CHAPTER- 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

The art of fictional narrative attained a high degree of success in ancient India, which is evident from the popularity of epics like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, and fictional narratives like Kathasaritsagar, Panch Tantra, Hitopdesha, Kadambari and the Jataka Tales in Sanskrit. For this phenomenal achievement by Indian authors Mulk Raj Anand says that India “is perhaps one of the two early homes of fictional narrative.”¹ But the novel in English, as a form, came to the scene rather late in India. It is believed that it was the British who introduced the Indians to the novel as a form of literature. The Indian novel in English emerged in 1920s and established itself as a popular form in the next thirty years.

English education was introduced in India in the early nineteenth century. The stage for fiction was set by sketches and memoirs and short narratives. Dean Mohamed (1795-1851) has lately been discovered to have the greatest claim of being the first Indian writer in English with his travelogue as the first published Indian English text. But the first Indian prose writer in English is Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), a well-known social reformer. M.K Naik terms Roy’s essay A Defence of Hindu Theism (1817) as the “first original publication of significance in Indian English Literature.”²
Later, writers like Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Ramgopal Ghose, Kylash Chunder Dutt, Henry Derozio and many more appeared on the scene.\(^3\)

The first Indian novel *Rajmohan’s Wife* was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the famous Bengali novelist. This novel was serialized as *Wife* in the Calcutta Weekly *The Indian Field* in 1864 and was published in the book form only in the 1930s. *Rajmohan’s Wife* is about the effects of bad marriage on women. The suffering of a middle class housewife Matangini caused by her husband Rajmohan forms the subject of the novel. This was the time of social reform and it must be noted that the first Indian novel is not a historical romance but a social novel.\(^4\)

Ever since the appearance of Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s novel *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864, Indian English fiction has grown considerably in bulk, variety and maturity. Its development can be traced from the imitative and the experimental to the realistic and later to the psychological stage.\(^5\) The second Indian English novel is written by Lal Bihari Day. His novel *Govinda Samanta, or, the History of a Bengal Raivat* (1874) is a family saga in which we see the trials and vicissitudes of the protagonist Govinda Samanta.

Toru Dutt (1856-77) better known as a poet might be the first Indian woman novelist. Her unfinished English novel *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden* was published in Calcutta in 1878. She could not finish this novel as she died a premature death at the age of twenty-one. It was a romantic love story set in England.

The novel *Anand Math* (1882) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was not concerned about the contemporary situation of the Indian woman, but with a desire to create and provoke a national consciousness. As for the image of ‘woman’ as a source of power, the ‘shakti’, he turned not to the Western sources, but to his own rich heritage coming down
to him from ancient times. In *Anand Math*, for example, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee created the symbol of the motherland, and ‘Vandemataram’ was on the lips of all patriots throughout the freedom struggle. The ancient Indian ‘mother’ image was taken up, transfused and given to the collective consciousness of the country. R.W Frazer says, “the novels themselves owe their form to Western influences, but the subject matter and spirit are essentially native.”

Krupabai Satthianandhan (1862-1894) was one of the earliest medical students but unfortunately her health did not permit her to complete her education. Her two novels *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1894), and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) are autobiographical in nature. *Saguna* is about the transformation of a Hindu Brahmin family into a Christian household and *Kamala* is about a woman’s sorrows and conflicts.

Shevantibai Nikambe, a social reformer and educationist, wrote *Ratnabai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Wife* (1895). This short novel holds forth the ideal of companionate marriage. A young married woman whose husband is away in England is sent to school against all opposition by her father. She suffers much due to the attitude of her in-laws but when her husband returns he finds a wife with whom he can converse with and eventually everything ends happily. This was part of a larger discourse of reform and the treatment of women in Hindu society. Rajalakshmi Debi whose novel, *The Hindoo Wife or The Enchanted Fruit* (1876), is in the verse form.

When we turn to the novelists of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, we find that many wrote historical romances. But, Shoshee Chunder Dutt wrote *Shunkur: A Tale of Indian Mutiny* (1857) and *The Young Zamindar* (1883) both of which
depict the greatness of the cultural heritage of the country and aim at raising the consciousness of the readers to fight for political freedom. Some of the historical romances written around that time are - Chakravarti Khetrapal’s *Sarala and Hingana* (1895), S. M. Mitra’s *Hindupore: a Peep Behind the Indian Unrest - An Anglo-Indian Romance* (1909), and Balakrishna’s *The love of Kusuma: An Eastern Love Story* (1910).

A Madhvian wrote quite a few novels in English - *Clarinda* (1915), *Nanda: The Pariah Who Overcame Caste* (1923) and *Lt Panju - A Modern Indian* (1924). *Clarinda* is a historical romance about a woman who was converted to Christianity in Tanjore.9

Indian writers found historical romances suited to their purpose of obliquely expressing their patriotic, religious and cultural views without much political risk and idealized women in their novels. ‘Woman’ was just an appendage—a symbol of beauty, sweetness, purity and faithful love which was best exemplified in the early novels like *Padmini* (1909) by T. Ramakrishna, *The Prince of Destiny* (1909) by S. K. Ghosh, *Hindupur* (1909) by S. K. Mitra, *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909) by R. C. Dutt, *Nur Jehan* (1909) by Sir Jogindra Singh *The Unveiled court* (1933) by U. Bahadur. These novels revolve around ancient glamour and glory and give an idealized image of an Indian woman culled from history and legend.

With the changing social conditions, the image of Indian woman also changed considerably. Western rationalism and humanitarianism and the spirit of social reform prodded by patriotism turned the minds of the reformers and writers to the problems of the widows. Rohini in Bankim’s novel, Binodini in Tagore’s and Abhaya and Kiranmayi in Sarat Chandra’s are all widows, but in spite of having bold approach to depict the widow as a normal human being they could not be bold enough to grant the right of
remarriage to them. Romesh Chander Dutt's *The Lake of Palms* (trans. 1933) deals with the predicament of a Hindu widow. He also offers a solution put forth by the great Indian social reformers that for a child widow 'the scriptures distinctly sanction remarriage.\textsuperscript{10}

Sarat Kumar Ghosh wrote a fantasy, *1001 Indian Nights: The Trials of Narayan Lal* (1906), and *The Prince of Destiny: The new Krishna* (1909). Ghosh's second novel is perhaps one of the earliest to explore the East-West encounter, a popular theme in Indian English novel. But often, novelists portray two heroines in the novels, symbolizing the Indian and the Western conceptions. The Indian girl is charming and capable of deep and silent love and sacrifice. The other girl is educated with Western values but paler in comparison. Subsequently, the East-West encounter became a popular theme of the novel.\textsuperscript{11}

Most of the writers named so far are from Eastern India. All of the early writers in English came from areas that had the greatest British influence, namely the Bengal region, the Western coast and the south. The impact of colonialism could be seen not only in the use of new language but also in concerns of the writers for reform and construction of a new India, to the depiction and sometimes celebration of conversion to Christianity.\textsuperscript{12}

Indo-Anglian fiction was the inevitable outcome of the Indian exposure to Western culture and art forms like the novel. In the early Indo-Anglian novels women were distant from reality, crude, moralized or sentimentalized. The authors went on giving the romanticized images of women, and in general, were unable to grapple with reality. The reasons for the inability of Indo-Anglian fiction to reflect reality might be traced to the difficulties the writers had to face as they were writing in an acquired
language. The double difficulty in giving expressions and transmuting the experience in English is recognized by Dr Meenakshi Mukherjee who has called the Indo-Anglian novel ‘the Twice Born Fiction’. The experience of the writer had to go through the pains of two births to see the light of the day. The problem would be even more difficult when they tried to deal with the uneducated women.

When Gandhian phenomenon struck India, many things changed including the novel. The intensification of the sense of nationalism and the attempts to use all means to construct the idea of a modern India have found place in the novels. K.S. Venkataramani (1891-1951) has to his credit two novels - Murugan, the Tiller (1927) and Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making (1932). Murugan contrasts the life of two friends, Kedari and Ramu, the former a materialist and the latter a Gandhian. A Gandhian colony is established at the end of the novel and the two friends settle down there. Kandan is a story about an ICS officer who resigns from government service and joins the freedom movement only to be killed at the end. The trinity of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao began writing soon after the Civil Disobedience Movement of early 1930s and Indian English writing emerges in its glory by the writings of ‘The Big Three’ (a term coined by William Walsh). They carried the Indo-Anglian novel to great heights for more than six decades. All of them have really shown ‘stamina and stern consistency of purpose’ and have managed to hold on to the chosen course in spite of all odds, and each has now to his credit a corpus of creative fiction. They also challenge a comparative study of their aims, methods and achievements. When distinctions are made they fall into neat categories of Anand being a humanist, progressive or committed writer; Narayan - the comic genius or writer pure and simple; and Raja Rao the religious
or philosophical novelist. Roughly contemporaneous, Anand (1905-2004) hails from Peshawar (now in Pakistan) and Narayan (1907-2001) from Madras and Raja Rao (1908-2006) from Mysore. These three authors have in their distinctive capacities enriched the novel’s natural idiom with a distinct Indian sensibility. They established Indian English novel in the gamut of Indian and World literatures.

The issues they tackled about were all relevant issues of the time, issues that had to be depicted and debated in the quest to construct an ideal nation. Issues of caste and the upliftment of the downtrodden, modernity and religion, the effects of colonialism, the question of gender roles - mainly the place of woman in society, all find place in the Indian English novel as influenced by the trinity.

MULK RAJ ANAND, R.K.NARAYAN AND RAJA RAO: LIFE AND WORKS

Mulk Raj Anand occupies probably the topmost position in Indo-Anglian literature. He is indeed a high ranking novelist who won acclaim not only from critics in India but also from abroad. He is a household name as a novelist in India. He has written more than a dozen novels and almost every novel has won praise from readers and critics. He is undoubtedly one of the charismatic literary figures of modern India.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was born in a Hindu family of kshatriyas in Peshawar. His father was a coppersmith who was in army and retired as a Subedaar. He was a worldly man, highly ambitious of his son’s education and economic status. He had
five sons and Anand was the fourth one. His mother, Ishwar Kaur, was a religious woman who had a great faith in orthodox values. She had a vast knowledge of folk tales, having heard them in her childhood from her own mother, as also of legends, fables, myths and other narratives of gods, men, birds and beasts. "So sure was my mother's gift for story-telling," says Anand, "that sometimes I found myself rapt in her tales with an intensity of wonder."15

The first twenty years of Anand's life were spent in the Punjab area. After passing his matriculation in 1920, he entered Khalsa College, Amritsar. He joined freedom struggle against the British government and courted arrest. He was also given seven lashes of cane during Jalianwala Bagh incident for breaking the curfew, and was also imprisoned for a day during civil disobedience campaign in 1921. This made him hate imperialism and his hatred of imperialism also later on bound up with his disgust for the cruelty and hypocrisy of Indian feudal life, with its castes, creeds, dead habits and customs, and its restrictive religious rites and practices.

In 1925, he graduated from Punjab University with Honours in English. He received scholarship and went to England for research in philosophy under Professor Dawes Hicks. He completed his dissertation on the thoughts of great philosophers: John Locke, George Berkley, David Hume and Bertrand Russell. He was awarded Ph. D by the London University in 1928.

Anand's life and career can conveniently be divided into three phases: the early years in India until his departure for England (1905-25); the years abroad (1925-45) and; the later years in India (from 1946 till death). This division is not based on his principal periods of residence, but corresponds with the different stages of his literary career. The
first period reveals the various strands and influences that shaped his mind and later came to bear upon his writing. The second period is concerned with Anand’s hard struggle to become a novelist and the eventual success that he got. The third period reveals his achievements in the social and cultural life of India.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1930s and 1940s he divided his time between literary London and Gandhi’s India, joining the struggle for freedom. In 1939, Anand married the actress Kathleen Van Gelder in London. They had a daughter. But this marriage could not last long and he got divorced in 1948. He married again with Shirin Vajibdar, a distinguished dancer.

Anand with a wonderful academic attainment started his career as a writer during 1930’s. The genesis of Anand’s agnosticism might be traced to his shock, at the age of eleven, over the death of his nine year old cousin, Kaushalya. This provoked him into writing a letter to God asking ‘why he had taken Kaushalya away’. This letter was presumably his first piece of writing and in it he found his voice as an agnostic.

His first text \textit{Untouchable} was born as a reaction to the trauma of the suicide of an aunt, who had been excommunicated from the society for mingling with the Muslims. His first literary effort was to chronicle the lives of the under-privileged - whether it was \textit{Untouchable} (1935), \textit{Coolie} (1936), \textit{Two Leaves and a Bud} (1937) or his trilogy \textit{The Village} (1939), \textit{Across the Black Waters} (1941) and \textit{The Sword and the Sickle} (1942). He wrote \textit{The Big Heart} (1945) which deals with the virtue of the machine and modernity. He wrote all these novels while staying in England. Some of his early poetry stemmed from feelings of an unrequited love for a Muslim girl.

Anand’s first three novels \textit{Untouchable}, \textit{Coolie} and \textit{Two Leaves and a Bud} were like many packets of dynamite. \textit{Two Leaves and a Bud} had to be withdrawn from
circulation in England. All these three were also banned by the Government of India. He was suspected a ‘Bolshevik’ during his visit to India.\(^{17}\)

In 1945, Anand returned to India for good as a committed socialist but he did not write for sometime because of a nervous breakdown. He was deserted by a hill woman and he depicted his agony in the novel *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953). Then he wrote series of novels like *Seven Summers* (1951), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), *The Road* (1961), *Death of a Hero* (1963), *Morning Face* (1970) and *Confession of a Lover* (1976).

Besides novels, he wrote more than seventy short stories which had been published in various collections entitled *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber’s Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947), *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966), *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973) and many more. He had also rewritten old Indian tales in two collections: *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946) and *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961).

In 1952, Anand was awarded the International Peace Prize of the World Peace Council for promoting peace among the nations through his literary works. In 1967 he was awarded Padma Bhushan by the President of India for the distinguished service in art and literature. In 1970, he won the Sahitya Academy award of the year for the novel *Morning Face*. In 1978, he won the E.M. Forster Award for his novel *Confession of a Lover*. He was also the founder editor of the art magazine, *Marg*. He spent the later years of his life in Khandala and died in 2004.

R.K.Narayan, one of the foremost Indian writers of fiction in English, is widely acclaimed as the best novelist that India has produced and probably the most entertaining
and distinguished of contemporary writers anywhere. His portrayal of life is realistic in physical detail and at the same time suggestive of depths beneath. The main strength of Narayan lies in his comic vision while the creation of Malgudi authenticates his creative genius.

Born on 10th October 1906 in a South Indian Brahmin family, Narayan was the second child of his parents. He was educated in Lutheran Mission School at Mysore. He had his entire education in South India, not in the redbrick universities of England or America. He learnt English mostly from Indian teachers. He spoke Tamil at home, Kannada in the streets and English with a South-Indian accent in educated circles. He passed examinations at school and college without distinguishing himself. He once failed in English and took one year off to study it. His private reading developed his own distinct style and helped him to be a great author.

Narayan's wife, Rajam, was less than twenty when she was married but she managed the household expertly and earned Narayan's mother's praise. Within six months, she proved herself adept at house-keeping and was left in complete charge of the household. She had another great quality of an Indian wife. She could adjust herself well in the family of her husband. She got on very well with Narayan's brothers. But she was not to live for long. She departed from this world within three years of her marriage leaving behind a girl child to be looked after. Narayan received a great shock at the sad demise of his young wife who died at the age of twenty-six. Widowed at the age of thirty-two he did not re-marry. He engrossed himself in writing and bringing up his daughter. All these incidents are reflected in his autobiographical novel *The English Teacher*. 
After some hand to mouth journalism for a few years, Narayan published his first novel *Swami and Friends* in 1935. After this he never looked back and produced many novels that regaled the Indian reader and also readers from other countries. He wrote steadily ever since. He wrote chiefly about the Indian middle class because he was a part of it and understood it best.


As a nominated M.P, one major issue he took up was about the weight of children’s schoolbags; otherwise he was apolitical. “Anand at least has, it would appear, some political axes to grind, though these do not offensively intrude into his creative writing. But Narayan has no axes of any kind: he is that rare thing in India today, a man
of letters pure and simple.” He lived a long full life up to the age of ninety-six. He spent his later years in Mysore and died in 2001.

Raja Rao is also one of the greatest Indian novelists in English; though a close contemporary of Anand and Narayan, he is entirely different from them in his art as a novelist, and his enchanting prose style. Although his works are scanty he definitely matches up with Anand and Rao in the profoundness of his creation.

Raja Rao (1908-2006) came from a very old South Indian Brahmin family. He was born in the village of Hasan, in Mysore. His father was a professor of Canarese in Hyderabad. After having matriculated from Hyderabad, he went over to Aligarh for higher education. There he was lucky enough to come in contact with Prof. Eric Dickinson, a poet and painter. He inspired him to study French language and literature. He took his B.A. degree in English and History from Nizam College, Hyderabad. He was awarded government scholarship by the Hyderabad University, and on this scholarship, he went to France in 1929 to continue his study of French literature there. First, he studied at the University of Montpellier and then worked for the Doctorate degree at the University of Sorbonne under the supervision of an eminent scholar Prof. Cazamian.

Shortly afterwards in 1931 he married a French school-teacher, Camille Mouly. She had a role in Raja Rao’s development as a writer since she advised him to explore the possibilities of writing in his own mother tongue and on Indian ethos. She also translated some of his short stories. He complied by writing a long poem and a few short stories in Kannada, but the work that made people take note of him was his first novel in English *Kanthapura* (1938) which is about the Gandhian movement in a South Indian village.
Meanwhile, his French marriage failed as it was regarded as an act of rebellion by his orthodox Hindu family. Following the outbreak of Second World War and disintegration of his marriage he returned to India. Back in India, he visited a number of spiritual Ashrams including those of Ramana Maharishi and Sri Aurobindo. In 1941, he spent sometime with Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram.

After a long silence of twenty-two years during which he studied philosophy, he wrote his second novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and then *The Cat and Shakespeare* in (1965) and *Comrade Kirilov* in (1976). His last novel was *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). He was invited to teach Indian philosophy at a university in U.S.A. In 1965 he married Katherine Jones, an American stage actress. But his second marriage also broke up, and he married for the third time to another American woman, Susan Vaught, in 1986.

Raja Rao is not a prolific writer. The quantum of his literary output is rather meagre. This is because he wants to achieve perfection, and consequently writes slowly and revises frequently. Moreover, his philosophical and religious concerns leave him with little time for literature. He won the Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *The Serpent and the Rope* in 1966. His name was also actively considered many times for the Nobel Prize for literature. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan, in 1967 by the Government of India. He spent his final years in America teaching in an American college.
A writer's views and attitudes which condition his work are the result of a number of influences that operate upon him from childhood onwards, and Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao are no exception to this. Their heredity, their social milieu, their education, the books they read, the people they met and of course, the contemporary scenes of the world around them all conditioned their art, and went into the making of Anand, Narayan and Rao, the novelists.

The first profound influence over Anand was created by the older British Universities where he had gone for higher studies and stayed there from 1924 to 1945. In London, Anand came under numerous literary, political and social influences and it is in them that the sources of his synthesis of Marxist and humanist thought can be seen. He was deeply influenced by Marx. He himself said:

[a] whole new world was open to me. All the threads of my past reading, which had got tied up in knots, seemed suddenly to straighten out, and I began to see not history of India but the whole history of human society in some sort of inter-connection. The fact that Marxian dialectic had developed out of Hegel, whom I had read, added to the zest of my preoccupation with it.19

He became an overt nationalist and championed the socialist cause in his fiction in step with many European and American writers of the day. He felt the complete
erosion of human values in his time and became the champion of humanism by writing for the underdogs.

Another event that had profound influence on Anand was the General Strike of 1926 in Great Britain. It made people conscious of the class war between have and have-nots in modern civilization. Anand had admired Britain for her achievements in science and technology. Living through the strike, this illusion of his was shattered with a bang when he discovered that industry was controlled by a small group of individuals who had an absolute say in matters of domestic and foreign policy. The object of the General Strike was to attain specific rights for the mine workers. Anand and a group of his colleagues sided with the workers but were dismayed at the failure of the strike. He felt "that the people of Britain, no less than the people of India, had yet to win their liberty."20

After the destruction wrought by the First World War, European society had plunged anew into the shadows of economic depression and cynical mood. The economic depression caused disastrous effects; it gave rise to unemployment that brought in its fold unending distress and appalling misery. There was a complete erosion of human values. The peculiar conditions during the early decades of the century in Europe and elsewhere greatly moved Anand to sympathize with the social cause.

The rise of Fascism in Italy under Mussolini and the Nazi power in Germany in 1933 under Hitler reflected the paralysis of the Western democracies. The Japanese aggression on Manchuria in 1931, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in 1935, the extinction of Spanish Republic at the hands of Germany and Italy in 1936-37, all in succession tolled the death knell of the League of Nations. Such a disintegrating world disillusioned the intellectuals of the day. Anand strove for a commitment that would restore order and
save his world from the existing chaos. He was not only absorbing the atmosphere as a participant but also seemed readily inclined to reflect it in his writing.  

Alarmed at the situation the intellectuals of the West prominently led by Maxim Gorky of Russia, Romain Rolland of France, Thomas Mann of Germany, and E. M. Forster of England assembled in Paris in 1935. They could read the premonition of a threatening situation, caused by the aggressive imperialism of the day. This psychology working in the background was the moving force that propelled the writers to use their talents against fascism and write for the working classes. Anand was profoundly influenced by this Progressive Movement.  

In England, the Progressive Movement began with the publication of Michael Robert’s anthologies *New Signatures and New Country* grouped Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, Isherwood and Edward upward together for the first time. These writers were responsible for making social realism and tendentious literature of revolt fashionable in both Europe and America. Inspired by these ideas Anand and some other Indians also formed Progressive Writers Association. One of the notable consequences of this movement was the growing rejection of the aesthetic theory of “art for art’s sake”. Anand was profoundly influenced by this Progressive Movement and believed that the purpose of the novel is to change society and through society, mankind.  

At home, 1930s was the seeding time for a modern independent India. It was the most tumultuous year in Indian history. It was the decade when Indian struggle for independence was at its peak:
"[t]he Gandhian Salt Satyagraha movements of 1930 and 1932, the three round table conferences, the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, the introduction of the Provincial Autonomy in 1937, the Gandhian movements for Harijan uplift and basic education, the organization of Marxist parties of diverse hues (the Congress Socialist, the Royalists, the Communists), the involvement in the Second World War in 1939, the schism in the Congress leading to the expulsion of Subhash Chandra Bose and his eventual escape to the Germany and Japan- it was a packed decade indeed."24

The national movement led by Gandhi released the energies of men and women slumbering for centuries. The Thirties movement proved to be a watershed in the literary sensibility in India. That anyone could have put pen to paper in this era without reflecting upon the consciousness of the age is simply inconceivable. Although normally residing in England, Anand also could not remain uninfluenced by these Movements. He says, “Of course, I am of my time and the atmosphere of the thirties.”25 The spirit of the time shaped his sensibility. He began to question everything in the background, to look away from the big houses and to feel the misery of the inert, disease-ridden, underfed, and illiterate people. He was aware that great many of our people suffered from poverty and squalor. No one in India had yet written the epic of this suffering humanity because the realities were too crude to be written. It became Anand’s aim as a novelist to focus attention on this suffering, and thus to write what may fittingly be called ‘epics of misery’. Charles Dickens wrote about the “Hungry Forties” and ‘London Poor’ of the
nineteenth century England, Anand wrote about the 'Turbulent Thirties' and the 'Hungry Folk' of twentieth century India. 26

The early fiction of Anand was truly representative of this shift in writing. His fictional world depicted not the feudal splendors, and mysticism of traditional Indian literature, but the hard and suffering lives of millions of his countrymen. Anand thus ushered in the humanist realistic fiction.

In April 1929, he went to see Mahatma Gandhi in the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. Gandhi told him to write a straightforward pamphlet about Harijans. He was allowed to stay in the Ashram for three months after he promised not to drink, not to think of his girlfriend and cleaned latrines once a week. That whole course rejuvenated Anand and the austerities that he practiced there awakened his conscience and converted him to a life of sincerity, simplicity and truth. And thus he wrote his first novel Untouchable.

The Thirties movement defined in specific terms the position of Anand and the functions of his art. Anand, like Gorky and Eric Gill believes that the work of a genuine creative writer is inspired by a mission. He is strongly committed to his creed and in his opinion "any writer who said that he was not interested in condition humane was either posing or yielding to a fanatical love of isolationism- a perverse and clever defense of the adolescent desire to be different." 27

A critic H. H. Anniah Gowda posits, "Among the Indo Anglian novelists, Mulk Raj Anand was the most conspicuously committed writer... perhaps the best word for it is the plainest: it is propaganda writing." 28 The propaganda novel in its true sense is one so dominated by its author's ulterior purpose that the propaganda cannot be ignored, and
normally one who dislikes that line of propaganda would find it unreadable. He opines that such a novel cannot rank among the great works of literature. In a similar vein, Chetan Karnani, another critic, complains of the extra-literary intentions of the novelist: "The trouble with Anand is that he is not able to hide his proletarian sympathies." These critics charge him of having used the artistic medium of the novel for pure propaganda. Indoctrination, they hold, does not go with the creative process and aesthetic experience.

Anand is not deterred by such criticism: "I do not in the least mind criticism, even adverse probably because the suffering from which my novels have been written has already been rewarded by the fact that they have gone into so many languages of the world in spite of their truthfulness and exposure of many shams, hypocrisies and orthodoxies of India." Anand is a great pioneer in the domain of Indo-Anglian fiction who contributed to it a new technique, bold matter, fresh approach, and uncomplicated style. He interprets Indian material in terms of new universalism. Anand infuses a note of high seriousness into Indo-Anglian fiction. He makes the common man a hero and inaugurates the literature of the oppressed. He believes that man is the master of his destiny and rejects fatalism. That is the reason why he condemns all obstacles that come in the way of man's happiness and comfort such as fascism, feudalism, imperialism, caste and creed, exploitation and poverty. He says that all people must have liberty and equality. Despite his affiliation with the Bloomsbury Group, he tries to remain true to his roots. He declares, "Literature of any significance, whether local or universal, has to come from the breath of the people. One cannot grow harvest in the air."
Narayan was influenced and moulded by the men and women he had seen, the incidents and accidents that he had encountered and the periodicals, magazines and the books he had studied. All of these together shaped the theme and structure of his novels. He confesses in his My Days that he had started writing under the influence of events occurring around him.  

Narayan started writing in 1930s, this was the time when the resurgent India received fresh impetus during the Gandhian age (1920-1947) which witnessed a tremendous upheaval in the political, social and economic spheres. The freedom struggle reached its peak and there was an unprecedented awakening among all sections of society, the women, the youth and the down-trodden — who had long suffered under the weight of traditional authority.

Narayan remarked that during the period of nationalist agitation the subject matter of fiction became "inescapably political...the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution and above all the detached observation which constitute the stuff of a fiction were forced into the background."  Narayan proves that the quintessence of Gandhi’s philosophy was part and parcel of India’s daily life. To Gandhi, art had to fulfil some kind of useful purpose and contribute to the general education of the people. Narayan penetrated the heart of Gandhi’s teaching. He separated the obviously ephemeral implications of his philosophy from what was eternal in it and he gave literary existence to the latter.

In his autobiography My Days he mentioned three important political events that had great influence on his thought processes as well as on his writings. The first was the
agitation against the Rowlatt Committee Report and the Rowlatt Bill before the
Parliament. Gandhi called it the ‘Black Bill’ and it was received with the deepest dismay
by every section of the public and was condemned by the Congress as a measure of
renewed repression and unwarranted restrictions, for the bill would give sweeping powers
of preventive detention or enforced residence as regards all suspected political agitators.

The First World War brought a great change in the thought of Narayan. He
witnessed bombardment and chaos during that period. The Second World War also had
its repercussions in Narayan’s career. He witnessed black outs, food rationing, alarms and
excursion.\textsuperscript{34}

Narayan read Arthur Conan Doyle, P.G. Woodhouse, W. W. Jacobs, Arnold
Bennet, Sir Henry Rider, Marie Corelli, Palgraves Golden Treasury, Keats, Shelley,
Byron, Browning, Shakespeare, and Sir Walter Scott. Narayan says:

I read the \textit{Bride of Lammermoor} and six others novels by Sir
Walter and realized the strong doses of love and hate that agated
the highland clans. I admired Scott so much that I searched for his
portrait and found one in a second-hand bookshop - a copper
engraving as a frontispiece to a double column edition in a
microscopic type containing three novels in one volume, with
many illustrations.\textsuperscript{35}

Narayan also read The Ramayana written by Kamban. He spent full three years in
going through the ten thousand five hundred stanzas of the book. \textit{T. P’s Weekly} afforded
him plenty of literary material about publishers and writers. \textit{The Spectator, The Times}
Literary Supplement and the Manchester Guardian slowly made him familiar with the critics who mattered and their judgement.  

Himself a product of the Hindu middle class, sharing the beliefs, superstitions and perhaps the prejudices of his class in a small town and viewing its going ons with sympathy but also with a keen eye for the comic in the life around him, he qualified himself as a writer of his own class and the provincial town. He claimed that his purpose in art was to convey unambiguously the thoughts and acts of a set of personalities who flourished in a small town named Malgudi located in a corner of South India.

An innate sense of irony, humor and complete absence of pomposity and pretence is what makes Narayan the writer he is. Narayan’s good-humored irony as a firm ally of serious moral concern creates thoughtful fiction which has its centre in Malgudi but has a circumference embracing the entire human condition. William Walsh sums up Narayan’s art as “exact realism, poetic myth, sadness, perception and gaiety....it is kind but unsentimental, mocking but uncynical, profoundly Indian but distinctively individual. It fascinates by reason of the authenticity and attractiveness of its Indian setting, and engages because of the substantial human nature which it implies and embodies.”

Regarding Raja Rao, C. D. Narsimhaiah has claimed that the depth and range of Indian national identity in the novels of Rao is derived from Sanskrit and Kannada traditions. Rao himself acknowledges that: “[h]is sense of Identity is conditioned by his rigid Brahminism.”

Raja Rao’s writings, be it his short stories or his novels, have philosophical content, and this is part of his literary art. He believes man to be ‘a metaphysical entity’.
He is the only novelist who has given the genuine expression to his philosophical spirit which permeates his work. To the Western educated mind, India represents spirituality, and Raja Rao supports this outlook and asserts the superiority of Indian philosophy over the Western thought.

Raja Rao is greatly influenced by the classical epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the Buddhist texts in English translation, medieval Kannada poetry, the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, and the philosophy of Ananda Coomaraswamy. Among the Western influences on him, Raja Rao himself mentions these intellectuals: Plato, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Malaraux, Kafka, Rilke and Andre Gide. He is also greatly influenced by the Bible.

On his return to India in 1940 he went to Benaras in order to get first hand knowledge of the spiritual traditions of India. In Benaras, he actively considered for sometime renouncing the world and turning a sanyasi. He was saved from this disastrous course through his meeting with Swami Atmananda, the great Vedantic scholar, whom the novelist accepted as his ‘Guru’, guide and mentor. Hence, he attaches such great importance to the role of a ‘Guru’ and, the quest for a ‘Guru’ is ever recurring theme of his novels. He also spent sometime in deep meditation at Mahakali Temple in Ujjain. In 1942 he spent a few months in Gandhi’s Ashram.

It was in 1950 that Raja Rao visited America for the first time, and was fascinated by American culture and way of life. No doubt, he found Americans materialistic but also energetic and enterprising and capable of doing much towards transforming life on this planet. He studied avidly the works of Ralpho Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. He was greatly admired by the Americans and he also expounded
Hindu philosophy to them, particularly Vedantic philosophy. A seeker of truth, Raja Rao appears to have discovered the mantra of truth in the classical literature of ancient India.

Raja Rao's Indian background does not provide him with a model for his fiction. Literary models that he seems to follow are all European and not British or American. His life-long struggle to come to grips with a foreign medium and literary form inevitably restricts him to his European - mainly French-background. The quest for identity that runs through his works is, in fact, a quest for form. This is what he writes about himself in the Preface to the *Policeman and the Rose*: "A South Indian Brahmin, nineteen, spoon-fed on English, with just little, with an indiscreet education in Kannada, the French scene overpowered me."\(^{40}\)

According to Raja Rao, the key to man's existence as a social being lies in the soul, not in the body. The characters in his fiction live both at the physical and spiritual planes. They are moved by a code of conduct which preaches that the only commitment that one should have in the world is to oneself. The quest of the real self is the object of the heroes of Raja Rao. "For me literature is Sadhna -not a profession but a vocation."\(^{41}\) It is a severe discipline, painful and exhausting, not an intellectual adventure as it is for a Western writer. Therefore, he would like an Indian writer in English to discover and identify himself as an Indian first, and then commence to write. His mind is firmly rooted in the Hindu culture and philosophy. For him "India is culture\(^{42}\) and "For me India is the Guru of the world, or She is not India."\(^{43}\)
Critical Studies on Anand, Narayan and Rao

Most existing critical materials on Anand, Narayan and Rao’s works do not attempt to come to grips with the feminist perspectives. A few exceptions notwithstanding, the bulk of criticism remains descriptive and formalistic in nature when it comes to the interpretation of novels from feminist point of view.

K.R.S. Srinivasa Iyengar in his work *Indian Writing in English* discusses the different aspects of Anand, Narayan and Rao’s writing but there the analysis of female characters is lacking. Female depiction by these authors - minor or major - is not discussed by him in detail.


Saros Cowasjee in *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand* goes for general study of his novels and its different dimensions. Kai Nicholson in
A Presentation of Social Problems in the Indo-Anglian and the Anglo-Indian Novels deals with the depiction of social reality and the related problems of the society.


R. M. Verma in Some Aspects in Indo-English Fiction discusses some of the issues related to Indian ethos, sources of the novels of Narayan and the settings and themes of his novels. R. K. Narayan: An Anthology of Recent Criticism edited by C. N. Srinath focuses its attention on Narayan as a Gandhian novelist, his Indianness as a mode of perception, and his identity as an Indian writer.

M. K. Nayak in The Ironic Vision foregrounds irony in Narayan’s novels. Margaret Berry in Lila and Literature concentrates upon Narayan’s concepts of Lila and literature. Iton Shepherd in The Sublime and the Ridiculous: Allegory and Irony in R. K. Narayan’s Fiction successfully delineates the ironical and allegorical elements of Narayan’s novels. In Quest for Identity in Indian English Writing edited by R. S. Pathak, only the character of Raju is portrayed and it is compared to Billy.

P. Dayal in Raja Rao: A Study of His Novels presents the general theme and structure of Rao’s novels. Anu Celly in Women in Raja Rao’s Novel applies Western
feminist theories to her reading of Rao’s work. This work remains more or less descriptive than analytical. C. D. Narsimhaiah in his work *National Identity in Literature and Language: Its Range and Depth in the Novels of Raja Rao* discusses about the Indian identity and culture.

In *An Anthology of Recent Criticism* edited by Ragini Ramachandran, many writers deal with different aspects of Rao’s work such as his language, myth and ritual mainly based on a study of *The Serpent and the Rope*. But in none of these articles we come across the discussion on the issue of gender in Rao’s novels.

Many published essays on Rao’s work focus only on one specific aspect of Rao’s work; they are not full-length studies. For instance Uma Chakravarthy writes about the Siva and Shakti in Rao’s novels. C. D Narsamhiah in *The Swan and the Eagle* finds out the metaphysical elements in Rao’s novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. In *Quest for Identity in Indian English Writing*, edited by R.S Pathak, an essay by Ashok Kumar Jha deals with the issues related to the identity.

As this survey reveals, there are no full length-studies of Anand, Narayan and Rao’s works which foreground gender issues. The present study is a modest attempt to study these eminent novelists from a feminist perspective. Though portrayal of female characters and criticism on the status of women in the literature are not new concerns, what is strikingly different is the new perspective with which the women’s portrayal is being looked at. In this thesis, an attempt has been made to analyze Anand, Narayan and Rao’s literary discourse to unearth the hidden ideologies that construct the notion of womanhood in Indian society, keeping its culture, philosophy and values in perspective.
PLAN

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao have established Indian English Novel in the gamut of Indian and world literatures and carried Indo-Anglian novel to great heights for more than six decades. Anand has been branded as a humanist, progressive and committed writer; Narayan is hailed as a writer, pure and simple and Raja Rao is considered a religious or philosophical novelist. Their fiction, however, is rarely discussed in terms of gender. Therefore, in this thesis an attempt is being made to examine how far Anand’s humanist zeal, Narayan’s happy notes and Raja Rao’s religious fervour have succeeded in coming to grips with woman’s existential reality.

The principal objective of this study is to foreground as well as analyse issues related to gender, female sexuality, power and family relationships in the fiction of Anand, Narayan and Rao. It also aims to examine whether with changing times, the evolution of India as a Nation, spread of education and achievement of independence, the mental make-up of traditional Indian woman evolves or becomes stagnant in their novels. This study aims at tracing the change that has taken place in the authors’ attitudes as well as the attitudes of their female characters. A close look of their fiction reveals certain intentions of the novelists and therefore, an attempt is being made to define the social and moral principles for locating the positions of women in their contemporary world. A predominant feminist perspective has been adopted in the critical analysis of women characters as delineated in the novels of these three authors.
Owing to the vast range of fiction by these three authors, this study restricts itself to the novels written by Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao from roughly around 1935 to 1976. Rather than conducting an exhaustive survey of all the novels written by them in the six decades, nineteen novels have been earmarked for case-studies. Some relatively less popular novels have been included while some landmark novels have been left out, because of a due consideration of space. On the whole, novels chosen for analysis are believed to be representative of the topic under investigation.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of Indo-Anglian fiction and the representation of women till the arrival of these three authors on the scene and thus contextualizes Anand, Narayan and Rao. As the chapter conceptualizes the main hypothetical questions it draws a methodological framework in order to study Anand, Narayan and Rao’s ideological positions as well as the positions of their female characters.

The second chapter describes in brief how gender, female sexuality, power and family relationships are the salient factors for defining woman’s position in the society and discusses some of the feminist theories. It points out how the term feminism is one of the most frequently used but most problematic categories in the field of literary discourse. It examines the relationship among feminist theories in literature. With a brief introduction of Indian feminism, it analyses the position of women in ancient India, the contributions of the social reformers in uplifting the condition of women in the nineteenth century society and also discusses how in the later nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century women’s movement comes to be linked with nationalist movement.
The next three chapters deal with the study of women portrayed in the novels by Anand, Narayan and Rao and attempt to place their notion of womanhood, as depicted in the images of their women characters in the novels.

The concluding chapter apart from bringing all the loose threads together, also brings up the findings about the various ideological positions of Anand, Narayan and Rao.


**Notes**


4. Ibid., 6-7.


8. Ibid., 8.


11. Ibid., 9.

12. Ibid., 6-7.


18 Ibid., 358.


22 Ibid., 21

23 Ibid., 21


26 Ibid., 146.


36 Ibid., 64.


43 Ibid., 322.