

CHAPTER - VI

Conclusion

Now it would be proper to consider the place that Mulk Raj Anand occupies in Indo-Anglian literary tradition as a social observer of reality in India.

In the major five novels of Mulk Raj Anand, that have been taken up for the present study Mulk Raj Anand presents Indian social problem and in doing particularly the gloomy side of Indian life. In these five novels viz., Untouchable, Collie, The Big Heart, The Old Woman And The ~~Low~~ and The Death of Hero. Mulk Raj Anand treats social evils with an intention to suggest a possible solution. His social realism is closely integrated with his behaviour.

The social problem of 'untouchability' is dealt with in Untouchable. In Coolie Anand discusses the class distinctions between the rich and the poor, the landlords and the peasants, the factory owners and the workers, the masters and the servants, the aristocrats and the farmers (villagers). In The Big Heart and Death of a Hero, Anand deals with the problem of communalism and the dehumanizing effect of machines introduced into India with the advent of industrialism during the British rule. In The Old Woman and The Cow, Anand discusses the suppression of women in India.

Anand firmly believes that the main object of art is to help man realise himself in the framework of earthly existence. In his fiction, we find not only realistic portrayal of life, but also an expressionistic vision. He suggests, through his writings, that is the most ever democratic of writers that India has ever produced. Therefore Dr. Iyengar remarks : "He (Anand) wrote of the people, for the people and as a man of the people."¹

Anand has presented, in his first novel Untouchable, the evil of caste and its disastrous effects on human dignity. He brings out the terror and cruelty that are inflicted on the hero who is a symbol of all unfortunate untouchables, victims of the wrath and injustice of the caste-Hindus. The problem is posed and the horrors of untouchability are vividly painted. Bakha is the central character, true to life, as well as, a type representing hundreds and thousands of his like. His life is a tragedy which invites our sympathy. The novel opens with Bakha setting out for work, traces the curves of his momentous experiences - happy and otherwise - and ends with his plan to return home.

Caste system is an entirely indigenous phenomenon in our country; but class system has universal dimensions. Anand deals with the class distinctions in his novel Coolie. In Coolie, the hero is a young boy, with an equal if not greater zest

for life. His enthusiasm is suppressed every time, he tries to come up in life but all the same he emerges resilient. Though Coolie elaborates Anand's interpretation of the Indian class system, as Dr. A.V.Krishna Rao says : "Coolie becomes multidimensional with its philosophy of naturalism and the contemporary national ideas. The Hindu - Muslim Communal riots, the Anglo-Indian snobbery. The growing industrialisation of the country and the rising trade-unionism among its workers are objectively observed by munoo with a sense of awe and wonderment---."2

The novel is composed of multiple thematic layers like mechanisation, East west relationship, innocence versus awareness, communalism etc. and all these are effectively integrated into a pattern of epic dimensions. As the class system has greater victimising power, the victims - munoo in Coolie, Nur in Death of a Hero, Anand's attack is all the more vehement. As D.Riemensheider remarks : "At every stage and at every turn of his life, munoo is made aware of the distinct line between the masters and himself which must not be crossed, from either side."3 His novels like Untouchable, Coolie display his deep understanding of the pathos and tragedy in the life of the social underdogs.

Anand's next novel The Big Heart dramatises the reception that mechanisation gets in a rural set-up. Here we see how the inhuman society victimises the lowborn as well as the

reformers who venture to alter the social pattern. The development of Janki's character is relevant because she takes up Ananta's mission after his death. Ananta, 'the machine-man' fervently advocates the use of machinery.

Anand further discusses the social evil of communalism with reference to Hindus and the Muslims in India. The theme of religion is not dealt with at length in any particular novel except perhaps Death of a Hero, where we have a graphic description of the various atrocities that result from religious chauvinism. Anand is obsessed so much with this problem that there is hardly a novel which lacks a contemptuous reference to God or religion. As M.K.Naik says : "the continued survival' of Dharma in our land indicates its hard core of strength."⁴ The novel, Death of a Hero, depicts man's struggle against all odds and ends, and the eventual triumph of ideals over all obstacles. Magbool, like Ananta in The Big Weart, would sacrifice his life rather than his cause. Politics is only of peripheral importance in Death of a Hero. Anand causes magbool's 'advance into danger' a 'kind of protest', magbool's love of the people and the urge to free them from communal oppression is an appreciable beyond doubt.

Then, while shedding the fatalistic acceptance for good, the mind must be susceptible to absorb the new, modern elements India should not lag behind but try to keep pace with

the fast developing countries of the world. It should accept the advanced use of machinery which has changed the very way of life in a other countries. As Mahatma Gandhi himself admitted : "Machinery has its place : it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace the necessary human labour."⁵ In many of Anand's novels like Coolie, The Big Heart and Death of a Hero, Anand pictures the transitional period in which there were varied reactions to the acceptance of the machine. Even before leaving kangro hills and coming into contact with the town attractions, Munoo is eager to learn to make machines. In sham Nagar, every little machine like the telephone, gramophone, shaving machine etc. fascinates him. But then the machines are often described in terms of dehumanising images. The factory in Bombay is no better than hell and the factory whistle blown early in the morning to hurry the Coolies to their work. Spot is equally frightening. In Bombay where the use of machinery is in full swing, the poor coolies are considered useful nonhuman machines. Munoo is knocked down by a motor car. But it is to be remembered that it is the train that helps him to escape the torture at Sham Nagar. If a car has knocked him down, it is again a car that takes him to Simla. The great benefits of machinery are depicted in The Big Heart and Death of a Hero. Ananta points out how, with the help of machines, the Russians grow wheat even in snow fields and extract power from coal

without anyone having to go into the mines. The same belief is voiced by Ibil in Death of a Hero.

Anand discusses the social problem of the suppression of womcrpal. The Old Woman and the cow and The Big Heart. In India, women have been treated as inferior to men. The so-called responsible men cover up their weaknesses and dare to judge the morality of women. Marriage is the destiny usually offered to women by society. Sohini in Untouchable, Gouri in The Big Heart, are the characters who show the clash between the inferiority of women and the superiority of men. M.R.Anand himself observes : "In India where arranged marriages are widely prevalent, the wife is forced to obey all through her life, 'the whims of a man, chosen far her by others.'"⁴ Anand suggests woman's economic independence through education as the solution to this problem. Gauri, in The Old Woman and the Cow, quotes Colonel Mahindra "Education will make us masters of our destiny-not religion." (P.258) Gauri and Janki (in The Big Heart) illustrate Anand's point of view in regard to this social problem.

Anand does not accept 'religion' or 'belief in the unknown fate' as providing solutions to the social problems the Indians confort. As Alastair Niven remarks : "Anand seems to reject and intellectualist approach to social problems and to insist on a need for action rather than theorising ---."⁶

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Anand's themes are the result of "the modern Indian ethos". His novels interpret and comment on Indian social problems. As V.S.Pritchett observes : "Mr. Anand's picture is real, comprehensive and subtle and his gifts in all moods from farce to comedy, from pathos to tragedy. From the realistic to the poetic are remarkable."⁷

Anand concentrates on the 'social' aspect of Indian life to such a great extent that he underestimates the spiritual side of the Indian tradition. Moreover, his predominant preoccupation with 'social reality' has been greatly responsible for the lack of artistic integrity in his novels. His concentration on social problem has negatively affected him as an artist.

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