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ON READING MULK RAJ ANAND

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Abstract:

According to traditional philosophy and religion, death opens the gate of heaven or hell for the soul after deliverance from the physical body in order to enjoy eternal peace in heaven or suffer from torture in hell in just proportion to their good or evil deeds done in this worldly life as expounded in the theory of Karma. Many Philosophers and creative writers who have expressed their views about death, the most horrible and dismal truth of life directly or indirectly in their works on the basis of their experiences, though 'the inmost law of life and death are known to the Creator only. Mulk Raj Anand, the Marxist humanist does not believe in all these things. According to him, there are two worlds, heaven above and the earth below. There is no 'spiritual' world separate from the 'material' world.

KEY WORDS:

traditional philosophy and religion, physical body .

INTRODUCTION

The soul is the body and the body is soul. He doesn't ready to accept that there is heaven above, the horizontal earth and the hell below. He has no faith in life after death. Like R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao he does not believe in the concept renunciation of worldly life and self-surrender to God for liberation of soul from the bondage of body. He exposes the ugliness of so-called Hell by using his protagonist's symbolic journey through hell. He does not hold God or any unseen power responsible for the sufferings of human beings. According to him none but man himself is accountable for whatever happens to human beings. He finds that present socially is divided and sub-divided into various sections of people esp. of the rich and the poor, the haves and have-nots. Poor people are being exploited by rich people; they are exploited by the rich in different ways. They are unable to raise their voice against the exploiters. So the novelist becomes painful to see the man-made sufferings of the poor and down trodden in the name of caste, creed and religion. It can be ended through constant struggle against traditional social system in which exploiting rich persons enjoy heavenly bliss on the earth. He says disunited, unprivileged, weak may suffer heavy casualties or even crushed to death but the struggle once they started will continue till the achievement of goal. He has faith that the earth is a kind of hell in which humanity being tortured. The society is full of inequality, injustice, exploitation, violence and fear the poor deprived persons are tortured physically and mentally at every step in different ways. They always experience death in life. It may be said that they die many times in final before death-find death.

Anand wants to search the truth about life, death and reality. The society grounded inequality, injustice, exploitation, violence and fear has become a veritable hell in which the poor, deprived persons are tortured physically and mentally at every step in different ways. Anand's novels express the social,

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economic and political injustice in various forms by his different surroundings in the novel, the same protagonists with different names. In quest of freedom they journey from one place to another and gather variety of experiences. It seems that for them death is not horrible but it gives relief from the miseries, trials and tribulations of life. All the protagonists of him engaged in struggle always. Munno in *Coolie*, Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* are poor persons struggling for existence for ending their poverty; Ananta, a factory hand in *The Big Heart* is struggling for the betterment of lives of his poor thither brethren who have been thrown out of jobs, on account of the establishment of factory, and Maqbool Sherwani in *Death of a Hero* is struggling against religious bigots and obscurants who have assaulted Kashmir and established 'Azad Kashmir' as their own pure secular state. His fight is for the restoration of a pure secular democracy in Kashmir. All his protagonists in their struggles feel that this world is virtually a hell and everyone has to suffer a tortures in different ways like death is everywhere in one of the poems of Shelley. Manoo, the orphan hill boy finds no love and affection of his aunt and uncle in his home at the village. Gujri, his aunt always beats him more than she beats her cattle. This teen-aged boy feels that life and death are alike to him, and hence he appears to be happy to leave his village forever. He is always reminded of his parents' death. He says to Jay Singh, the son of a village landlord: "No, never; I never want to come back" and it proves true at the end of the novel. After leaving his village, he roams from one place to another, from towns to cities, meets people of different classes, communities and temperaments but finds no solace and he becomes worse or even worst. He is exploited more and more wherever he goes. He wishes for better life but scatters. Manoo realizes and accepts his real position when he is abused by Bibiji, wife of Babu Nathoo Ram and a mother of Shaila with whom when he was playing in order to entertain, he bites her on the cheek out of child like simplicity. It is that he is to be a slave and servant one should do all the odd jobs, some one to be abused even beaten. Since he is treated as an animal, he feels that he is really no better than animals. Bibiji, the owner compared him to an animal, an utter brute, a savage. Then he escapes from Babu Nathoo Ram's house secretly at night and reaches to Daultapur where he works in Pickle and Jam factory of Seth Prabha Dayal and Ganpat. His life is very depressing and dark evil. He has to work hard during the day and go to bed only after midnight. He feels of helling torture within and without. The policemen are the symbols of Shaitan. When he pleads the sergeant not to beat Prabha, the thanedar strikes his brick on Manoo's naked back and feet. In the Pickle factory the coolies have to live a sort of death in life because they are always in fear of being crucified. After the insolvency of Phrabha Dayal, Manoo becomes collie in a grain market. The novelist describes the horrible and wretched condition of labourers in the factory i.e. a keen competition among the coolies for jobs, crying and requesting for jobs. Then he works in the George White, Cotton Mills where Jimmie Thomas, the head foreman is 'Shaitan' or devil incarnate whereas the cotton mill is a virtual hell for collies. He treats the factory workers as animals and kicks, abuses and beats them wherever he likes. Manoo is always afraid of being strangled to death by the machine, Hari, his co-worker drags him away from his shirt entangling in machine and saves his life any how. The machine appears to be a monster of death, some invisible power which may throttle the workers. After the hard work during the day, it is very difficult for the coolies to find a spot to take rest at night. Manoo and Hari find an unoccupied place where they plan to sleep there but a half-naked woman tells them that her husband died there last night. But Hari says that they will rest in his place.

It shows that the death is not frightening to the poor and homeless people as it only gives relief from the suffering of their hellish lives. When there was a Hindu-Muslim riot, Manoo is beaten severely and falls down on the ground. Then he behaved like a corpse. Here it is found that Manoo has faith that only death can save him from the fears and sufferings of life. So he pretends to be dead even when he is living and thus saves his life. While trying to escape from the riot, he is knocked down by the car of Mrs. Mainwaring, an Anglo-Indian lady and loses his consciousness. She takes him to Simla and when he recovers she employs him as her rickshaw puller, page and even some thing more. He grows weak physically as he suffers from tuberculosis. Then he becomes indifferent to life and death. He has no grudge even against Mrs. Mainwaring. He seems to forgive all for what others have done to him. He then passes away. Thus his death liberates and releases him from the pain and suffering of life.

Gangu, the protagonist in the novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* in which he and his family leave their village Hoshiarpur for Macpherson Tea-Estate in Assam in the hope that they will earn much money there and also get land for cultivation as assured by Buta, the glib-tongued scoundrel. He is not much optimistic about the better future life though Sajani, his wife, believes in whatever Buta Sardar says. While on Journey itself he feels for a moment, "as if the worm of death was crawling through his belly and gnawing at the flesh inside him. When they are passing through a forest, Gangu looks deep into it on his side and imagines that the forest must be inhabited by demons, the tree-spirits and dangerous animals like tigers, lions, bears, reptiles and dragon flies. He is then reminded immediately of the picture of hell. Thus, it shows how Gangu's mind is obsessed with hell on the earth. He visualizes the hellish life in Macpherson Tea-Estate in Assam. When he joins duties, he finds that, Tea-Estate, is a virtual hell for poor coolies who are treated there

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is sub-human creatures. Narain, a coolie tells him that Tea-Estate is even worse than a prison for coolies. Once a coolie comes here and joins his duties, he is never allowed to go back to his village or town. Any worker can't go out without permission of the warden. Coolies have to accept without protest all kinds of ill treatment and humiliation. Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager of Geerge Coton Mills in Bombay is a devil who hates the Indian coolies and behaves with them rudely. He abuses them and calls them dogs and donkeys. He looks like Yama wandering always with a revolver in his hand. Not only he is cruel to his coolies but also so morally degraded and depraved that the chastity of coolies' mother's, wives, daughters and sisters is not safe from him. Gangu's daughter, Leila once finds herself coiled in the grasp of python, which seems to be a messenger to death to her. She feels she is dying. However, she attacks with her scythe, cuts it into two and saves her life anyhow. When malaria breaks out, Gangu becomes its victim, but recovers from it. Soon after this, his wife is attacked by this contagious disease and dies of it for want of treatment. Gangu had no money even to perform her funeral rites and so he approaches Croft cook, the manager for financial help. Instead of getting any help, he is rebuked and charged with spreading the disease and is ultimately turned out of office. Some coolies planning to go out of Macpherson Tea-Estate are found out at the station. A company of Gurakhas beats them with bayonets and butts of their rifles. Even children and new born babies are not spared. Many coolies are found bleeding and dead. Isn't it an empire of Yama? Isn't it a hell? Then there is a show of force by the bombing airplanes. The poor ignorant coolies think that the airplanes flying in the air are the spirits raised from the earth to destroy them, as the demons sometimes arise out of nether world ---the dots of Yama?

The coolies start running hither and thither to save their lives. Their shrieks, cries and groaning are heard everywhere. While searching his daughter and son in this pandemonium Gangu comes across a woman coolie blanched by mortal fear. He rushes to her but finds her dead. Gangu murmurs: "Happy death". It appears from what Gangu murmurs that death is not as terrible as life is for the poor coolies of Macpherson Tea-Estate. It only gives relief from the pain and sufferings of life. Now he has become old fed up with his hopeless life. His life is loaded with anxiety, poverty, sorrow and lack of vitality and stamina. His sighs with an intolerable sob. It appears that he waits for death, which may relieve him from the agonies of life. In course of time, Reggie Hunt, fascinated by his daughter and followed Leila, the daughter of Gangu wants to possess her. But he shoots him out of fear and desperation. At last, he gets relief at least in death like Manoo in Coolie.

In this way, in the foregoing novels Manoo and Gangu are illiterate, simple and credulous. They struggle for their own existence and at last meet death with resignation. They are too weak to fight against those responsible for their hellish lives. Hence, to all appearance they are passive sufferers.

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