Chapter VI

Summing-up

Comparative literature aims at unifying certain forces inherent in every literature, throwing light on the glorious features of humanity. Though man is subjected to jolts because of the cultural and social differences, basically he remains the same, rooted to the strong ground of humanity. Literature of a nation holds the mirror to the true face of man. It emphasises on the significance of the universals, which ultimately becomes the main focus of the comparative literature Chellappan, one of the great authorities on comparative literature, observes, “comparative literary theory seeks universals through particulars, which it interprets in a wider perspective” (305). And the idea of universals present in various degrees gives an added charm and importance to every literature; this naturally leads one to think of the possibility of establishing a strong comparability among literatures. To substantiate this point, it is worth quoting Yue Daiyun who writes of Etiomble’s views on comparative literature:

He (Rene Etiomble) proposed that comparative literature was a form of humanism and stressed that the literature of various nations should be regarded as the common spiritual wealth of all mankind and as an interdependent entity. For Etiomble, comparative literature was the very undertaking that prompted mutual understanding between peoples and fostered the unity and progress of mankind. (40)
The present attempt has been undertaken in line with these views. The themes chosen for the study show the common aims of Mulk Raj Anand and Rajam Krishnan. As seen in the introduction, their backgrounds — social, political and literary — have exerted a powerful influence on them and their novels exhibit their individuality and mark of innovation in their approaches to the themes discussed above. Their sympathetic understanding shown towards the less privileged few also marks their writing careers. They also emphasize the fact that given necessary encouragement the less privileged can prove themselves equal to others.

Both Mulk Raj Anand and Rajam Krishnan have tried their utmost to expose the evils existing in the society of their respective decades. Armed with Dickensian style of approach they lay bare the society with its squalor, stupor and travails. And they have never lost right of their targets, in novel after novel, of attacking the inherent and vile attitudes of the vested interests. Their analogous intentions have been to get the society rid of its weak spots and to take it on its evolutionary march.

For their literary missions, progressive thinking has motivated them. Their respective ages, literary contacts, and educational backdrops have moulded their revolutionary ideas in regard to the decadent social scenario. Right from the days of his college life, Anand has been inspired by the dream of pin-pricking the societal retardation and has been led towards their direction by his father's association with the Arya Samaj and the Urdu poet, Iqbal's exemplary writings. Later his fruitful stay at
London mingling with the great intellectuals like Russell, Locke and Hegel and literary giants like T.S.Eliot, Herbert Read, George Orwell, Cecil Day Lewis and others have sharpened his social consciousness. His mind had been at work to cogitate over the festering ills of Indian society, even though he had been away from the Indian soil. For more than two decades all these influences, which have been unconsciously affecting his bent of mind surfaced when he came under the spell of Marxist principles. He began to look at the world from the perspectives of Marx and the resultant action has been his championing the cause of the socially relegated underdogs, the untouchables.

With the encouragement of her father, Yagya Narayan, whom Rajam Krishnan admires as an ideal teacher, she has grown to be a great novelist. Having been born in an orthodox background, she did not have first hand influences as Anand had in his formative years. Rather she imbibed the spirit of the classics in Tamil, Hindi and English. Next comes her husband’s voluntary help to her to emerge as a writer. By a keen observation of happenings around her wherever she went along with him on his engineering enterprises, she started sharpening her literary consciousness. The national poet, Subramaniya Bharathi, Kokilambal, Kothainayaki, and Mathavaiah have inspired her much to look at the sufferings of women and the unshakable fetters binding them to the blind conventions of social mores. Thus she began to write only to alleviate the hardships of women.

After her return from Russia, there arose a shift in her literary leanings. She too has been enthused to look at the labourers wherever they are from the perspectives of
Marxian dialectics. Then she undertook extensive field studies in the labour-areas to have a firsthand knowledge of their problems, which naturally find expressions in her later and memorable novels.

Anand and Rajam Krishnan have thus taken up the task of projecting social issues, since they have been discontent over the appalling situations of the Indian society in their respective decades. What has been subsisting around them, when they started writing, unravels the human decadence. Right from the outcaste who is kept for away from the four fold varna system, the poor but exploited labourers and the oppressed women, they are all portrayed as unfortunate victims of societal maltreatment.

Exploiters, in the Indian context, rule the roost and subjugate the innocent beings for their own selfish ends. Feudalists, capitalists and bureaucrats dictate terms to their subject race and it is an unwritten law that they should not be opposed. These monied and influential forces thus break the backbones of the working force of men and women. And at home, dominant men trample the individualistic spirits of women. Exposition of such untold horrors eventually enforces the involvement of the creative writers to focus more and more on the social issues.

The conclusion one arrives at, after a thorough familiarity with their works, has been that they have not veered away from their main purpose of focusing only on social issues. In their works, they have realistically projected the sufferings of the exploited lot.
Without transgressing the limits of creative writing, they have tried their best to sincerely expose and purposefully castigate the social ills through novels.

All creative writers are prone to employ the expedience of ‘art for arts sake’ just to boost the sale of their works and be economically successful. Withstanding such temptations, both Anand and Rajam Krishnan have subjected their creative writings only to analyse social problems. They have not expressed their regrets over the loss of fame or income in any of their personal sketches. Such has been their unflinching attitudes to social problems and they have decided forever to ameliorate, in their individual capacities, the sufferings of the subject races of the Indian society by projecting them in their creative works.

Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan have faced, in their writing careers, the charge of being propagandists. Even though in realistic terms, they have employed social problems to set society right, they have purposefully refused this charge. The common derivation has been that a socially conscious writer cannot in fact avoid being a propagandist.

Since both of them have developed their social sensibilities to a greater extent, they have found the prevalent situations too nauseating to tolerate. They have decided to in their own ways to usher in reforms if not effectively but at least to create awareness among the general public. Anand’s ideal of a good social system is a western-based one. He has had personally witnessed one during his stay in London and has expressed the
good points of the western social atmosphere in his articles and non-fiction works. He compares the pathetic plights of the untouchables with those of the European porters and coolies who are never discriminated on account of their base works. His personal concern has been that in India, a caste has been specially created for the convenience of the caste Hindus to do all mean and filthy works. And once one is born an untouchable, he remains the same forever and his future generations also have to wade in the same muddy waters without redemption.

Rajam Krishnan has not expressed her indignation at the atrophied society over this point, till she went out for field studies to internally comprehend the multifaceted problems of the workers. To start with, she had been grappling with feminist problems and all her earlier novels focus on the same problem thus proclaiming her a staunch feminist. Once the shift set in after her visits to Russia, and the familiarity with Marxist principles, she started to look at all the drawbacks of the society from broader perspectives. She never bothered to receive the adverse comments of her own community for her total involvement with the working class. One can in fact equate the stand of Rajam Krishnan with that of Maniammai, in _Pataiyil Patinta Adigal_, who has been cautioned by her own ilk not to do social service to the outcastes. Even though Rajam Krishnan has not intensified the problems of the outcastes, as Anand has done in _Untouchable_, she does not fail to pinpoint the callous attitude of caste Hindus towards the unfortunates in _Kutukunjugai, Cetril Manitarkal, Roja Italkal_, and “Mallikaippu”.
Anand and Rajam Krishnan’s similar points of view in regard to untouchability should be applauded. Being socially committed writers, they cannot but point out the worst evil prevailing in their respective decades. They have done their best to expose it to even at the cost of the genre of the novel. Rajam Krishnan avers... “I will make the outcastes the heroes of my novel even disregarding the requirement of the novel form” (CM 3). But Anand has done a lot of revisions to produce artistic integrity in Untouchable. Whatever may be their receptive approaches to this problem, they have undertaken an unimaginable job which none dared to do so prior to their works.

Anand foresees better future for the untouchables through the speech of Gandhi. Gandhi says, “Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow” (Unto201). He is of the view that the change in attitude to untouchability should proceed not only from the upper classes, but also from the outcastes. They should try “to rid themselves of evil habits, like drinking liquor and eating carrion”(201). Rajam Krishnan’s superb characters, Maniammai (PPA) and Viji (KK) fight tooth and nail to redress the travails of the untouchables. Of them, Maniammai has been personally blessed by Gandhi to carry on the message against this evil practice. Wherever they are, either in the farms or in the service of the municipalities as scavengers, they should show their solidarity by forming unions to press for basic rights. Maniammai exhorts them, “Be united oh Depressed People! Form unions! And fight for your rights!” (PPA 152).
Anand may predict the change of profession for the scavengers doing filthy works by referring to the introduction of "a machine which clears dung" (Unto203), that is, the flush system. Yet society's differential attitude towards them should be altered. Hence the introduction of reformers like Gandhi, Maniammai and others in their novels. Rajam Krishnan hopes that such a changed situation can be brought in, once they are educated and economically well off. Her outcasts do not perform the traditional works, rather they are employed in mills, factories and farms. Moreover, her main charge has been that all the concessions and reservation opportunities have not benefited the last Harijan.

Both of them have sought the help of Marxist principles to make their literary tools sharper. From enlightened angles, they have looked at the social problems and after applying the Marxian yardsticks, they have put forth their views for the public gaze in their novels. Social problems and the theories of Marx are mostly interrelated and overlapping issues. Only by applying the canons of Marxist principles, solutions for the problematic issues of the workers have been over the years arrived at. Anand had been providentially provided with such an opportunity when he was staying at London. Rajam Krishnan, too, has applied the same formula while assessing the workers issues in her novels. Exposition and trouble-shooting of social problems have gone hand in hand in their works. It is inconceivable to think of them as committed writers but for the impact of Marxist principles.

Both of them are condemned as propagandists and critics have gone on charging that their novels suffer owing to excessive propagandist elements in them. To wriggle
himself out of the impasse. Anand boldly announced on his return to India that he was no longer a member of the Communist party and that he was not a propagandist (Cowasjee 13). Rajam Krishnan also mentions, in her interview to Nalinadevi, that she has not deliberately included any propagandist materials in her later works; rather she has taken up the eternal issues of the workers (RKNSM 277). When the focus of a writer’s attention is on the social problems, the artistic creation in fact suffers. She herself has proclaimed in her prefaces that she has not seriously paid much significance to the literary requirements of the novel form.

Anand considerately analyses the inhuman exploitation of the workers in The Big Heart and Two Leaves and a Bud. Since they are no strong union leaders to bring them under one fold, workers are unable to achieve any thing. Anand (TBH) or Gangu (TLB) suffer from personal drawbacks and thus cannot muster enough courage to form unions. All strikes in the novels of Anand fail, since the fault lies at the level of the capacity of the leaders and the unions. He has thus admirably demonstrated the inevitable fact that unjust exploitation of labour went on unchecked, because there were no strong unions then and that unions sometimes could not be formed, because there existed no unity among the workers owing to the paucity of dedicated leaders.

During the period of Rajam Krishnan, much water has flowed under the bridge. Able leaders like Ramasamy (KM), Shanmugam (CM) and Maniammai (PPA) mastermind many successful strikes and processions. Through these union activities, Rajam Krishnan conveys her standpoint that workers should be united and that they can
definitely achieve their goals. Women labourers get leave with pay during delivery periods, enhanced wage on a par with men and other related benefits. Thus what Anand has attempted to achieve in Two Leaves and a Bud, The Big Heart and Coolie, in regard to the formation of unions, Rajam Krishnan has successfully accomplished ushering in the requisite trade union efforts to reduce mindless exploitation of labourers. In her later novels dealing with the sufferings of the workers, she projected the resultant awakening of the working force keeping abreast with the changing times. Labourers were then brutally exploited and once they realize their own strength, they start clamouring for the necessary rights denied so far to them. Rajam Krishnan underscores that while being exploited by both the old and new societies, it is imperative on their part to attain at least economic parity (Nalinadevi 263)

Application of Marxist theoretical angles in regard to workers issues has led to the evolution of Trade Unions. Dedicated union leaders have sacrificed a lot to bring all the workers under one fold. Both from within and without, they have faced opposition to run unions. Ananta, in The Big Heart, Sauda, in Coolie and de la Havre, in Two Leaves and a Bud, have sown seeds to nature unions. Ramasamy and Shanmugams of Rajam Krishnan’s creation have taken up the baton from their predecessors. Moreover, problems have piled up and workers themselves have started to voluntarily participate in the union activities. When the workers are united, no capitalistic forces can with hold their rights. Now demands are conceded. Basic facilities have been provided. The managements and the union leaders then and there sign wage settlements. Anand has
noped to bring success to the union movements. Then times were adverse for the growth of unions. But Rajam Krishnan now observes total success of union efforts.

Anand exhibits a humanistic tendency towards the issue of exploitation of women in his novels. Intellectually he wants Indian women to shake off their slavery and achieve liberation, but he also expresses his instinctive affinity with the traditional values of Indian womanhood, which he depicts in golden light.

Gauri, in The Old Woman and the Cow, seems to emerge as a proletarian heroine seeking a bourgeois ideal of freedom, that is, a woman in bondage acting on the impulse of an illusory freedom. She seems to be under the illusion that a shift to the town can ultimately mean attainment of freedom. She is the typical woman of Anand’s idea to emerge as the ‘new woman’. She makes her own destiny. Since she is a revolutionary character, she cannot be a mythical one and so she abandons the meek Sita of the myth and transcends the protesting Sita of the folk-tale.

Rajam Krishnan points out the inevitability of trade union activities to achieve such aims. Hence her novels detailing the problems of the workers focus on the effort of trade union leaders like Ramasamy of Karippu Manigal and Shanmugam of Kä’šukanjugal, and their massive processions to press for the worker’s demands. Maniammai, the widowed revolutionary indirectly expressing the author’s personal involvement in trade union matters gathers workers, male and female, belonging to different fields at Nagapattinam and signals the rise of the workers’ strength.
While attempting to project the sufferings of women in their respective decades and regions, they exhibit different approaches. Anand's brush encompasses a wider panoramic prospective taking in all human beings, both men and women, to consider their sufferings. His 'Progressive Humanism' does not differentiate them on the ground of gender. Hence he has focused less the travails of women. His memorable characters, Gauri and Laxmi (OWC) and Janki (TBH) deserve the readers’ sympathy but they do not evoke whole-hearted identification with their relegated status in the society. On the contrary, Rajam Krishnan's female characters are taken out from actual situations in life. It must be here made obvious the fact that she started her career mostly as an avowed feminist and has also been charged that in her novels, she minds only about the weaker sex thus verity losing the response of the male readers.

Rajam Krishnan's important female characters, like Revu (MMP), Girija (LWP), Revathi (Vidu), Maruthambal (MM), Viji (KK), Sengamalathachi (KM) bring the exploitation of women to the fore. In different situations how women are treated stepmotherly and as an inferior human species has been thoroughly dealt with by the author. She does not finally advocate the break-up of the unitary family system; rather she wants her characters to fight for their rights, remaining within households. Her bold characters, like Viji of Kūttukumukal, Maniammai of Patiyil Patinta Adigal, rise against the oppressive attitude of the society and inform the reading public that women cannot be forever contained under the dominant male setup. Anand's Gauri (OWC) or Janki (TBH) cannot oppose the prejudiced male domination single handedly and so they seek safer
Asylums to lead better lives. Rajam Krishnan's mild characters, too, adopt this technique of running away from their homes to breathe the fragrant air of freedom; yet the author makes them realize their down-to-earth responsibilities as mothers, hence the return of her heroines to their households to look after their children.

In folk-tales and songs, women protest against the suspiciousness of men about their chastity. After proving her chastity, a woman will definitely refuse to live anymore with the husband who has insulted her by doubting her chastity. Anand's Gauri, in The Old Woman and the Cow, goes away from her suspecting husband to manage her own future. Rajam Krishnan's Viji, in Kutukunjukal, is on the threshold of getting out of wedlock and Maniammai, in Patiyil Patinta Adigal, has gone out of the family fetter to selflessly serve the downtrodden. Many of her heroines, like Girija of Lamps in the Whirlpool, Revathi of Mari Marip Pinnun go out of the oppressive homes to decide their own future.

Rajam Krishnan differs from other female writers in the sense that for a society to evolve, the ennobled roles of women and their active participation are also of paramount importance. Without women and their contribution, a society cannot grow. She has thus repeatedly emphasized the voluntary involvement of women in all social activities.

In the fifth chapter, how Anand and Rajam Krishnan have exposed the festering sores of superstitions and blind practices has been detailed. They are more concerned over the backward Indian society, which fails to match with the fast-evolving western
societies. Unnecessary and totally irrelevant practices performed in the name of religion will choke the vibrant nature of any society. Fatalistic tendencies fail to revive the spirited nature of the younger generations. When everyone is caught in the irredeemable cobwebs of superstitions and blind practices, it will take many more centuries for the Indian society to progress. Anand and Rajam Krishan have thus ridiculed the unfounded beliefs of the gullible people. And therefore they have tried to instill courage and enthusiasm in the reading public to come out of the enervating malaise of obscurantist beliefs and irrelevant practices.

Though both of them have exhibited Marxist leanings in the beginning of their writing careers, they always look forward to the democratic ideals enshrined in Indian Renaissance as represented by Gandhi and Nehru. Thus they put up an amalgamation of the left and right wings of current political ideologies. And they have tried to present, through their creative output, the remedy to alleviate the lingering malaise of their respective societies.

In regard to both tradition and modernity, both Anand and Rajam Krishnan adopt a love-hate attitude. They have vociferously attacked the ossified systems of traditional life with the hostility of an iconoclast, and, at the same time, cling to tradition with nostalgic fondness. They present modernity as an alternative to traditional ways of life in their novels, but openly unravel the dreary face of modernity too, which they attack with no remorse.
Gauri of The Old Woman and the Cow by Anand is a classical example of the clash between tradition and modernity. Retaining her traditional values, she embarks on a modern path to nurture her future. For Rajam Krishnan, Viji of Kūjukunjukal and Maniammai of Pāṭayil Patinta Adigal represent the quintessences of both tradition and modernity. They discard, from traditional mode, whatever impedes the normal growth of society and unhesitatingly embrace the positive aspects of modernity.

Anand and Rajam Krishnan thus realistically project the inherent weak spots of their respective societies. Their attempts at exposition of them are direct and blunt. The societies in question, incidentally, are at the crossroads of transition. Therefore the main focus of the novelists is on the course of changes in their societies. They fervently implore that exploitation of the underdogs has to stop and at the psychological framework of the common people has to be overhauled. These authors finally emerge as the authentic fictional voices of the mute sufferers and the powerful indicters of all forms of exploitation.