



SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S COOLIE AND TWO LEAVES AND A BUD

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the three great Indian writers of fiction writing in English. He is India's most controversial novelist. He was born in Pesawar, now in Pakistan, but then in the North-West Frontier Province of India. An important aspect of Anand's fiction is its concern with the reality of organized evil. In all his novels he appears as a social critic. The society he has seen and observed is the field of his work. His writings probe deeply into the social process. For him 'literature is an expression of society' and the large majority of the questions raised by him are social questions: questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres symbols and myth. Anand's two novels Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud deals with the problem of poverty which is an evil in the whole human society, particularly more in India. Gangu, the protagonist, represents the labor class, and Munoo, he suffers the same fate of maltreatment and mortification everywhere. Anand's hero's arouse pity, compassion and understanding in the end. Anand idealizes the whole man as he has said that his media as a writer were "the memory and imagination" and the substance of his work became "the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationship, rather one single part of it." Hence man alone can fashion forth his happy world free from superstition, bigotry, caste, class, capitalism, exploitation, tyranny, fascism, war, genocide etc. which make mankind miserable. This will help man to acquire a true vision for rescuing humanity from disaster.

Key Words Maltreatment, mortification, bigotry, genocide, gamut

INTRODUCTION

The world of Mulk Raj Anand is the world of humanism. It is the chief characteristic of his fiction the key to the understanding of his art. He has written novels and short stories of the welfare of mankind in the hope that life will be improved and there will be less suffering and pain. His well defined characters such as Munoo and Gangu in the novels "Coolie" and "Two Leaves and a Bud" conceived in terms of the most persistent attitude of our time, that is humanism, give concrete form to his theoretical intellectualism, revealing their creator's piercing insight and humane understanding of human existence in social terms. Being a



minute observer of human situation in the realistic tradition of fiction, Anand exposes social hypocrisy and taboos, class exploitation and class struggle, social and economic injustice and the atrocities committed on the oppressed disheveled lot. He depicts human beings who are enmeshed in poverty and injustice, struggling to come out but shackled by the coils of evil. The village money lenders, priests, tea-planters and caste Hindus treat them as beasts. The novelist favors the degraded people- the peasant, the sweeper, the city drudge, the sepoy, the laborer- the miserable human beings.

METHODOLOGY

The novel “Coolie” was written in three months and was published in 1936 by Lawrence and Wiskart. The novel was one of the most popular works of Anand. It is translated into more than thirty eight languages of the world. It shares not only the author’s social rage, but also its immense popularity. It has been widely praised by readers, scholars and critics alike. The novel “Two Leaves and a Bud” takes its title from the simple refrain, which the tea leaves gatherers recite as they pick two leaves and a bud. Most of Anand’s social concerns voiced in “Coolie” are introduced also in “Two Leaves and a Bud” which is in a way, an extension and enlargement of the scenes and affairs relating to the Bombay cotton mills of the former novel. “Two Leaves and a Bud” is to a great extent Coolie written in a thicker strain as it makes a violent attack on the dehumanizing effects of imperialism, of capitalist economy and its corollaries such as exploitation and harassment of helpless laborers. In his two chronicles of coolies- Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud, Anand turns to the lot of another class of the under privileged. The novel Coolie is an angry comment on the tragic denial to a simple peasant of the fundamental right to happiness. Munoo and his fellow coolies are exploited by the forces of industrialism, capitalism, communalism and colonialism. Humanitarian compassion distorts action and character even more disastrously in Two Leaves and a Bud, though the novel has its better points. Anand tries to objective by showing how the British attitude to the Indian can be both imperialistic as in the case of Reggie Hunt or liberal as in that of Dr de la Havre buh on the whole , the impression is unavoidable that Gangu is presented as a veritable Indian job in order that the author’s thesis can be proved. The one saving grace of the novel is the imaginative description of the plantation scene.

CAPITALISM AND IMPERIALISM

By going through novels like Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud there will be able to identify Anand’s opposition to capitalism and imperialism. The British imperialists found India an ideal place for practicing Capitalism in its most cruel form. They exploited the poverty and misery of India to make maximum profit. Munoo in Coolie and Gangu in Two Leaves and a Bud are victims in the tragic drama of exploitation, illustrating how capital lives by sucking living labor. The Capitalism in Anand’s novels is part of the British Imperialism. The senecan view ‘Vivere militare est’, to live means to struggle, is more true in the case of Indian



peasants and tenants than of any other section of Indian society. The struggle of the peasants and tenants for “daybreak and daily bread” is a major theme in Anand’s novels. In his novels landlords, money lenders and lawyers are satanic triplets in search of the blood of peasants. Poor peasants are subjected to boundless oppression by these social leeches.

In the novel Coolie, The Charter, the trade union leader Sauda asks the coolies to repeat after him points to the prominent areas of capitalistic exploitation. It says that the coolies are human beings and not soulless machines; they want to work without having to pay bribes; they want to clean houses to live in they want to be saved from the clutches of money lenders and so on demands which are completely ignored by the company owners. The charter epitomizes Anand’s social criticism against capitalistic exploitation. The communal riot that has occurred during the strike is also part of the capitalistic exploitation. It is cunningly engineered by the capitalists by their money power, knowing full well that the fire of communal violence will not use tsshem. The British capitalists ‘divide and exploit’ policy is crystal clear in this situation.

RELIGIOUS FANATICISM AND NATIONALISM

India is a birth place of many religions: Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism are contributions of our land. India is also a host of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These religions have transformed our history and will continue to last till the end of our history. Majority of our countrymen are too serious about our religions. They were prepared to noisily argue for it; write for it; fight for it; die for it; anything but live it. This has caused immense problems to the unity and solidarity of our country. The frequent quarrels in the name of one religion or the other that abruptly floods our streets with blood, is a contempt of true religion. Very often these quarrels are the machinations of certain Machiavellians who have no interest in any religion. Anand’s exposition of this fact is skillful in coolie. His humanism considers any quarrel in the name of religion as nonsensical. He wants to lead the Indian society from the darkness of religious fanaticism and nationalism based on it, to the light of secularism. In the novel Coolie Sauda’s speech reminds Munoo that long ago at Sham Nagar, he too has had similar thought about the rich and the poor. With the fiery speeches of the leaders of Red Flag Union, the situation turns dangerous for the factory owners. So they cleverly convert the labor meeting into a Hindu Muslim communal riot. Munoo realizes the danger and takes to his heels.

CASTEISM AND KARMA

Anand is angered by the Hindu society’s acceptance of Casteism and Karma as the fundamental truth of its religion. He protests against the Christian theories of revelation, pre destination, original sin and human depravity as they are impediments to human progress. He ridicules the hopeless practices of Islam. He attacks impartially the awkwardness that has



intruded into every religion. He wants people to practice the true religion which is nothing but humanism. He disapproves the way religion is reduced to mere rituals and dead customs. The story of Two Leaves and a Bud, a story which takes us to the abundant forest of Assam and reveals to us the horrid plight of the laborers in a tea plantation there. Its central character Gangu, an unheroic hero, is a typical farmer facing debt hunger, malaria, insult and even death with a strange natural self-respect. After he is kicked and chased out from Croft-Cooke's site, he reacts with the reconciled indifference of the Hindu saying, "It was only one more reward for the misdeeds of his past life."

Though the author does not share Gangu's belief in Karma and his superstitious belief 'that to bring a piece of iron home on Monday was the sure sign of a future tragedy', and which urges him to ask his son Buddhu to throw away the nail he has joyfully picked up from the ground, Anand introduces them in the novel to make Gangu's portrayal realistic. However the author does not maintain this detachment throughout the exposition of Gangu. In Two Leaves and a Bud, a Buta is a barber by birth, but the abjectness traditionally attached to his low caste is rarely thought of, and he is greeted as Buta Ram by the poor coolies of high caste origin, as he is a sardar in position and as he is not reduced to poverty like them. Though Munoo in Coolie and Gangu in Two Leaves and a Bud are Khatriyas by birth, their belonging to the wealth less class compels them to greet and obey people like Buta of the barber caste.

CONCLUSION

In Anand's writing one continually hears the rumblings of a suppressed voice, incessant and strong, but muffled by the stifling quilt of convention and tradition. This is really the voice of the outsider, the minority of one. It strives to make itself heard above the noise of an agreement that has various manifestations religion, the caste system, colonization and wealth and in doing so, produces a variety of speakers. These speakers generally occupy subordinate spaces in society, but nevertheless feel burning with them in subordination. Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud are artistic works depicting the widening gap between the haves and the have nots, the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled. Coolie portrays the sufferings of an individual coolie in a class ridden society while Two Leaves and a Bud pictures the same problem as a group experience in the support of a levitation capitalistic set-up. Both are stories of crushed humanity, of sighs and tears of what man has done to man.

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