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CHAPTER - III

LATER NOVELS

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C H A P T E R - III

LATER NOVELS

I

THE BIG HEART (1945)

The Big Heart was published in 1945 and written during the period of World War II. Many issues are interwoven in the novel. The division of society through caste and class is fully realized by Anand. As K.R.S. Iyengar comments on the novel : 'Once again Anand triumphs because he, writes of things he knows...'<sup>1</sup> As Anand is by birth a coppersmith he knows the conflict between castes and sub-castes very well. His firsthand knowledge of such conflict stands him in good stead in his novel also. Apart from caste conflict, Anand shows the evils of industrialization, as it is a 'Picture of India ten years ahead.'<sup>2</sup> Saros Cowarjee rightly comments on the novel : 'The conflict in The Big Heart is between the forces of tradition and modernity.'<sup>3</sup>

The novel presents a strong criticism of the industrial civilization. K.N. Singh<sup>h</sup> as pointed out : 'Anand attains a close relation to the immediate problems of Indians.'<sup>4</sup> Anand's stay in England for long time in a Casteless Society makes aware of the evils of caste system back home. At the same time, his experiences in a class-organized society make him conscious of its <sup>effect</sup> ~~import~~ on traditional Hindu Society. The Big Heart is a creation of this consciousness. He calls the novel as a 'drama of machine wrecking'.<sup>5</sup>

To begin with the story exposes the conflict between sub-castes, Thathiar and Kasera are sub-castes in the community of the coppersmiths. Ananta, the protagonist is a coppersmith, who belongs to the Thathiar and returns to his home in the Billimaran Kucha of Amritsar after having worked in factories in Bombay and Ahmedabad. He brings his beloved Janki, a young widow, with him. In this town, Lalla Murli Dhar and Seth Gokul Chand have established a factory which manufactures war tools. It has created a peculiar unrest. Many thathiars have been rendered jobless because of the introduction of the machine. Ananta tries to gather all the jobless coppersmiths into a union so that they can demand their jobs and justice from the factory owners, the capitalists.

Ananta believes in non-violent activity. Satyapal, a young student leader and Mahasha Hans Raj, an anti-machine Arya Samajist provoke the coppersmiths to use violent methods. Ralia is one of the unemployed who joins Satypal and his company in breaking open the the factory gates. Ananta tries to stop his violent action of breaking machinery. Ralia batters Ananta's head against a broken machine and kills him. Thus the effects of industrialization on the traditional values of Indian communities create a state of crisis.

The class and caste conflicts are finely interrelated to each other in the novel. Anand exposes the inter-

personal relations among the high castes. Kaseras and Thathiars are sub-castes of the Kshatriya coppersmith community. Kaseras suppose themselves superior to the Thathiars; and they would be polluted by contact with the sub-caste. They believe in a legend :

"To Ram was given an arrow, to Sita bow, and from them the truly noble order of Kshatriya Kaseras is descended !" <sup>6</sup>

This deep rooted caste-consciousness is revealed by Anand. As Saros Cowasjee points out :

"Untouchable dealt primarily with the caste problem and Coolie with the class problem. The Big Heart touches on both these problems, showing how, they react on each other !" <sup>7</sup>

The Thathiars never want to revolt against their caste-exploitation. The cruelty of the Kaseras is unnecessary. The thathiars endlessly suffer at the hands of the rich Kaseras. Ananta is conscious of it, as he says :

"...we suffer from the day we are born till the day we die, but this cruelty is unnecessary. A little reason could settle this difficulty between the Kaseras and us." <sup>8</sup>

He is a representative of the Thathiars. Because of the use of machinery by the Kaseras many Thathiars have been thrown out of work. Ananta also wanted to ply his hereditary trade i.e. making utensils. Other thathiars also

fail to get piece-work due to the machinery. Their plight is well expressed in Ananta's speech : 'We thathiars live in a small world, full of denial and resusal, insults and humiliations, we have begun to feel doomed'.<sup>9</sup>

This tragic condition, starvation for the poor copper-smiths and their frustration brings them into direct conflict with their masters, the capitalists. In the villages high caste Hindu people address the low caste people not by their names but by their caste names. As V.K.Rajwade, the renowned historian points out : 'In Hindu Society people are included in the caste. Individual and isolated person has no identity in our Society. The individual can be recognized by his caste and each caste has its own occupation'.<sup>10</sup> Anand has described the two groups of these two sub-castes in the following words :

'...the beautiful copper, brass, silver and bronze utensils made in the lane are sold by dealers called Kaseras... In the new Iron Mongers' bazar... there are the screws and bolts and nails and locks are sold by thathiars...'<sup>11</sup>

The ~~th~~ thathiars are lower because they work with their hands. As Anand points out :

"...the thathiars are craftsmen, doing dirty, grimy, ill-paid work with their hands, had come to acquire a low professional status in Hindu society."<sup>12</sup>

The traditional moral values are strict in the villages. Ananta, the protagonist is considered to be a 'drunkard' and 'a whore-monger' because they reject Anand's relations with Janki without marriage. And Raila, a worker and Ananta's friend who beats and starves his wife is more acceptable to the thathiar than Ananta. Gokul Chand, a Kaseria is blamed for his visit to Murli Dhar's house, because Murli Dhar is a thathiar, and the elders like Seth Gansham Das, Manek Chand who are Kaseras do not like Gokul Chand's communication with Murli which they consider to be against their Dharma. Of all these Kaserian characters, Gokul Chand is liberal minded. As he says to Seth Gansham Das :

"We sit together with people of high caste and low caste in the trains. We draw water from the pump which is supplied from a tank controlled by a Mussalman Engineer."<sup>13</sup>

Gokul Chand is a Kaseria and the Chaudhari of utensil seller's community. Lala Murli Dhar is a thathiar and the leadman of the coppersmith brotherhood. They establish a factory manufacturing war tools. Their relations are based on cash nexus. They are partners but their friendship seems to be stained because of caste differences. The class and caste system co-exist in India. Anand has tried to project the interaction of the two evils - class and caste in The Big Heart. As M.K.Naik points out : In Billimaran ...the worst in old tradition joins hand with the worst in modern capitalism in an unholy alliance of forces of exploitation.<sup>14</sup>

The Kaseras and the Thathiars are involved in the establishment of a new factory which represents the conflict between the tradition and modernity. Ananta's belief in the revolution is ended by his death. It is significant that he is let down by his own men.

Ananta is a mature and rational protagonist. Anand's view is nearer to Nehru's rather than Marxist or Gandhian vision. He accepts the idea progress through industrialization. At the same time he is aware of the cultural and economic strains involved in the process. Owen Lynch, a communist thinker argues :

"Untouchability, caste, superstition and oppression of women will all vanish the moment the society gets industrialized and the exploited become economically strong."<sup>15</sup>

But in the Gandhian context of castes and cultural traditions, industrialization, is not the only solution. However Ananta's death is not his failure. He becomes a martyr who died for his brotherhood. The poet Puran Singh Bhagat, a young leader, and Janki, Ananta's sweetheart will carry his message of fraternity and humanity. As Margaret Berry writes :

"In no other novel has Anand so attempted to organize a whole social, economic and political picture."<sup>16</sup>

It is possible that Anand is a coppersmith by birth so he is able to give an effective picture of the sub-castes and their conflict in the novel. The Big Heart is a serious attempt to depict a society with its complex problems. The problems are not to be explained simply in terms of either caste or class. But both the caste values and class values project a different predicament for the protagonist. In this sense Anand transforms his earlier pre-occupation with mere caste or mere class and attempts a more complex and complicated situation in the changing industrialized situation.

## II

### THE OLD WOMEN AND THE COW (1960)

This first publication of the novel was under this title in 1960, but the second publication of this novel is titled Gauri (1976).

This novel is the only one in which Ananda has chosen a woman as a central character. Woman has a secondary status in the male-dominated human society. Karl Menninger says that, 'Man's cruelty towards man is exceeded only by man's cruelty to woman'.<sup>17</sup> Woman is a pleasure-giving and child-bearing machine in the Indian society. Woman is downtrodden and a pitiable prey of sexual exploitation by man. Her domestic duties - cleaning, washing, cooking and cleaning again in a monotonous routine. She has the status of a slave

as Anand says, "...bond and fecund for the service of the hearth..."<sup>18</sup> The story of the novel has a mythological parallel in Sita's life from the Ramayana. The novel is inspired by the story of Sita in the Ramayana banished by Rama because she had spent sometime in Ravana's empire and people had doubled her purity. Gauri's story is a modern myth as Anand has pointed out :

"the novel aims at heightened communication of the most intense vision of life through a new myth."<sup>19</sup>

Anand's women characters are like his male characters, oppressed and passive. They have strong belief in Karma and fatalism. Gandhi the central character of The Old Woman and the Cow is no exception to this. The Old Woman and the Cow is a story of Gauri, a meek and gentle 'like a cow'. She is married to Panchi, an orphan whose land is mortgaged. She arrives at her husband's home in Chota Piplan and settles down to a life of misery and pain. There is a drought and famine, but Gauri is blamed for it and considered as an inauspicious bride. Her loyalty to her husband is questioned by her mother-in-law Kesaro. When Panchi learns that Gauri is with child, he beats her and throws her out of the house. She returns to her village of Piplan Kalan, but sold by her mother, Laxmi and her uncle, Amru to Seth Jai Ram Das, a banker in Hoshiarpur for the sake of money.

In Hoshiarpur, Gauri with the help of the banker finds shelter in nursing home. Colonel Mahindra, a doctor helps her. But the Colonel's partner, Dr. Ratan Chandra Batra, tries to seduce her. Meanwhile, Panchi regrets his actions and goes to Piplan Kalan to fetch his wife. While looking for Gauri, he is attacked by her uncle Amru's cronies and he returns to his village with a broken head. Gauri is restored to her husband with the help of her repentant mother and Dr. Mahindra. But the villagers refuse to accept her child because the child is not her husband's. Panchi demands proof from her of her purity. 'I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me', she says and leaves her husband's house to begin a new life.

Gauri's life is a story of woe and suffering. Kesaro refuses to accept her as a member of the family and appears as a traditional mother-in-law. Panchi fails to understand Gauri's gentle nature, because he is essentially a crude peasant, a hard labourer. Panchi's attitude towards his bride is expressed in the following words . . .there was the prospectus of the prize of a girl - a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day...<sup>20</sup>

Gauri's gentle nature as a cow has changed later on. She becomes a self-willed woman. But Panchi suspects her chastity and hits her and orders her to leave his house. Gauri's leaving her husband's house at the beginning and at the end of the novel are two different actions. She is conscious of her rights and not a dumb cow, she is able to take her own decisions.

Jack Lindsay rightly comments :

"Here the key pattern lies in the tale from the Ramayana... The blind circle is ended in the novel. The woman who is banished becomes the woman who herself rejects the narrow world of subjections and fears that enslave Panchi despite his better self."<sup>21</sup>

Gauri's rejection of Panchi's cowardice makes her memorable female character. Her love for Panchi makes her sad but she does not flinch from taking a decision because as K.N.Sinha points out : 'Gauri is the modern version of Sita, not the self-effacing, goddess of The Ramayana.'<sup>22</sup>

The caste and class conflict in the novel is not as dominant as in Anand's earlier novels. The Old Woman and a Cow is novel of women's emancipation. Her caste or class is not the only oppressor but her own relatives make her life unbearable. The relationship between mother in law and daughter-in-law is a curse of Indian domestic life. Even Gauri's mother helps Amru to sell her own daughter for the greed of money.

Gauri is abused by her mother in-law as an inauspicious character like a sweeper who belongs to the lower caste. On the other hand Panchi supposes himself a Rajput peasant and superior to Gauri's caste.

Panchi's attitudes are traditional. He hopes at the marriage ceremony that Gauri will be 'obedient', good and gentle as cow'. Because obedience is the most essential

quality of a wife. Gauri's obedience and devotion to him is not traditional, her struggle is more fundamental. Kesaro and Panchi force her to leave her home. Kesaro stands for the proverbial mother-in-law and the exploitation of a woman at another woman's hands. When the conventional society demands the proof of her purity, she realizes that she cannot change the society or Panchi. So she stands for her own protection, saying boldly to Panchi; '...if you strike me again, I will hit you back...'<sup>23</sup>

Anand depicts a village society including various castes. Bulaki is a barber and his son Jagatu, Nanak, the sweeper boy. These are lower caste people. On the one hand Chaudhari Subedar Achru Ram, the headman of the village and his son, Rajguru belong to a wealthy class as well as high caste (Rajput Baniyas, Hindus. But Panchi is helped by Rafique Chaha a Muslim. But the Hindus do not accept their friendship and intimacy. they talk against his as, '...eating and drinking with the Muhammadans and other low caste scoundrels...'<sup>24</sup> His partnership with the potter - Rafique Chaha is thus broken. And Gauri's opinion is, 'The Mussalmans make better friends than our Hindus.'

The suffering of women is as horrible as untouchability or caste distinctions/differences. Panchi thinks he can beat and kick his wife because he is her lord and master., Kesaro torments her without sense; and her mother and uncle heartlessly sell her to a sixty year old money lender. All these villagers are peasants, they have strong belief in God,

Karma and superstition. Kesaro believes that all misfortunes (droughts, famines) are ultimately traceable to the wrong stars of Gauri. Gauri as a woman is treated like a docile cow. Ricmenrchneider comments the comparison of Gauri and the Cow cannot be extended further than the common gentleness, softness, endurance and obedience.<sup>25</sup>

Gauri's decision at the end of the novel proves that she, though a cow, cannot be cowed down by the traditions of the society. And she proves ultimately a strong character. The change of the title of Gauri is justified. As M.K.Naik says : 'The Old Woman and the Cow represents the high water mark of Anand's fictional genius.'<sup>26</sup> Anand's portrait of Gauri is perfectly feminine and realistic presentation of women in the rural society. As P.Paul writes : 'Gauri has almost become an archetype of ideal Indian woman in Indian writing English.'<sup>27</sup>

In this novel Anand has dealt with the torture of women in our society. Women every where are treated inferior to man. They are treated like slaves. This degradation of woman is the subject matter of the novel, for instance is treated most harshly not only by her husband but by her own mother as well. All these represent the traditional social values which undermines the position of women in the society. Gauri's mother, who sells her for money, Panchi, her traditional husband, who gives importance to power and money and Kesaro her mother-in-law all are reactionary agents of traditional values.

## III

THE ROAD (1961)

Anand has written on the same theme or Untouchability twenty eight years later after the publication of his first novel Untouchable. Rama Jha's comment is : 'Anand takes up more directly both the theme and character of the Untouchable once again, in the context of politically free India.'<sup>28</sup>

The 'politically' free India is the right context. Anand explains in his letter to Cowasjee that he wanted to prove the reality of the untouchables in the 'enchanted mirror'<sup>29</sup> of free India. Cowasjee calls it 'a timid work'<sup>30</sup> And M.K.Naik's opinion is that 'Anand has failed to give a memorable picture of a changed Bakha in a changed world'.<sup>31</sup> Anand in his Untouchable successfully handled the problems of untouchability. His three solutions to the problem untouchability are the 'highlights' in his novel. In The Road there is not any greater powerful predicament. Anand's humanistic approach is echoed by Balaram Gupta as he says :

•        "The Road re-affirms Anand's inalienable faith in the essential dignity of man, whatever be his caste and position in society."<sup>32</sup>

A group of outcastes is working to build the road under the leadership of a sympathetic caste-Hindu in the village Govardhan. The road will help them to transport milk

to the nearby towns easily. But some higher castes men refused to touch these 'polluted' stones handled by the outcaste labour. The landlord Thakur Singh is jealous of the untouchables for the reason that they have now started earning wages. So he tries to prevent them from their earnings in various ways. Thakur Singh's son, Sajnu, alongwith Lachman, his friend, burns down the huts of the untouchables. But the untouchables are not frightened by Thakur Singh's cunning plans; instead they successfully complete the building of the road with the help of the Government. At end of the novel, the hero Bhikhu tried by the caste-hatred in the village, moves away along the new road to Delhi, a place where people are too busy and 'no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste.'<sup>33</sup> The road to Delhi is to be the road to freedom from caste-hatred.

Anand has included a love story in the novel. Sarpanch Thakur Singh is a landlord. He owns most of the village and the land on which the untouchables live. He is an orthodox Hindu and a greedy money-lender. He has a son, Sajnu, and daughter Rukmini. Lambardar Dhooli Singh is a landlord and belongs to high caste, he helps and supports the untouchables in the construction of the road. These are two opposing groups in the village. Dhooli Singh's son is Lachman and his daughter is Mala. In the struggle of the two landlords these two innocent daughters suffer. When Lachman repents his deeds against the untouchables he goes to work with the

others to build the road. And Sajnu helps his father Thakur Singh in his crusade against the untouchables. In their opposition the possibility of marriage comes to an end. The understanding between two families that Lachman would one day marry Thakur Singh's daughter Rukmini and Sajnu marry Dhooli Singh's daughter, Mala, also comes to an end. The attraction between Bhikhu, the untouchable and Rukmini is only a romantic illusion. Bhikhu knows the impossibility of their union and his self-realization, which makes him aware of the reality. Rukmini is warned by her parents about her caste and caste duties. She crushes even the thought of Bhikhu, 'He is Harijan. I can't even touch the thought of him', she thinks. Her mother's expression is suggestive when she says to her daughter, '...we are the Ahir Kshatriya caste, Rajputs, descended from Bhagwan Krishna.'<sup>34</sup> This love affair between Bhikhu and Rukmini may be romantic in a literary sense, but, nonetheless, intermarriage is impossible, and that is a reality.

The untouchables are not allowed to enter into the temple or to walk on the village earth because they are outcaste. Laxmi, Bhikhu's mother is a very calm and loving mother. She believes in God and ageold Karma theory. She simply says to her son, 'we are Chamars and they are twice-born.'<sup>35</sup> Her traditional mind and timidness shows that caste consciousness is universal and very natural in Hindu society. Bhikhu's rejection of this conventional attitude is

a hint of conflicts. He angrily says, 'one is a leather worker by profession and not by birth.'<sup>36</sup> The humiliation, abuses and physical attacks in Untouchable are numerous, similarly in The Road they are plenty. At the end of the novel, Thakur Singh, the orthodox landlord wishes to meet Bhikhu. In Thakur's house Bhikhu begs for a glass of water. But Sajnu, Thakur Singh's young son pulls the brass cup out of Bhikhu's hand angrily and shouts that the whole house will have to be purified. Bhikhu, like his prototype Bakha, for a moment thinks of retaliating but he remembers that he is a chamar, untouchable; and he controls himself.

Pandit Suraj Mani is a village priest. He is cunning and shrewd Brahmin similar to Pandit Kali Nath in Untouchable. His caste is a mere mask used to hide his greed and he always uses his caste as a tool of establish his superiority over others. His orthodox mind and giving much importance to purify is humorous. He is opposed to any modern ideas of equality. He says; 'Doot of Yama incarnate ! ...Kaliyug has come ! our time is over... I will prepare a ceremony to purify the earth.'<sup>37</sup>

As Ranjee Shahani writes, 'the most mischievous theory that mankind has ever invented'<sup>38</sup> is the theory of Karma. Anand criticizes the evils of Karma. All characters in the novel expecting Bhikhu and Dhooli Singh are fatalists. Pandit Suraj Mani is head of this group. Laxmi, Bhikhu's mother and other female characters - Rukmini, Mala and Sapti

the wife of Dhooli Singh and the groups of Thakur Singh and his son Sajnu, Sanju's friends Daya Ram, Cowherd Mahesh and small peasant Rama Nivas - all are fatalistic characters. Laxmi's approach or Rukmini's mother - their understanding of the 'Status' is the outcome of a pressure of Hinduism. The Manu Smriti propounds the following view on the subject:

"For the prosperity of the worlds, he (the creator) from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet created the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The Brahmans, Kshatriya and Vaishya constitute the three twice-born castes, but the fourth, the Shudra has only one birth, to serve the other three castes is ordained for the Shudras."<sup>39</sup>

Bhikhu is a Chamar boy and other men like Pandu, one-eyed Shiva Ram, Old Bapu and Drunkand Shankar are a group of untouchables. Bhikhu is a representative of this community.

"They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of impure and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of Untouchability affixed to them."<sup>40</sup>

As Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writes about the Untouchables.

"In The Road Thakur Singh, a landlord is against the untouchables because they have started earning money. When Bhikhu touches a brass cup, Ram Nivas, a

peasant, abuses him saying that, 'they have a little money, now they are feeling uppish.'<sup>41</sup>

This reveals the bias and hatred of untouchables which is not only for their 'caste' but for their 'economic' growth also.

In Untouchable Bakha returns at the end of the novel to his home with hope of a 'change'. In The Road Bhikhu decides to leave his own village and marches towards the town to escape from the caste-identity. This may be described as romantic idea, but in reality migration of the untouchables to the city for a better deal is a reality.

The Road is a new writing on the same theme of untouchability, but in a different situation, that is of Independent India. While Untouchable is a dramatic presentation of a day's experiences in the life of Bakha, The Road is literary romance dealing with various other respects of untouchability in the changed world.

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