Preface

The scenario of Indian fiction in English exhibits four distinct courses of driftage in its progression from the past to the present. Having had its origin in the pre-Independence period, it developed from its embryonic stage to the existing state exhibiting marked differences in the various phases of its growth. The challenges the Indian writers confronted in the early years of Independence were different from what they had to face before 1947. With the declaration of National Emergency in India in 1975, the country once again witnessed repression of human rights for a period of time. When Emergency was lifted, there was an upheaval of creative work on the “injustice and incarceration” (Selbourne viii) of the times from writers all over the nation. Later on, when the postmodern trends began to cast their spell on Indian writers, a few were inspired to adopt the “intertextual exercise” (Mukherjee, The Perishable Empire 181). Hence the four distinct phases in the evolution of Indian fiction can be recognized as pre-Independence, post-Independence, post-Emergency and postmodern.

Mulk Raj Anand who turned from academic pursuit abroad to creative writing in the pre-Independence times, continues to write. Though Anand’s doctoral dissertation (1929) was on the thoughts of Locke, Hume, Berkeley and Russell, very few attempts have been made so far to trace the strands of Western literary theories in his fiction. Taking the cue from one of the novels of the author, the attempt made in this study is to explain how Aristotelian theory of the mean or moderation finds its application in the behaviour of Anandian protagonists. The term has acquired currency as “golden mean” due to the glory of an added life the protagonist achieves through the choice of the middle way, who otherwise would have ended up his life in tragedy. But the question of associating this glory to the hero’s exercise of moderation depends greatly upon our view of life—whether we should be concerned with the “brevity” or “intensity” of the tragic hero’s experience. Hence the controversial term “golden mean” has been excluded from this study.

I have taken the liberty to substitute a new expression “Nicomachean mean” for this Aristotelian virtue. The reasons for doing so are two fold. Primarily, Aristotle discusses the theory in The Nicomachean Ethics. Secondarily, he uses only the term “the mean or moderation” throughout his lengthy discussion there. Hence the title: “‘Nicomachean Mean’ in the Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand.”

Kollam

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