
CHAPTER - II

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I

NOVELS OF MULK RAJ ANAND

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The 'novel' form came to India through the influence of the Western literature. K.R.Srinivas Iyengar writes :

"The 'novel' as a literary phenomenon is new to India... It is only during a period of little more than a century that the novel, the long sustained piece of prose fiction has occurred and taken root in India."¹

Anand is one of the three great Indian novelists writing in English, the other two are Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. William Walsh describes them as the 'big three' of the Indian novelists. While C.D.Narasimhaiah writes :

"Popular opinion has bracketed Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao as the three distinguished Indian novelists writing in English, largely because their names have been making news for more than three decades now."²

The widespread popularity of the three novelists and various aspects of their writing appreciated by foreign and Indian critics is a proof of Narasimhaiah's opinion. For instance, Jack Lindsay writes as :

"About 1925, he (Anand) started off a series of novels, planned on Balzacian lines, in which, when it was completed, was to be revealed the involved pattern of Indian life, its movement into new unities, new complexities, under the pressure of history."³

Like Balzac, Anand's novels deal with various themes, and his characters come from prince to pauper shows his deep study of Indian society. D.Reimenschneider rightly says :

"... not only the subject matter is basically the same in all the novels but that we can likewise speak of one and the same idea of man underlying the various characters we meet."⁴

After the publication of his first novel Untouchable Anand has become famous as a 'committed' writer. In his context Prof.Anniah Gawda says :

"Among the Indo-Anglian novelists, Mulk Raj Anand is the most conspicuously committed writer. I am using the current word 'committed' for what used to be called 'tendentious' writing and earlier still 'writing with purpose'. Perhaps the best word for it is the plainest, it is propaganda writing."⁵

But, it must be noted, that Anand is famous as a art critic, and hence, presumably, he is conscious of the demands of artistic creations. A 'committed' writer need not be necessarily 'tendentious'. This clear from examples, such as the British novelist H.G.Wells or the American novelist Upton Sinclair.

In this project I have discussed Anand's some novels in the context of class and casteism in India. His first three novels : Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936) and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) deal with the miserable lives of downtrodden and poor outcaste society. All his protagon



belong to different classes and castes, and they are victims of either class/caste conflict, or victims of males dominated social system. K.N.Sinha is right when he says :

"These three novels, Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud not only present a mirror reflection of the actual life... but the catharsis of pity."⁶

Anand's trilogy, The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1962) deals with Indian peasantry. The Village is remarkable for its social conflict between landlordism and traditional, fatalistic peasants.

Anand in his later novels also has depicted the same theme - poverty, suffering and suppression. His early novels were published in England in the pre-independence time. His later novels appeared during the World War II and post-Independence time. I have discussed Anand's The Big Heart (1945), The Old Woman and the Cow (1960) and The Road (1961) also his Lalu trilogy briefly again in the context of class and casteism.

II

UNTOUCHABLE (1925)

Untouchable was refused by publishers in the beginning. Naomi Mitchison wrote a letter to Anand saying :

"...many people just won't read your book because of the dirt and cruelty you have conveyed in it."⁷

Anand revised the novel several times. E.M.Forster recommended to him the name of a publisher after nearly nineteen publishers had rejected the book. At the same time a young British poet Oswald Blakeston helped Anand and took the manuscript to Wishart Books. The book was accepted on the condition that E.M.Forster should write a preface to defend it against being called 'dirty'. In this way the book was published in 1935. Much of the argument centred on whether the book was 'dirty' or 'clean'. But Forster's argument is :

"...the prejudice against the sweeper class was still so strong or so elaborately organized, I didn't know. But you make your sweeper sympathetic yet avoid making him a hero or a martyr."⁸

He further says in his preface :

"...the book is indescribably clean, it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it".⁹

Edgel Rockword says :

'Untouchable' is essentially a tragic poem of the individual caught in the net of the age-old caste system."¹⁰

E.M.Forster writes in the preface as :

"a real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes ground, sometimes weak and throughly Indian."¹¹

But Iyengar speaks of the 'a photographic fidelity about the picture that convinces at once, though it also overwhelms us by its cumulative ferocity and force of detail.'¹² And Jack Lindsay notes 'the Kaleidoscopic movement of colour, sight, touch, sound.'¹³

Bakha is the central figure in the novel. Anand has described various episodes in the life of Bakha during the course of a day. The very location of the colony is a segregated place of the outcastes where Bakha was born. In the beginning he is childlike and unresentful by nature. He forgets all insults, he also differs from other sweepers as he is a champion at all games as well as very responsible and duty-conscious. But at the end of the day he gives up his hope of becoming a gentleman and realizes his true identity in his life.

Bakha's daily work is cleaning latrines as he goes out to sweep the main road and the temple courtyard in the town. He passes by the fruit stalls, sweet-meat stalls and so on. He stops at a shop to buy a packet of cigarettes and puts an anna on the board in front of the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper splashes some water over the coin and then picks it up and throws it into the counter as if the coin too is 'untouchable'. Then he flings a packet of cigarettes at Bakha from a distance. Another shopkeeper behaves in the same manner. He throws the packet of jilebis at Bakha also from some distance. Then a really serious incident takes place. Just when Bakha is walking along the street, happy, he happens to

'touch' Lallaji. That 'touched' man hurls vulgar abuses at Bakha and attracts a big crowd around them. Bakha feels sorry and begs forgiveness of Lallaji. The 'polluted' man slaps on Bakha cheek in return. Bakha stands aghast, his turban fallen on the ground and his poor jilebis scattered in the dust. Now he realizes his position and place in the world. As Bakha muses,

"All of them abused. Why are we always abused?... Because we touch dung. It is only the Hindus and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I am a sweeper - Untouchable ! Untouchable ! That's the world ! I'm an Untouchable !" ¹⁴

Later on, Bakha reaches the temple and as he goes near the temple, he is stunned to hear the priest shout. 'Polluted, Polluted'. The whole crowd takes up the tune and starts shouting the same words. Another priest shouts from the temple that he too has been polluted because of Bakha's sister, Sohini's contact. Bakha can do no more than rage against the brutalities of the upper castes.

After sending his sister home he goes to the silver-smith's lane to fetch food. There an orthodox house-wife is mad with fury because she feels that Bakha has defiled her house by contact. She hurls some chapatis at him from the fourth storey of the building. They fall on the dirty road. Bakha picks them up and walks off with disgust.

In the evening Bakha carries a wounded little boy to

his home, but the boy's mother is angry with him for he has touched and 'polluted' her son. As a sequel to the events of the day, Bakha wanders homeless in the town. He meets colonel Hutchinson, the christian missionary. He offers him salvation through conversion to Christianity. But the colonel's shrewd wife shouts at him. So he runs away in fear. Bakha hears Gandhi's speech and also listens to the views of the poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar, that the problem of untouchablility can be solved, if the modern flush latrines are introduced.

Bakha is duly impressed and feels more hopeful of the future and returns to his house to tell his father about the Mahatma and about the mahcine that will 'clear dung without anyone having to handle it.'

The Untouchable is a forceful indictment of the evils of the fossilized caste system and orthodox traditions. Anand introduces a spectrum of society including the high caste Brahmin priest, the Vaishya shopkeeper, goldsmith, silversmith, etc. Bakha's playmates belong to a 'higher' caste - Ram Charan the washerman's son, Chota the leather worker's son. These are also middle class Babus and Christians. Bakha is initiated into social consciousness as a result of his contact with these high caste Hindus who treat him with cruelty and contempt which reduces Bakha to utter nonentity.

Bakha belongs to the lowest caste in the Hindu hierarchy. Owing to the low caste of the sweeper his life is

miserable and full of agony. Bakha's suffering is justified on the basis of his birth or his karma. His caste is supposed to be a fruit of his sins of his past birth. This is a clever ploy used by high-caste Hindus to suppress untouchables from any possible revolt. Bakha's dream to be a gentleman is shattered by caste - Hindus. His identity is :

"I am untouchable !.... an untouchable,
posh, posh, sweeper coming !" ¹⁵

Bakha's consciousness, his acceptance of his identity is the climax of his inner conflict. Wherever Bakha goes, he is greeted with such words as 'defiled' and 'polluted'. Bakha is a passive sufferer because he has no strength to protest against the evil customs of society. Bakha's passiveness in the novel is a burden of tradition. Whenever he is insulted he feels like hitting back. But he restrains himself and he contemplates his position, and understands why he is abused and humiliated, because he is a sweeper, an untouchable. Bakha is representative of the untouchables in his sufferings. The anguish of all untouchables finds an expression in his pathetic remark, 'what have I done to deserve all this ?' ¹⁶

Bakha knows that his individual protest is not useful here. The identity crisis which Bakha faces can be solved through the spiritual as well as materialistic means. Anand explores the possibilities of inter-personal relations between untouchables and high caste Hindus in existential

terms. So Bakha is attracted towards the poet's idea of the introduction of flush system to end untouchability rather than the talks of the colonel or the Mahatma.

E.M.Forster in his preface says, 'Untouchable is a remarkable novel due to directness of his attack.'¹⁷ Bakha's day and the series of incidents prove this. The traders as well as Vaishya in the hierarchy of caste system are 'high' and they throw things towards outcastes or low caste people because they know that they dare not protest. Orthodox Hindus worship a bull, but will not touch a human being. Hindu temples are closed to those who keep its grounds clean. Saros Cowasjee comments :

"Bakha is a child of modern India, but ill-treated and insulted by age-old tradition. The Hindus who pride themselves on their cleanliness spit in the stream and pollute the water. Bakha a sweeper, cleans their dirt but he himself is treated like dirt."¹⁸

Pandit Kali Nath is the temple priest, who belongs to Brahmin caste and symbolizes the hypocrisy of the high caste Hindus and their attitudes towards the untouchables. The consciousness of Bakha is totally opposite to the fatalistic approach of his father, Lakha. Lakha's reaction to the Pandit's attempt to molest Sohini is as follows :

"...we can't do anything. They are our superiors. One word is sufficient against

all that we might say before the police. They are our masters. We must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind."¹⁹

Colonel Hutchinson is a Christian and the chief of the Salvation Army - a missionary organization. He tries to win over converts to Christianity. He visits the outcastes colony and talks to the untouchables of God of Christ. But he fails in his attempt to influence Bakha and convert him to Christianity. In the image of the Colonel, Anand a juxtaposition of Hinduism which ill-treats the outcastes and christianity - which believes in equality among all Christians. That the tremendous weight of traditional habits weights on the heads of the untouchables too heavily to undertake any change at that stage.

Two women characters are important in the novel. Gulabo, the washerwomen, the mother of Ram Charan, who thinks herself to be superior and who claims a higher place among the low castes, and who looks down upon Sohini who belongs to the lowest among the sub-castes. This is termed by P.Paul 'untouchability within untouchability'.²⁰ Sohini as an untouchable cannot draw water from the well of the caste Hindus. Besides cleaning the latrines of the high caste Hindus, she has to look after the house-hold duties. She is abused by not only outcastes but by her father also. Her role in the novel brings out the fact that among the untouchables there are higher castes and lower castes.

Untouchable is a realistic description of the miseries of the untouchables. Riemenscheider comments that, 'Bakha is only a passive listener and does not understand most of the points raised.'²¹ But Bakha's calmness and his consciousness are a natural developments from the beginning. E.M.Forster writes about the end of the novel :

'...Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now of the Mahatma, now of the machine. His Indian day is over and the next day will be like it, but on the surface of the earth if not in the depth of the sky, a change is at hand.'²²

As C.D.Narasimhaiah remarks :

"In the novel, Untouchable, doctrines and dogmas are assimilated into a total sensibility which shapes Anand's imagination and gives life to an epoch and its hopes, and aspirations, and its curses."²³

The Untouchable is essentially a novel of caste conflict which was everyday reality - in the Indian context. Bakha's confrontation with high caste Hindus provides the central issue of the novel. Bakha is treated as an Untouchable in the literal sense of the term inspite of the fact that Bakha has excellent qualities as a human being. But his very humanity is insulted and trampled. Untouchable can be said to be the first 'Dalit' novel in Indo-Anglian fiction and Anand deserves due credit for attempting something impossible

in literary terms. The anguish and suffering of Bakha cannot be explained with reference to any class conflict in the Marxist sense. It is purely and simply a scathing statement of the caste ridden Hindu society which blinds its adherents to humanitarian values.

III

COOLIE (1936)

Coolie is a great epic of human misery. Munoo, the hero of this novel is an orphan and poor hill-boy. He is caste away by his aunt and uncle who have no love for thim. He works as a domestic servant in the house of a middle class Babu at Sham Nagar. He imagines that he will live in peace and comfort but his dream is shattered by his masters. Then he is employed in a pickle factory in another town. Then he goes to Bombay where he gets work in a cotton mill. But before he can settle down he finds that the friction between the mill owners and the workers has assumed alarming proportions and the mill is declared to go on short time. The consequent agitation and turmoil somehow spark off Hindu Muslim riots from which he barely escapes. Later, he is knocked down by the car of an Anglo-Indian woman. Now he moves from place to place with her, works as her page-cum-rikshawala, and eventually dies of consumption.

Munoo, the central character, belongs to a low class, not to a low caste. Munoo realises that it is his poverty,

not caste which is the root of his dirtress. He explains his status in the world in these words :

"I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Varma, a Brahmin is a servant boy, a menial because he is poor. No, caste does not matter."²⁴

In this context Rama Jha comments : 'Coolie presents a strong criticism of the machine civilization.'²⁵

V.S.Pritchett praises the form and the protagonist, as he says, '...a picaresque novel and the emergence of an new type of hero.'²⁶

Coolie is Anand's yet another attempt to diagnose the root cause of evil that exists in human society. In Untouchable, he found on specific cause of human misery. It was caste. But in the Indian context there are other evils which aggravate human condition in general. Anand obviously is thinking in terms of class-conflict which is the basis of Marxist philosophy. It is the relationship between the master and the servant, the employer and the employee. And the capitalistic system which exploits the weaker and the poorer sections of society irrespective of caste. This is typically an urban phenomenon.

Munoo's suffering, his life of drudgery from morning to night in the villag and in the city is monotonous. Munoo has a desire to make himself somebody. He tries to adjust himself to every one of his situations, but he fails. His failure is due to the cruelty and evil in other men : the

greed, selfishness and mercilessness of his fellow human beings.

In the village he is continually beaten by his aunt. In Sham Nagar many times he is kicked and beaten by his masters. His masters and upper class people always remind him of his position and status in the society. Nathoo Ram daughter Sheila pushes Munoo away. She warns him, 'You are a servant, you must not play with us.' (p.46)

In one situation Munoo bites Sheila on her cheek. It is only the child's innocence. But Nathoo Ram and his wife judge the act in their way and abuse him '...You ought to be handed to the police. ...Had you no shame ! No respect ! ...Didn't I ask you to leave my children alone and not to play with them ! What is your status that you should mix with the children of your superiors ?'²⁷

So Munoo is unable to bear life in the Babu's household, he escapes from his master's house. There are two classes, the rich and the poor, which are brought into conflict with one another in the novel. One class is represented by Munoo, his uncle and aunt, the factory workers. The other class which is stronger because it is powerful, is represented by the Babu, factory owner, mill-managers etc. The conflict really is systemic and the human beings who are involved in the conflict are alienated.

Coolie presents the picture of the labourers and employers. Munoo, we see, accepts everything objectively and

without a protest. He understands why the rich are superior.

He exclaims :

"...The babus are like the sahib-logs, and all servants look alike : there must only be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor."²⁸

His urge is 'I want to live, I want to work'. Munoo by birth is not forced to do any particular work. He has freedom to go anywhere and choose his own work. His place in the new class system is based on the cash nexus. So he works in a pickle factory in Daulatpur and then as a coolie. He says, 'I wish I were a coolie still and not in business.'²⁹ Anand describes the misery and horrible conditions of coolies in these words :

"The smell of stagnant drains, rotten grains, fresh cow-dung and urine, the foul savour of human and animal breath and the pungent fumes of smouldering fuel cakes, along with the sight of sprawling naked bodies, glistening with sweat, or sheeted like ghosts, in a vain attempt to escape the flies and mosquitoes, brought the bile of sickness to Munoo's mouth."³⁰

In the village the town and the city, the life and hardships of the poor remain the same. The workers' conditions in the pickle factory and in the Sir George White cotton mills are more gruelling. As C.D.Narsimhaiah comments :

"The wisdom of an old living culture which has sustained our peasantry through centuries of misery and manifesting itself how in an uprooted peasant in search of a factory job. Death has ceased to frighten to poor ... they are past all fright, it is life that is a threat, and death is a release."³¹

Hari is another coolie. Kind hearted Hari and his family help Munoo to find a spot where they could rest for the night. Ratan, the wrestler coolie is also a kind hearted man. Saros Cowasjee says that "the world of the poor remains basically one of comradeship drudgery of city life."³² For instance, when Hari's hut is washed away by the rains, Ratan invites the whole family over to his place and arranges shelter for them. He protects Hari and the other coolies from the Foreman and the Pathan guards. Prabha, a partner in the pickle factory and his wife give parental love. Munoo asks himself :

"Why are some men so good and other bad-some like, Prabha and the elephant driver, others like Ganpat and the policeman who beat me at the railway station ?"³³

The relationship of Prabha and Munoo is as between equals, because they are poor and there are none more equal than the poor. Philip Henderson observes that :

Coolie takes us into a world in which comradeship of man for man exists only among the poorest people."³⁴

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In the larger cities like Bombay the life of the poor is more ruthless. Jimmie Thomas, the head of the cotton mills treats the factory workers as if they were animals. He kicks, beats and abuses them at will. He is an intermediary between the employer and the workers. He charges every worker in the worker in the factory a price for the gift of a job. He is a money-lender and owns hundres of huts which he rents out to the workers. Mr. Little, the manager of the Mills is a nervous minded and whimsical man. He orders a Parsee boy to take a fly killer to kill files. Sir Todar Mal is a sycophant of the English who takes great pride in being seen in the company of Englishmen.

Munoo's tragedy is an indictment of the evils of capitalism which destroys Munoo and his like. It is a ruthless exploitation of the weak at the hands of rich people. Munoo realizes finally his position in the world. He is a slave, a servant who should do the work, all the odd jobs. Munoo's position is a result of capitalistic society. His journey from village to city is symbolic of the peasantry migrating to the cities for work. Munoo accepts everything without a protest. He does not really know why the rich are superior. This unquestioning nature is the direct result of his feeling of inferiority bred by his belief in Karma. All coolies believe in Karma and express their fatalistic view. Anand gives the description of coolies who show their helplessness in life. Anand describes the plight of the workers as follows :

"They (the workmen) were broken, dispirited... they mumbled a conventional phrase, in a meek and holy manner: 'Never mind brother this is the will of God' or 'It is sad but in this world the wicked seem to flourish and the good always suffer.' The misery of their lives had robbed them of all energy, till their souls seemed to have disappeared and only a bare suggestion of the memory of pain hung round their faces, like helplessness about the limbs of a sick man, tenderness about the face of a child, and weakness about the eyes of a dumb animals"³⁵

Munoo is a passive sufferer. He faces life with a calm confidence. Throughout the novel he attempts to grow into a respectable man. The Hindu Muslim communal riots at the meetings of the trade union leaders is another conflict in the novel. These meetings are disturbed by the rumours that some Hindu children have been kidnapped by pathans. Several are killed, many are wounded in the furious riot, and the rest flee for life. Anand points out how men are made the victims of communal jealousy and religious fury.

The communal conflict is an extension of caste conflict. In this manner both caste, conflict or communal conflict and class conflict are inter-related. In the Indian situation this is peculiarly an Indian phenomenon, where the conflicts originate both in traditional orthodox of castes as

well as the systemic capitalistic situation obtaining in the urban society. The complications are obvious enough. Anand does not seem to deal with both these conflicts in this novel in a headlong manner, but touches upon it rather superficially.

Anand emphasizes that the British Government not only exploited the Indian people, but destroyed those Indians who were in its service. They are tools of exploitation of their English masters. Nathoo Ram, Daya Ram, Todar Mal have been dehumanized and lost all fellowfeelings in the service of the English, and the police is always a symbol of British oppression. The police is a ready tool in the hands of the capitalists. When Prabha goes bankrupt and is besieged by his creditors, the police are summoned. They beat mercilessly. Prabha his wife, Munoo, Tulsi, Bonga are all the helpless and powerless because they are poor. As Saros Cowasjee says:

"...the evil in his novel is the direct result of capitalistic exploitation and the indifferences of the British Government towards the lives of millions of its subjects."³⁶

The British never agree to accept the Indians on terms of equality. Coolie is a novel which is an attempt to read beyond caste system and explore the economic implications of the situation. As a result, Anand explores the connection between class and imperialism on the one hand, and on the other he suggests a complicated motif of caste/ communal

conflict interrelated to imperialism and capitalism. His preoccupation with class/caste systems and poverty and misery is unmistakable.

IV

TWO LEAVES AND A BUD (1937)

It is Anand's third novel. The central theme of the novel is the exploitation of poor labourers at the hands of British planters on a tea-estate in Assam.

Manoo of Coolie and Gangu of Two Leaves and a Bud are Kshatriyas by birth. But both belong to the wealthless class. Gangu is a middle-aged farmer working on his field in a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab. But he is lured by the false promises of a tout, leaves his native village, and goes with his wife Sajani and his children Laila and Budha to work on the tea estate in Assam. Soon he discovers that the promises made to him were all false, that the world on a tea plantation is like a prison home. Soon malaria breaks out, and Sajani dies. After getting over the shock of his wife's death, Gangu goes to Mr. Croft-Cooke, the Chief planter, with a request for a loan so that he can conduct the last rites. But Croft-Cooke, a man afraid of malaria and cholera, is terribly angry that the coolie who is kept under segregation and spread of infection should approach him for a loan. He dismisses him and kicks him out of his bungalow. In the course of time, Gangu is given a patch of land

discarded by all as useless, for it is believed to be the place where a coolie had committed suicide and so nothing grows there. But Gangu loves the land very much.

The calm atmosphere of the estate is disturbed a few days later. Discontent is aggravated by the brutal behaviour of Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager. Gangu finds himself involved in the strife. Coolies are mercilessly beaten up by Reggie Hunt's men. The mob proceeds to Dr. Harve's house as he sympathizes generally with the workers' caste. He decides to lead them to Mr. Croft-Cooke, the manager of the estate and ask for justice. But he is obstructed in the way by Croft-Cooke and his company and immediately dismissed from service. Peace returns, a few days later. Reggie Hunt is attracted by the loveliness of Laila, Gangu's daughter. He shoots Gangu as he appears on the scene. A trial follows in which the killer is declared 'not guilty'. As K.N. Sinha writes :

"...the novel dramatizes moral issues.. through counterpointing of good and evil and through a conscious manipulation of characters and incidents."³⁷

K.R.S. Iyer also calls ⁹ Two Leaves and a Bud 'a dramatic novel.'³⁸ But Two Leaves and a Bud is yet another novel by Anand to probe the situation of poverty from the angle of the underdog. Like in Coolie this novel too explores the theme of poverty on another level - that is of plantation. In Coolie it was urban background whereas Two Leaves and a Bud has a semi-

industrial background. Here the problem is the same, poverty; and the emphasis on the caste is the least. There is another theme introduced by Anand and that is the abject position of women. For example Reggie Hunt power seduces Gangu's daughter. When the people tremble for fear of being swept away by cholera, he beats them up for making a big issue of what he calls 'nothing'. The antagonistic relationship between the British masters and Indian labourer is exposed by Anand through the British characters of Hitchcock, Ralph, Macara, Croft-Cooke and Reggie Hunt. Croft-Cooke is the estate manager. He also represents the British imperial power. But he does nothing to improve the conditions of coolies. But the British planters and their families have not harmonious relations with the natives. As Anand explains 'The British had never done anything for anybody without seeing to what they could get out of it.'³⁹

Dr.Havre is a sincere and has genuine sympathy for the exploited workers. He says, 'there is nothing more horrible in this universe than the cruelty of man to man.'⁴⁰ Havre stands for good and is against the evil power of capitalism.

Thus the exploitation by British capitalists and the hardships and miseries of the coolies is a major theme of the novel. The great inequalities between two classes of people - the rich and the poor - is a direct result of capitalism. As Premila Paul comments :

"The Indian Society seems particularly prone to class division because of its being conditioned by values inherited from its colonial past and those ushered in by forces such as scientific materialism and commercialism."⁴¹

In the class dominated society 'money' is everything and the measures of the status of an individual in society is 'wealth'. For instance, Buta, a barber by birth, belongs to low caste but he ranks high because he is a sardar in position, and Gangu is Kshatriya by birth but belongs to working class. Anand exposes 'the capitalist domination which cuts across caste.'⁴²

The domination of caste and class nexus in capitalism is well-expressed through the realization of Gangu and Narain, both are coolies on the tea-estate. 'Money is everything... It is the crux of the world... It is the root of happiness...'⁴³

The British ruling class plays its role in the capitalist exploitation and the native Indians are proletarians. Gangu is one of them. Gangu and his family due to their starvation and drought arrive in Assam but they become slaves for their English masters who beat, abuse and kick them without reason. He is lured by the false promises of Buta, a Coolie-catcher and experiences endless humiliations and dies at the hands of his cruel master. Gangu is also a passive character as Anand's earlier heroes - Munoo and Bakha are Gangu's fatalistic approach and strong belief in

God is expressed as follows :

"I have always said it and I say it now again that, though the earth is bought and sold and confiscated, God never means that to happen, for He does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and the others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men, and yet many die of hunger, and most live under a heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if the earth were made for a few and not for all men !" ⁴⁴

Anand refers to fatalism in all his novels as well. He also emphasizes the philosophy of fatalism, the backwardness of the poor and the downtrodden. Fatalism is a philosophy of those people who believe in the status-quo and who refuse to change. Anand believes in 'historical dialectis' which believes in change, with his novel. Anand, attempts to highlight further the rural Indian situation complicated by the fatalistic thinking of Indian peasantry.

Gangu, a typical Indian peasant shows his traditional view when he is dismissed by Croft-Cooke's chaparasi as he is deeply chagrined. But he feels that it is a reward for the misdeeds of his past life. Even the death of his wife is in his view a blow struck by God. As ^{K.N.} ~~S.K.~~ Sinha points out :

"Gangu and his family suffer because God has ordained that they should. They are mere scapegoats sacrificed at the altar of narrow racial and class prejudices !" ⁴⁵

Dr.Havre wonders :

"....people don't need Marx to realize. The black coolies clear the forests, plant the fields, toil and garner the harvest, while all the money-grubbing, slave-driving, soulless managers and directors draw their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies. Therein lies the necessity of revolution in this country...."⁴⁶

This emphasizes Anand's protest against capitalism as well as colonial exploitation. The exploitation of women on the tea-estate by the capitalist men is a common thing. Narian, a coolie, informs Gangu in the beginning about the insecurity of women in the plantations. Women too have to work under the hot sun. Some women leave their babies in their baskets. The children are lying in the dust, or in a drain, or sometimes by the wayside. A pregnant woman is forced to work and the birth of a child means one more mouth to feed. But the coolies do not care for it because it also means 'more hands to earn for the family.' Reggie Hunt always uses woman-coolies for his lust but his coarseness is obvious in his remarks :

"Dirty cheats, the whole bag of them. And not only here, too, the deceitful bitches. They try the same game in bed, leaving you high and dry at the critical moment !"⁴⁷

Gangu's daughter, Laila is a victim at the hands of the callous brutality of Reggie Hunt. Ranchi and Neogi are two Coolies are tortured to present their wives before Reggie. Other women are under the pressure of their husbands and always blindly follow them. They have no deep friendly relationship among themselves.

Two Leaves and a Bud is a novel capitalist (and colonial) exploitation in a different setting than in Coolie. It is tea-plantation. Here, along with the class-conflict, Anand stresses the exploitation of women. The low status of women is yet another cause of evil that exists in society. Women, especially poor women, as a class suffer at the hands of man. In the first place, they are treated as beasts of labour, and secondly, they are used as victims of the passions of men. Anand is a champion not only of the low castes and the depressed class, but an advocate of women's freedom. In this sense, Anand upholds the dignity of not only the downtrodden but women as a class also. His treatment of castes, classes and women and his championship of their cause is the hallmark of his contribution to the Indo-Anglian fiction.

V

THE VILLAGE (1939)

The Village is a first book in the series of novels called Lala Trilogy. Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) are second and third in the sequel.

The Village is Anand's beautiful work on the Punjabi peasant life. As S. Menon Marath calls, 'The finest and the most balanced of Anand's works.'⁴⁸

Anand deals with the peasant problem and tries to illustrate the reasons for their miserable condition in the pre-war time. Along with the colonial exploitation, the protagonist, Lal Singh stands against the orthodoxy of traditionalism. Anand believes that the society and individual are closely connected with each other. A.V. Krishna Rao rightly points out :

"According to Anand human behaviour is determined by its social environment and society, not character is the destiny of man."⁴⁹

The Village is a beautiful example of the conflict between an individual and society. The village Nandpur is a typical Indian village and the villagers are orthodox traditional Hindus. The British reviewer of Life and Letter To-day described the book as 'a water-colour of Sikh peasant life.'⁵⁰ Another critic James Henley refers to its 'beautiful simplicity.'⁵¹

The protagonist Lal Singh is known as Lalu. He is the youngest of the six children of Nihal Singh a proud farmer in the village of Nandpur in Punjab. Lalu is rebellious by nature. He had some education in a mission school. He reacts to the injustices, evils and superstitions of the villagers.

The village is strangled by a corrupt landlord system and a disastorously deep seated faith in Karma. Nihal Singh's family is one such family. They represent the peasant society whose foundations totter under the conventional past. They are caught between two sets of values - traditional or feudal old values and modern, capitalist values. They are unable to understand the dynamics of the process of transition. Lalu observes his family ruined by the money-lenders and the landlord because of his father's religious beliefs in God and Karma. Lalu's progressive views brings him into trouble. He is disgraced because he has his hair cut and he eats in a Muslim shop. His mild fliration with Maya, the landlord's daughter angers her father. The landlord brings a charge of theft against him. His face is blackened and he is made to ride a donkey. Unable to bear this disgrace, he runs away from his home and joins the army.

After five months he is called back home. But his family is on the way of destruction. He finds his father seriously ill. His brother Sharma Singh has been hanged for murdering the landlord's son and the family is more in debt than ever before. But World War-I has started and Lal Singh sails with his regiment across the Black Waters. Meantime he gets the news of his father's death.

Lal Singh's father Nihal Singh represents all the characteristics of village peasants. He is proud militant person and head of the family. Lalu's mother Gujri is

affectionate, superstitious and wholly devoted to the welfare of her family. Dayal Singh and Sharm Singh are other members of his family.

The exploiters and landlords, Sardar Bahadur Hurbans Singh and his son Hardit Singh belong to a landlord family. Mahant Nadgir is a priest. Chaman Lal in the village is a money lender. Balmukund is a lawyer - The trio - squeeze the village peasantry. The peasants go to the money lender to borrow money to celebrate the wedding or other religious rituals. The bad harvest renders them unable to pay rent to the landlords. So they again go to borrow money from the landlords. The cycle of debt increases year by year for the peasant. Malcom Darling comments on the landlord and money-lenders as :

"Nowhere has money-lending been brought to a finer and more diabolical art than in India."⁵²

Nandput village is no exception to it. The debts multiply the land is mortgaged to pay the rent. The poor harvest is due to the primitive methods of farming and uncertain monsoons. They hardly pay the interests and the lawyer enters in peasant's life, the result is the farmer is evicted. Anand has told in The Village this tragic story of Indian peasants. Lalu, the protagonist sees the powerful oppression of the landlord culture. Nihal Singh's heart-reading prayer to the Sahukar for a loan for the wedding ceremony of Sharm Singh echoes the anxieties of the ordinary peasant :

'This marriage must be celebrated, because we have the prestige of the family to keep up... So be kind and help us."⁵³

The money-lender Chaman Lal, lends money to the poor peasants. The small peasants do not have their own lands. They are tenants and work on the land of the landlords. The landlords in the village and the factory owners in the cities give the same treatment to the labourers. Lalu's uncle Harnam Singh laments :

"...I am ruined, I had to mortgage the whole of my land to Chaman Lal. But I am not the only one, almost the whole village is ruined."⁵⁴

But the peasants know only to suppress their resentment and despair. They can only be silent sufferers. Mahant, the priest justifies social inequality in the name of religion of God. His argument is :

"God has given a place to everyone in this world... This is the true religion that you should not envy your superiors, for if you did so, there would be no order in the world."⁵⁵

This is the impact and pressure of religion on the peasants. In Coolie Anand has given the dirty picture of city life. In The Village he describes the rubbish heaps, stinking sewers, crumbling mudhouses and narrow streets. The poverty of the peasants due to the falling prices of crops,

the debts of the money-lenders, the torture of the landlords and the faith in religious ideas make their life more pitiable. Lalu's consciousness does not accept everything blindly. He opposes the conservative, unquestioning submission of the peasants. He knows the villagers are all cynical and fatalistic that it is impossible to change them. Lalu's first rebellious action against the social order is getting his ritualistic hair cut and his eating at a Muslim shop, at the village fair. The villagers blacken Lalu's face for his sin and shout him out of the village. As G.S. Balaram Gupta comments:

"Fanaticism has made them so hard-hearted that they cannot brook my violation of their religious principles."⁵⁶

So Lal Singh runs away from his village. Anand introduces many instances of the orthodoxy of the Sikhs. Lal Singh's mother, Gujri throws out the Maulvi's slippers into the courtyard with a stick. She regrets that the Maulvi goes through the kitchen. Anand's attack on communalism is common in his novels. What the reviewer of Santhport Guardian says about the novel is quite apt :

"The most successful interpreters of Indian life, Kipling, E.M. Forster, Edward Thompson have inevitably presented a European interpretation. In The Village, a gifted writer writes about his own people."⁵⁷

Thus The Village is not a propagandist novel or only a pastoral novel. Anand effectively gives the details of village life and their acceptance of the social order with the religious attitude.

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