

## NOTES AND REVIEWS

K. N. JOSHI and B. SHYAMALA RAO

*Studies in Anglo-Indian Literature*

Bareilly, India: Prakash Book Depot, n.d. Pp. 124.

MARGARET BERRY

*Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist*

Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971. Pp. 114.

M. K. NAIK

*Mulk Raj Anand*

Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, and New York: Humanities Press, 1973.  
Pp. 199.

Since K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar published his *Indian Writing in English* in 1962, there have been several literary surveys dealing with Indian writers in English. The best known of these are M. E. Derrett's *The Modern Indian Novel in English* (1966), P. P. Mehta's *Indo-Anglian Fiction* (1968), Naik, Desai and Amur's (eds.) *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* (1968) and C. D. Narasimhaiah's *The Swan and the Eagle* (1969). To these titles we may now add *Studies in Indo-Anglian Literature* by K. N. Joshi and B. S. Rao.

Joshi and Rao in the Authors' Note say that they "make little claim to originality for these 'studies,'" and they live up to their claim handsomely. But the lack of originality is less disturbing than the emphasis given to certain authors and the total neglect of others. In a slim volume of 120 pages, Tagore and Aurobindo take up more than 50 pages. Certainly these two cannot be ignored, but neither can one justifiably ignore Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Praver Jhabvala and Nissim Ezekiel — although Joshi and Rao do. And what justification is there for giving a chapter to the philosopher-statesman Radhakrishnan and his *Future of Civilisation*?

The book is characterized by an abundance of spelling and typographical errors (a bane of much Indian publishing), which would be forgivable were it not also marked by purple passages and a misplaced enthusiasm on the part of the authors. In the Introduction we are told that "Indo-Anglian writing is still a young stream rolling ahead with strength and vigour. It had an auspicious beginning. The future seems to be indistinct. Dark mountains loom ahead. But the strength and liveliness it has so far shown, gives us hope that it will make its way and reach the plains."

Imperfect as the "stream-plains" analogy is, one wonders why the stream hasn't reached the plains when a minor poet like Sarojini Naidu "will always be remembered as the Indian nightingale" and her brother Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is "a poet of the highest excellence." In this study Joshi and Rao have praise for all, and it is no pleasure for me to be frugal and withhold praise to these two kindly gentlemen — both professors of English in India.

Mulk Raj Anand, India's most controversial novelist, has been the subject of two book-length studies so far. Dr. Margaret Berry's *Mulk Raj Anand: the Man and the Novelist*, though published in 1971, is a reproduction of her M.A. thesis, presented to the Graduate School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1968. There is no evidence that the thesis has been revised for publication, and there are some glaring omissions — the most noticeable being that she has failed to take note of C. D. Narasimhaiah's *The Writer's Gandhi* (1967), in which there is a fine critique of Anand's *Untouchable*.

I have a couple of other reservations about Dr. Berry's book. In her endeavour to prove Anand a propagandist, she ignores what does not suit her purpose. She is not impressed by V. S. Pritchett's and C. D. Lewis's arguments that he is not a propagandist, and she does not mention scholars who agreed with their views, such as Stephen Spender, R. A. Scott-James, Walter Allen, Bonamy Dobree, and E. M. Forster (none, by the way, Marxists). She dismisses the insights offered by S. Menon Marath, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and Jack Lindsay as "undermined by exaggeration, idealizing, wishful thinking, induced it may be by personal, patriotic, or party loyalty." And as she herself rarely gives reasons for her own conclusions, it is difficult to refute them.

The book is not so strictly concerned with a study of Anand's novels as the title might suggest, but with the study of Anand's faith and his opinions on matters economic, social, political, and literary. Dr. Berry uses the novels largely to illustrate Anand's opinions on diverse subjects. Only in the last chapter, entitled "Evaluations," does she come near examining the novels as literature. But by now Anand's politics have prejudiced her thinking and she has made up her mind that he is a rigid Marxist. Indeed, so much is she obsessed that she dismisses one of Anand's most touching characters, Munoo in *Coolie*, with these words: "Munoo is himself imperceptive, dull, colourless, static, mostly apathetic, created only to follow the Marxist pattern, to endure the cruelties of the rich and the powerful."

Despite the foregoing, there is much to arouse enthusiasm in Dr. Berry's book. She is the first critic to give us a clear-headed analysis of Anand's faith as a writer — a difficult task considering the nonsense written on the subject. She shows us how before 1932 Anand viewed literature and the arts "mainly as religious and philosophic derivatives," and that it was only after he came under the influence of Marxism that his concept changed radically. Her discussion of the other influences that shaped his mind is equally good, and in her study we come across some sharp comments on *The Village* and *The Big Heart*.

M. K. Naik's *Mulk Raj Anand* is the first book in the Indian Writers Series, published under the distinguished editorship of C. D. Narasimhaiah — himself an authority on Indo-Anglian fiction. But the firm hand of the editor is not perceptible, and though it is a better book than Margaret Berry's, there are occasional lapses in style and logic. Anand at his worst is given to trite similes and overworked clichés, and his prose is often inflated and rhetorical. One sees the same defects in Naik:

The modern Indian writer... is a tree, with its roots nurtured in the Indian soil and its branches opening out to breathe the winds that blow from a Western sky.

In *Untouchable*, Anand's fictional genius sprang up fully armed like Pallas Athene from the head of Jove.

Like most humanitarians he [Anand] is too apt to allow the springs of his compassion wind their way to a sea of sentimentality.

Naik's judgment is sound as long as he is not directly confronted with the question of Marxist logic in Anand's novels. His appreciation of *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Seven Summers*, and *Morning Face* is keen, but when he comes to novels such as *The Sword and the Sickle* he is intrigued by Anand showing his hero "blundering on with a bunch of buffoons." Naik asks if the hopeless confusion of the hero is a reflection of Anand's own confusion. The answer is no. Contrary to popular belief, Marxism does not demand the idealization of the proletariat. It places man in the center of its philosophy and asks: How does man change? What are his relations with the external world? These are some of the questions the novel raises. Also, one must bear in mind what Stephen Spender said — one can't feed Marx to an artist as one feeds grass to a cow. Anand, in spite of his lapses into propaganda, is essentially an artist.

The best chapter in the book is on the short stories. Naik correctly surmises that had Anand never written a novel, the stories alone would have earned him a place in Indo-Anglian literature. He briskly reviews the more significant of the seventy-odd stories Anand has published in seven volumes, though the omission of "Duty" and "Old Bapu" — two of my favorites — is particularly galling to me. He gives in his study the reasons for Anand's success with the short story form: "... he is a born story-teller, endowed with an unerring sense of situation and with the ability to visualize a scene clearly." To this one may add the author's own reasons for preferring the short story to the novel. Anand wrote to me in a letter dated 20 April 1971:

You see, in the novel form even when you get the insights, the structure often conceals them. Whereas in the short story, the feeling of the mood comes through, in a concentrated moment of awareness. Also, it is possible to peel the onion of the character's personality, in a single layer or two, suggesting more than when you peel the onion in all the layers. Very few people can stand the ruthless exposure of their moods... The failure of the hero, which is often tragic, leaves the reader desolate. He can't suspect pity in the novelist, especially if he is a critic trained in Berkeley and has never heard of *karuna*.

The last sentence is directed to me, and I have just looked up *karuna* in a Sanskrit-English dictionary. It means "compassion."

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