



MULK RAJ ANAND'S INNOVATIVE LITERARY STYLE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Dr. Sudhir Upadhyay

Lecturer Of English , J.I.C. Awagarh , Etah, U.P.

ABSTRACT :

Mulk Raj Anand is undisputedly a distinguished Indo- Anglican novelist writing in English. He is a pioneer of a new kind of fiction in India which is well-known for its formless form, subtle and well- knit plot construction, superb characterization and for its dialectical usage of language. Besides, his staunch faith in humanism and the Marxist theory of socialism, what makes Anand more authentic in art is his simple but remarkable literary style. So the present research paper tries to concentrate on the same aspect more vividly and ambivalently. Before one goes to find out the minute details at length, one needs to know as to why and for whom does Anand write? Well, unlike Charles Lamb, Francis Bacon and Bertrand Russell, who always preferred to decorate and embellish their prose to make it more beautiful and striking with a pedantic and highly verbose language, the proletarian novelist wrote rather in a more flexible and condensed manner. He once cleared his purpose of writing in his reputed article 'Some notes on Indian writing', as such,

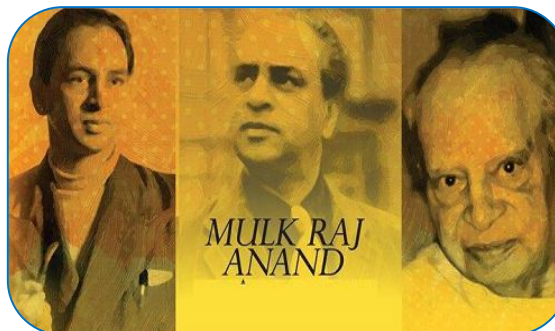
KEYWORDS : superb characterization , Lamb, Francis Bacon.

INTRODUCTION

"The purpose of writing is to communicate. Isn't it? If so, say your say in any language that comes to hand. Only say it quickly, there is no time to lose"¹ (1972, P - 89)

From the aforesaid statement, it becomes all clear that Anand overtly rejects all kinds of plagiarism in works of art — plot, form, structure, language and diction. His rejection of the Russian formalism and the archetypal aesthetic view of 'art for art's sake', again confirms emphatically his cemented belief in much practical view of art for 'people's sake'. Thus, life and art for Anand are palpably inseparable. How is he linguistically unique and a specific artistic brand? It is evident at every page during a serious study of his novels and short-stories.

The frequent use of his 'expletives' and the colorful swear words such as Achha', Wah', Ja Ja' Way', huzoor Saheb', Mai- bap, badmash', Sala', rape- mother, Son of a donkey, 'eater of your masters' etc, really give an adoring touch of Indianness to his fiction. The heterogeneous words of Punjabi and Hindi dialects confirm yet again the originality of expression, emotion and a balanced pithiness of thought people generally put forth during a routine conversation. And only a great prolific author like Anand could have done such a lively task in art through his credible rapport with ordinary souls. Second, it also brilliantly indicates his tremendous grasp over human psychology, his multi-faceted knowledge of his surroundings in which low



caste and marginally degraded people talk, behave and further grow up.

M.K. Naik, one of the renowned admirers of Anand knows this profundity of his artistic genuiness, as he mentions it in his celebrated book ' Mulk Raj Anand'

" Anand's strength lies in his closeness to mother earth. His style indicates this not less conclusively than his vision".² (1973- P-187)

What Mr. Naik states may be his own observation regarding Anand's austere prose style. And even an average reader may think similarly for the detailed mentioning of an endless saga of sufferings in works of Anand. Meanwhile, there are hostile critics like Meenakshi Mukherjee who castigates the novelist for inducing Hindi words in his narratives. She thinks this move is a violation of English language. She calls it simply a short-cut 'translation method' with which the author casts an emotional effect on the minds of the readers. She in her fiery article ' Beyond the village' : The Aspect of Mulk Raj Anand, critical Essays on Indian writing in English, comments,

"Even the device of interpolating Hindi words seems to be an unfair short-cut towards the solution of a problem that is certainly complex' ³ (1977- P14)

Anyway, up against the allegations on Anand's literary style, the fact is that he could not have claimed what he terms it as a personal touch' with his fellow countrymen, if he had not followed such language pattern in his works of art.

Actually, he knows it quite well that message of life to the readers can only be communicated at best in their everyday language. Lakha, Bakha's old coughing father in 'Untouchable' speaks the language like other people of his caste and community. He also advises his rebel son not to speak such big words for caste Hindus either. Munoo and Gangu behave as coolies often do. Similarly, Leila, Gauri, Sohini, Sajani, Devaki, Maya, Janki and a host of other female protagonists of Anand represent their class and category both linguistically and inherently. Here the focal point is that language and its usage is beyond the measure of time and place and thus varies from man to man. As far as Anand's colourful fiction is concerned, it is elegantly rich in all these shifting moods and variations of style. Meenakshi Mukherjee, however, castigates Anand on the grounds of the regional language usage in his fiction. While there are some sympathetic critics such as M.K. Naik, C.D. Narsimhaiah, K.R.S. Iyengar and et al, who admire the novelist wholeheartedly. The quote from K. R.S. Iyengar in Indian writing in English', reads.

"Some of the best studies of social life are, naturally enough in the regional languages; and it is not easy to translate the racy idioms of everyday speech into English.⁴ (1995 P 327) From the debate so far, it goes without saying that a writer's success and credibility of his narratives largely depends on his use of a more flexible and simple style. An artist says his or her things either through a smile, a frown or simply suggests by way of a polite persuasiveness. But his sole- motto in all this is to explore and expose, to find out and seek what is called the gross and crude realities of human life. That means, if any other author than Anand had written the novels like 'Untouchable' and 'Coolie', he would certainly have described differently the endless saga of sufferings in which both Bakha and Munoo find themselves deeply trapped due to various reasons. Indeed, a true piece of art work may be rated for many things- its compact and coherent plot construction, superb characterization, reliable episodes and a series of sizzling and dramatic events and situations that give birth to human thought. And if these technical tools of style remain strayed off a work of literature, no writer can claim the immediate success and originality of his narrative. More in words of Anand himself, who in his critical article "Crossroads In Life", said'

"To me creative writing becomes an expression of life, and not beautiful prose for its sake. I would no longer live by the dead ideas of traditional philosophies of the tame words of the classics. I would break all forms to try and create a new formless form".⁵ (1976 P.-34)

When the 20th century in its thirties and forties was witnessing many significant changes in the literary world, Anand mostly remained stoic and unmoved. He took a visibly different line from his contemporaries. He preferred being a realist in art. However, he was severely criticised by many for his avant-garde literary theory. But he did not care for his critics because he had to portray the actual psyche of Indian life in all its totality- Its dirt, squalor, beauty and its ugliness alike. This could not have been possible

without violating the obsolete archetypal literary rules. What matters more for Anand than merely an accepted style in art, he replies it himself in his article 'Reflections on the Novel': The Problems of Response in commonwealth literature.

"People who say I have no theory of fiction are more or less correct. And one does not need to formulate a systematic theory to write fiction or to react to its various impressions to enjoy its flavours and even to write some criticism of one's own"⁶ (1981, P-251)

After a deep introspective look into and discussion of Anand's narratives, many intricate aspects get clearer. First, he is a harbinger of a new kind of literary tradition in art, an innovative explorer of an avant-garde theory in fiction. Plot, form, language, methodology, characterization et. al- are Anand's own, and these are patterned after his own indigenous thinking regarding art and culture in Indian perspectives. No one can deny the adherence of some pet literary rules in art, as these have been in existence for ages and thus flouting them is not easy. Also a writer has to follow the strict literary discipline for his systematic and methodologically correct assumptions. But there is one more thing which an author has to keep in mind while writing. That is, a work of literature has its own receptive value except for its sheer ornamental significance. It seems Anand has kept this dictum in view regarding the creation of his beautiful prose. As he had to address his fellow countrymen with all their burning issues, he did it by using a layman's language in which these people think, feel and suffer endlessly.

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand is an explorer, thinker, philosopher and a practical humanist. His colourful literary theory is reflectively an echo of Indian people known for their diverse but simple language usage.

REFERENCES

1. Mulk Raj Anand: "Some Notes. on Indian Writing in English" Pigeon Indian, Journal of the Karnataka University, Humanities, Vol XVI- 1972.
2. M.K., Naik : Mulk Raj Anand, New Delhi Arnold Heinemann, 1973
3. Meenakshi Mukherjee: Beyond the village : An Aspect of "Mulk Raj Anand" Critical Essay of Indian writing in English, ed, M.K. Naik at, Madras: the Macmillan Co of Indian Ltd 1977.
4. K.R.S Iyengar: Indian writing in English (New Delhi Sterling Publication, 1995)
5. Mulk Raj Anand : Crossroads In Life', Bebonair, 5, No. 4, April, 1976)
6. Mulk Raj Anand: Reflection on the Novel the Problem of Response in Commonwealth Literature, ed, C.D. Narsimhaiah, Madras Macmillan Co of Indian Ltd, 1981



Dr. Sudhir Upadhyay
Lecturer Of English , J.I.C. Awagarh , Etah, U.P.