermixture of these two problematic class and caste, is a new development in Anand's novels. K.N.Sinha points out this as follows :

"A life-and-death struggle ensues between the 'haves' and 'have nots', and tension is generated by the clash of interests in which ancestral memories, customs, and prejudices play an important part."⁸

Anand's The Two Leaves and a Bud and The Old Woman and the Cow introduce a different theme, that is, the abject position of women in our society. The Two Leaves and a Bud is a study of capitalistic/colonial situation in which the peasants are lured to work, but who are tortured and exploited by the estate managers as well as the colonizers. Even though imperialism is considered as an evil, it is not the central focus of the novel. It is the suffering of the workers on the plantation at the hands of the capitalists. The working women are an easy prey to the lustful managers on the plantation. But it is not only the colonizers or capitalists who take advantage of women. The evil exists in the native society as well.

In The Old Woman and the Cow, Anand's heroine is kicked and beaten, and even sold to a lecherous old money lender. Anand makes a story case of the oppressed status of women in our society who are tended as a 'class' and the subjugation to traditions and male superiously pinned down to what it is. As Prof.Gupta comments :

"Anand makes a clever use of the old myth of the Ramayana and indicates how it is no longer possible for men either to keep woman suppressed or to deny her rightful liberty."⁹

Anand's Lallu trilogy comprising The Village, Across the Black Waters and The Sward and the Sickle treat various themes, but chief among them is the lot of the village peasantry under landlordism. As the workers in factories in the big city, so the peasantry in the village labours under the yoke superstition, traditionalism, landlordism and the economic system obtained in the village. Especially the first novel, The Village is remarkable for its forethought analysis of the social conditions in terms of the social conditions in terms of complex relationships between different social groups in the village culture as well as village economy.

Mulk Raj Anand is uniquely consistent in his preoccupation with social reality. In fact, the very subjection of the social issues, ignored by other bourgeoisie novelists is an ample contribution to the Indo-Anglian novel. Others, like Kamala Markandeya or Babhani Bhattacharya have also dealt with peasant themes, but Anand's preoccupation and involvement is wider and a lifelong passion. In this sense, he may be considered a unique novelist among the writers in English in India.

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