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## A STUDY OF LANGUAGE IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S THE ROAD

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to make an analysis of Mulk Raj Anand's use of language in his novel 'The Road.' It examines the Anand's catchy expression, literal translations, Hindi idiomatic sentences, Indian interjections, poeticisms, original coinages and other linguistic devices which are typically used by Mulk Raj Anand in his novel 'The Road.' Analytical, descriptive and interpretative methods are adopted for the present study.

**KEYWORDS:** Language, catchy, expressions, translations, idiomatic sentence, poeticism, interjections.

### INTRODUCTION

*The Road* (1961), belonging to Anand's late vintage, too, exemplifies all the devices of linguistic experimentation. It has in abundance specimens of interpolations of Hindustani words, phrases and sentences in the midst of fictional narrative and dialogue written in English. So does it abound with literal translations of Hindustani words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, sentences, and sentence sequences? It offers, too, it's not very negligible share of corrupt spellings of English words to indicate uneducated Indian speech, even though the example found in this novel is a solitary one.

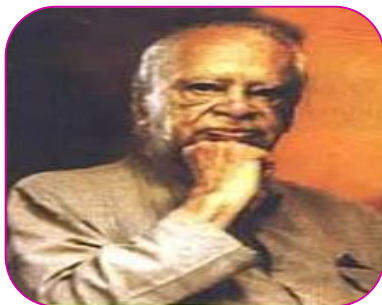
This novel, too, offers many remarkable instances of catchy expressions resulting from Anand's rather idiosyncratic experimentation, items of which begin to take on the appearance of mannerisms. To take a single example of interesting interpolation' from this novel, here is a quaint sentence:

'Oh, Budmash, none of your swagger,' shouted Dumpling Nose. (22)

In this rather Puckish sentence dealing with a Puckish situation, we come across a notable hybrid sentence with Hindustani interjection and noun, a clipped English sentence on the pattern of English syntax, and a proper (nick) name that belongs to both languages, to all languages and to none !

There is more matter for detailed comment in the literal translations found in this novel. In the phrase *his wife's skirt and headcloth* (54), referring to the spouse of Dimple-Nose Lambardar Dhooli Singh, we find the two strange bedfellows of items of clothing (skirt and headcloth) cheek by jowl in apparent harmony. So is there something uncanny in the coinage, *the witch of Rukmani* (108), an Indian form of swear in which the word occurs, and this word is literally translated into 'witch' in a sense that only gives out a quaint effect to the bilingual reader. The sentence quoted below is extremely funny; not a little so on account of the author's apparently exhibitionist attempt to give literal translation of Indian expressions. Attempting to describe the erotic feelings of Rukmini as she lay on her stomach ruminating over the idea of union "with her would-be husband, an and has hit upon this:

She had to lie upside; down to quell the quivering flesh of the breasts. (16)



No less amusing are some of his literal renderings of Hindi idiomatic sentences:

1. The chamber boys are.-. *Walking on the heart* of our whole caste brotherhood. (23)
2. He has *set fire* to all the hearts in the village. (27)
3. *He is on fire* and you are worrying about your face. (28)
4. *Am I also to be cut off from the hookah-pani ?* (67)

(The speaker actually means: 'Is my hookah-pani also to be cut?')

One may close this topic by quoting an interesting sentence where a typical Indian interjection sits next to the translation into English of a typical Indian nominal phrase in English syntax:

Hain, mad woman? (59)

Similarly, one comes across unforgettable examples of literariness that is not a literary quality from this novel, too, resulting from the novelist's overmuch dependence on clichés and stale poeticisms. He has, for instance, created a strange aphorism:

Man comes to man, not a mountain to a mountain. (32)

One may also list below the following examples of stale poeticisms resulting from Anand's fondness for Indian clichés getting the better of his powers of coinage that spring from the seat of genius:

1. She (Rukmini) was like a goat for whom the day when she must be butchered would arrive, as surely as the sun had risen today. (15)
2. A dowry, which could.... be given away with her own palanquin. (15)
3. She felt alone and helpless, bereft, a widow, even before she had been married. (74)

In the midst of it all, one finds many (many more than in *Untouchable*) original coinages that can be treated as Anand's precious contributions to the common fund of English as a world language. Apart from the coinage to immortalize for the English speaking world the conventional Indian salute, which recurs in this novel in the imperative sentence, 'Join hands to them all' (4) and the wonderful jokes around the ambiguous term *brother-in-law* (Anand has further enriched its exploitation by enjoining the common, though not so commonly admired, Indian caste custom of exchange of girls between households, weaving the erotic framework in this novel of masculine, social action and intrigues of village level politics around the prospect of exchanging Rukmini as the wife of Lachman for Mala, the Lambardar's daughter and Lachman's sister, who may thus become the wife of Sajnu), one comes across other novel achievements, such as the coinage *rat hole earth* (a coinage that captures the peculiarly Indian situation, considering that India leads the world in its population of rats) (13), or *middle peasant* (26), *god of hell* (41), *saucer lamp* (46), *holy well* (62) – all capturing masterfully some aspect of the condition peculiar to the Indian milieu that no current English expression could do so well; To the same category belong Anand's playful uses of English literal translations of the way Indian women refer to their spouses or would-be spouses before they are married actually (exploiting the fact that Indian women do not call their husbands by name), coining such eerie sentences as *And Sajnu had walked by the house with "them"...* *And she had stolen a look and nearly met "their" eyes* (37) or *only "they" was standing with open arms to embrace her* (92). One may, however, add in all fairness that some other of his original coinages have nothing specifically to do with his Indian heritage, and are original mainly on account of his mastery of the English language enabling him to add to the English vocabulary: e.g., *the woman of God* (53), *bent head* (55) *outhouse* (62) *step well* (64) *complement* (98), and the remarkable verb form *phewed* (105). One may also mention in this connection his beautiful simile describing the gait of Rukmini: *She was soft and heady as she advanced in a trance, like a peahen...* (16). So is the other simile describing Rukmini in an original way: *Rukmini, whose body was like that of the sunflower carefully tended in the backyard of the big house* (109).

Equally attractive are Anand's coinages on the analogy of Hindi idiomatic expressions: *sand in butter* (23), *a camel to ride and a cock to eat* (23); and *a goat in hand is better than a buffalo in the distance* (22-23) - the last one is likely to be more current in English usage in its new domicile in this country than its 'pure' English counterpart, *a bird in hand is better than two in the bush*. One may close this line of analysis by mentioning a picturesque experimental device of Anand in this novel, that of prefixing the names of many of his characters with copious descriptive nicknames such as *Fox face Dayoram*.

Comparison of statistical data (based on the arbitrary choice of *Untouchable* and *The Road* as illustrative texts by way of random sampling), however, does not sustain the theory of Anand's literary development implied in Meenakshi Mukhejee's remark that 'until 1940's Anand's attempts to give the English language an Indian domicile had not yet degenerated into a mannerism.' The results of a comparative survey of items point in the other direction. Mannerisms making their first appearance in *Untouchable*, the first novel to appear in print (such as interpolation of Indian expressions in the English continuum, literal translation of Indian words, phrases and sentences, and change of spellings of English words to indicate uneducated speech), which seemed to announce the rise of a new species of artist working in the medium of the English language, but which eventually proved false prophets of an incarnation of individual talent of extraordinary calibre coming to enliven the tradition, have become much minimized in the late novel making its appearance a quarter of a century later. My noting reveal 65 interpolations of Hindi nouns (19 listed in *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary*), 7 adjectives, 6 interjections and 4 verb forms interpolated in *Untouchable*, as against 60 nouns (10 listed in *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary*), 4 adjectives, 8 interjections and 6 verbs in *The Road*; there are 113 striking types of interpolations in *Untouchable* as against 89 in *The Road*. As for literal translation of Hindustani words, phrases and sentences, I noted 23, 21, and 13 of them respectively in *Untouchable* against 8, 18 and 28 in *The Road*. And while there are 9 cases of change of spelling of English words in *Untouchable*, there is only 1 in *The Road*. On the other hand, though there may be something subjective about the judgement of originality, the present study has been able to underscore only 11 felicitous coinages of lasting, original value in the earlier novel; it notes 32 in the later work. Though there are, and should be, formidable reservations about results achieved by mechanical application of statistical data to literature, such, however, is the result in the present case. *The Road* (1961), belonging to Anand's late vintage, too, exemplifies all the devices of linguistic experimentation. It has in abundance specimens of interpolations of Hindustani words," phrases and sentences in the midst of fictional narrative and dialogue written in English. So does it abound with literal translations of Hindustani words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, sentences, and sentence sequences? It offers, too, it's not very negligible share of corrupt spellings of English words to indicate uneducated Indian speech, even though the example found in this novel is a solitary one.

This novel, too, offers many remarkable instances of catchy expressions resulting from Anand's rather idiosyncratic experimentation, items of which begin to take on the appearance of mannerisms. To take a single example of interesting interpolation' from this novel, here is a quaint sentence:

#### CONCLUSION:

It examines the Anand's catchy expression, literal translations, Hindi idiomatic sentences, Indian interjections, poeticisms, original coinages and other linguistic devices which are typically used by Mulk Raj Anand in his novel 'The Road.'

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