ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine Mulk Raj Anand’s fiction in terms of the ordeal of consciousness perceptible in their central characters. This ordeal can be described as a movement not always successful - from the initial phases of existential alienation and despair to a transcendence of these, through the quest for a unifying myth. In the novels of the thirties and the forties the writer’s attitudes were mostly biased against the British and bitter memories associated with the British rule, overshadowed the pleasant experience with individual Englishmen. Mulk Raj Anand caricatured English men in Two Leaves and a Bud and R.K. Narayan found the Englishmen insufferably proud of their economic and intellectual superiority, in The English Teacher. But this bitterness gradually disappeared in the fifties. The hold on traditions was gradually relaxing while a new culture born out of the clash between East and West was merging imperceptibly but decisively. It is assumed that while, there is an insistent longing for death as a possible exist out of ordeal, this is sought to be overcome by a nascent awareness of a mythic consciousness. Therefore, the significance of these writers deeply rooted in the motifs stemming from the east-west encounter, tradition-modernity conflict, urban-rural dichotomy.

Keywords: British Rule, Consciousness, Dichotomy, Ordeal, Quest, Tradition-Ridden, Untouchability

INTRODUCTION

The Indian writer in English performs the impossible task of communicating Indian modes of feeling and expression in a language "that is not one’s own.” as Raja Rao puts it (Rao 9). Creative writing in English in fact began with the exposure of educated Indians to English culture and art forms. Borrowing the form of the novel from English literature, Bankim Chandra Chattrejee wrote his first novel in English, Raj-mohun's Wife in 1864. He reverted however to writing fiction in regional-language till the turn of the century. Subsequently Indians made the supreme "personal sacrifice", in the words of Babu Sambhunath Mukerjee, for the sake of writing in English without which "no impression could be made in the camp of our British rulers." (qtd. in Kelhar 80). That sacrifice has now paved the way towards the emergency of many novels in English, reaching far wider English-speaking peoples of the world.

While English prose for social and political purposes was written by Indians from earliest times with a rare force, eloquence and effectiveness, the excellence in the writing of creative prose could be achieved much later than in the writing of verse. But, despite its late start, the novel has gone far ahead of poetry both in quantity and quality. It was only during the Gandhian struggle for freedom that the Indo-English novel really came to its own. The ideals of the Indian struggle for freedom are reflected in such novels as K.S. Venkataraman’s Murugon, The Tiller (1927) and Kandan, The Patriot (1932.)
In the novels of the thirties and the forties, the writer's attitudes were mostly biased against the Britisher and bitter memories associated with the British rule, overshadowed the pleasant experience with individual Englishmen. Mulk Raj Anand caricatured Englishmen in Two Leaves and a Bud and R.K. Narayan found the Englishmen insufferably proud of their economic and intellectual superiority, in The English Teacher. But this bitterness gradually disappeared in the fifties. The hold on traditions was gradually relaxing while a new culture born out of the clash between East and West was merging imperceptibly but decisively.

RISE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ORDEAL TO ATTAIN IT

The publication of Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936) and R.K. Narayan's Swamy and Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937) and Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938), the novel in English may be said to have come of age. At present, the Indian novelists writing in English are large in number. Besides Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan the three foremost Indian writers of fiction in English, there are also K. Nagarajan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, Balachandra Rajan, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai. All these novelists and a few others have considerably enriched Indian English.

The themes of the Indian English novel in sixties are many and varied. K.B. Vaid, commenting on the themes of the Indian novelist, says that his thematic pre-occupations are "portrayal of poverty, hunger and disease, portrayal of wide-spread social evils and tensions, and examination of the hybrid culture of the dislocation, and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half-hearted industrialization." (Vaid 7)

Some other important themes of the novel in English are interracial relations, the Indian National Movement and the struggle for freedom as in Raja Rao's Kanthapura, partition of India and the death, destruction and suffering caused by it as in Khushwanth Singh's Train to Pakistan, depiction of hunger and poverty of Indians as in Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers, Indian rural life as in Venkataramani's Murugan, the Tiller and conflict between tradition and modernity, asin Anand's Untouchable, continue to become the preoccupation of the novelists. The theme of the confrontation of the East and the West has been successfully dealt with by Raja Rao, Bala Chandran Rajan, Kamala Markandaya and many others. The younger novelists display an increasing inwardness in their themes. The themes of loneliness, rootlessness, the exploration of the psyche and the inner man have been dealt with by Anita Desai in her two latest novels, Cry, the Peacock and Voices in the City.

An interesting aspect of the modern Indian Renaissance has been the creative release of the feminine sensibility. Women in modern India, have not only shared the exciting roles in struggle for in dependence but also have articulated the national aspirations and the consciousness of cultural change, in the realm of literature. In the personality of an individual like Sarojini Naidu, the temper of Indian Womanhood achieved its comprehensive synthesis. She was at once the lark of the Indian political technological and industrial changes have brought corresponding changes in its substance. Indian English writing has been enriched by such internationally recognized figures as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai. They continue to write in English and Indian English Literature continues to grow and flourish and attain higher and higher peaks of excellence.

This paper attempts to examine Mulk Raj Anand’s fiction in terms of the ordeal of consciousness perceptible in their central characters. This ordeal can be described as a movement not always successful from the initial phases of existential alienation and despair to a transcendence of these, through the quest for a unifying myth. It is assumed that while, there is an insistent longing for death as a possible exist out of ordeal, this is sought to be overcome by a nascent awareness of a mythic consciousness. Therefore, the significance of these writers are the motifs stemming from the east-west encounter, tradition-modernity conflict, urban-rural dichotomy.
Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most prolific Indian writers in English. Writing on Mulk Raj Anand, the internationally renowned novelist, always remains a challenge. The excellent mark of humour, can be attributed to the choice of themes and treatment in his works. His novels are mainly on themes evolving around human suffering caused by political, social, economic and religious factors.

Mulk Raj Anand is a committed writer who describes about the downtrodden people in the society. He always campaigns for the success of suppressed class of people like untouchables and of universal nature like coolie, and takes up the task of a writer committed to the eradication of the evils of society.

As Srinivasa Iyenger presents "the picture of a placer of a society and of certain persons, not easily to be forgotten, a picture that is also an indictment of the evils of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy.” (Iyenger 264).

Critics have agreed that Anand's central preoccupation in his writings in with humanism. Anand conceives art and literature as instruments of humanism in the hands of a creative artist who exhibits ardent love for all human beings especially the downtrodden. His chief concern is for social reforms. Anand's language and style have verge and vim. His first novel Untouchable "poured out like hot lava" (Anand 6)

He uses it as a weapon for the improvement of society and to create higher consciousness and intensity in the bottom-dog to enable him to rebel against the inhuman treatment meted out and injustices perpetrated on him. He does not attempt to writing, on the contrary, he says:

Any writer who said that he was not interested in la condition humanism was either posing or yielding to a fanatical love of isolations in a perverse and clever defense of the adolescent desire to be different. (Anand 81-82).

The guiding force behind Anand's understanding of the function of the writer and his writings is his humanism. "Though a committed novelist", R.K. Naik observes, "Anand does not believe in sacrificing the formal values of fiction." (Naik 18). Anand finds "the postulates of religion and the discoveries of were fundamentally antagonistic. (27). India is defined on a grand scale for the first time in the work of India. Indian life and culture are very comprehensive, vast and various/ that it is very difficult for a single writer, to deal with all these aspects and complexities. But, Anand with his immense capacity as a writer tackled fundamental aspects of the Indian situation, sets these on a broad canvas, and build upon epical picture of India in the throes of developing into the modern world. He has profound understanding of the Indian peasant and the Indian common man, both is absolute knowledge of the people is indeed concrete.

He had by 1926 inclined towards rationalism and humanist view of experience. C.D. Narasimhaiah opines that "Anand is interested in sensitizing us to the horror of poverty and suffering, without going against the grain of art." (Narasimhaiah 134). It is true to the extent that the first novel, Untouchable, primarily aims at sensitizing us to the horror of untouchability, the cancer of Hinduism. In-spite of, attaining freedom, the lower sections of the society are still bounded by chains. The three pillars of the Indian Constitution declare liberty, equality and fraternity which in real sense do not exist.

Anand is concerned with the predicament of man in society sensitively exploring the possibilities of personal salvation, in a world which is nightmarish. He is appalled by the seemingly inexorable match of social juggernaut stamping out the possibilities of love, compassion and nobility. He asserts with courage the world devoid of tenderness is a waste land.

“Anand's study of Marx and Engels gave him a grasp of the dialectical method and strengthened his belief in socialism, which alone he thought would provide the right climate, for man's total development” (Cowasjee 2)

He is a rational humanist who believes in western tradition in the power of science, to improve material conditions in progress and in the equality of all man. He propagates this through his novels.
Thus, for Anand life comes before art. He refers to his technique of characterization as based on real life and "transformed creatively from within in an almost Dostoevski in mood of pity, absolute pity, for those who \o\ve absolutely" (12) He puts emphasis on "the yoke of pity-compassionate understanding of the dignity of weakness of even negative broken down people who struggle so hard, to survive at some human level, and some-times surpass themselves (15)

Anand is "conscious of the exploitation" of by lanes of the outcastes and the peasants (Iyenger 334). His sense of pity and empathy does not allow him to remain in different to the problems of the underdog. Anand is implied by an urge to uphold the values which make man human. His view is that the novelist "helps men to take part in the drama of revolt from which emerges the new society. (Anand 33). His intense feeling for the poor seeks creativity to "arouse the conscience of humanity against the ruthless exploitation of the weak." (Sinha 33)

Anand with his first novel Untouchable (1935) made a beginning of the literature of the oppressed. It is an epic of misery. It describes the tragic plight of Bakha, an untouchable. Untouchable is akin to the lyrical with its intense quality of Bakha's poignant feelings over the cruelty of caste Hindus. Bakha, a sweeper boy of eighteen, has a sort of nobility which does not quite fit in with his "low" profession. He is a tiger at bay. His aspiration includes a decent life, life with good education. He wants to be treated as a human being. Inspite of his good merits; he is insulted and put beyond the possibility of proper recognition.

The chronicle of Munoo's life proceeds to reveal him always as the harassed underdog, the victim of forces, against which he is powerless to fight, and which, he can neither control nor accept. As a worker in a picket factory, as a coolie at a railway station, as a labourer in a cotton mill in Bombay, Munoo is ceaselessly, in failing tripped up by destiny. Munoo dies of consumption, mentally and physically "spent and broken", after working as a rickshaw coolie in Simla, for his life as a coolie in the cotton mills of Bombay has been lived on the edge of starvation. Sleeping in city streets, living in slums, among people whose lives hover ghastly and sordid bitterness of insecurity, the brave young spirit like Munoo dims, flickers and dies.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Anand has a lot of compassion for the underdogs. He describes the tragic plight of them who are caught in the cruel clutches of the manmade walls of the fragmented society. "Anand as a novelist and short story writer in his compassion for the underdog bowling him over, his indignation at the injustice of traditional practices landing in hysteria., and his failure to resist the temptation to squeeze the last tear of a pathetic situation." (Naik 150) Therefore, Anand is a committed writer of deep insight and intense feeling.

Anand carried Indian novel to a new height. He never lost his direct and concrete sense of the suffering and aspiring individual, the Indian individual who, fully realized, becomes a person of universal significance.

R.K. Narayan, simple and unpretentious writer, has enriched life and letters with his charming and warm-hearted novels and stories of Malgudi. To use Iyengar's often quoted comment: "Narayan is a writer of resolved limitation. Like Jane Austen, he carefully conceives and etches out an area of interest in life and adheres to it. His work is singularly free from stimulated comprehensiveness and diffusion.

Narayan has few equals among modern novelists, and is the best novelist that India has produced and probably among the most entertaining and distinguished of contemporary writers anywhere.

Like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan is not a committed artist; he is pure and simple with no aspirations or pretentions to be claimed as a missionary, scholar, idealist or crusader. Yet, he is considered to be a writer of middle class. He mirrors the Indianness which is otherwise Indian.
Desai sometimes created what may be called effects by creating an arrangement of the absurd and the non-contextual elements. Anita Desai’s fiction is thus, bound by what may be called existentialist framework both in theme as well as technique. She declares: "My novels are no reflection of Indian society, politics or character. They are a part of my private efforts they seize upon the raw-material of life-its shapelessness, its meaningless whether the existential frame-work (Prasad 25) she creates people "with dreams and wills" who in turn create the story, action and drama of her novels.

A study of the ordeal of consciousness in the novels of Mulk Raj is projected in different ways.

Mulk Raj Anand is the first indo-Anglian writer who finds his protagonists among the so-called low estranges of humanity. (Naik 8). It is Anand's unshakable belief in humanity-in man's tremendous potential and innate dignity, coupled with his deep compassion for all who are exploited, humiliated and prevented from realizing their full human potential that motivated him to write his novels and short stories. Anand's celebrated novel Untouchable itself has certain inherent fascination. It describes the tragic plight of the untouchables. The real cry and the echo ‘A man is a man-and he is born equal to all other men’ is heard from the miscellaneous strains fused in Bakha. Anand realised their humanity was being crushed and prevented from realizing its potential. Coolie created great impact because Anand had genuine sympathy for poor people. Munoo's life in Bombay is worse than that in the hills because poverty in rich city is more crushing than that in a poor village. In fact, Anand succeeded in portraying Bakha and Munoo because he is able to see them from their real depth.

Observation about Anand's idea of man is that the characters of the novels are balanced and dynamic. They are static in so far so their psychic predisposition is concerned. All of them are characterized as people who are highly sensitive, love, and compassion, suffering and endurance are fundamental experiences in their lives. As far their mental growth is concerned they are dynamic. They are not content with life as it is, but they never remain static and always try to mobilized their mental power to relate the own personalities to the realities of the world.

REFERENCES