CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view. Art is not necessarily for art’s sake. Purposeless art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me as a sound Judgment.

— Bhabani Bhattacharya

India has a rich and hoary tradition of story–telling, a brilliant galaxy of story–tellers who illumine the pages of her history and literature. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Rajmohan’s wife (1864), which is typical of a transitional period in the history of Indian literature was the first attempt made by an Indian to produce a novel in English. Later the novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Kamala Markendeya, Nayanatara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy, and several others have made their contribution for the flourishing of Indian English fiction.

The Indian English literature has achieved far reaching importance both in India and abroad in the recent decades. Indian English literature has been called “a Janus–faced literature” born of “a cross fertilization of two faithful cultures” - Indian and European. The Indian fiction in English is now living, developing and evolving literary force. It is also accepted as a significant part of third world or new literatures. Though the Indian novel in English has begun as a ‘hot-house-plant’, it establishes firm roots in Indian soil.
It has attained a rich growth, mounting extraordinary heights in the context of the contemporary Indian literature scene.

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of many writers whose literary manifesto was to write for social, political and economic purpose. The purpose was not only to throw light upon the social evils and malpractices prevailing in the society in those days but also to employ fiction to the cause of social amelioration. The proliferation of novel in Indian English manifests itself multifariously encompassing almost every aspect of Indian social life. In the last one hundred years or so, this staggering branch of literature has blossomed like a fragrant flower and has become golden gate for the world to see India through. This literary explosion or renaissance has not been quite evolutionary, but in recent years, it has caused a boom in the realism of Indian fiction writing.

The Indian novel in English began as a novel of social realism but not as a romance or historical romance. The raise of the novel in India was not purely a literary phenomenon. It was a social phenomenon, rather than a mere fulfilment of a social need or desire. It was associated with social, political and economic conditions of the country. Fiction is the off-shoot of the impact of Western literature on the Indian mind. The novel in India was purely a foreign import. The English novelists Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe and Sir Walter Scott and the English translations of the illustrious European novelists Leo Tolstoy, Honoré de Balzac, Fyodor Mikhail, Ovich, Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo and many others apprised the Indian writer with the theme and technique of fiction. Indian writers became aware of the latest achievements of their contemporaries in foreign tongues and produced work of a technically high standard after reading the world’s
classics in their own language. The literary stature of Indian Novel in English has steadily grown with each successive work of fiction. Indisputably, it has achieved global recognition as a significant genre.

The next important figure on the literary scene was Rabindranath Tagore, a multi-faceted genius. He came like a colossus on the Indian literary scene. He exerted a tremendous influence on the minds of the people with the choice of his themes. Tagore started by first imitating Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, till he found his own choice with *Choker Bali* (1908). To Tagore goes the credit of nurturing the infant genre at its most important stage of growth. He brought a new force into the form as embodied in *Gora* (1923), *The Home and The World* (1919), *Binodini* (1959), *The Wreck* (1919), *Four Chapters* (1950) and *Farewell My Friend* (1956). A significant fact of the period was that with Tagore, the growth of the Indian English novel and the novels in regional languages in India developed almost on parallel lines. Tagore’s novels helped the Indians to rediscover themselves and also created a new awareness about their culture. Tagore translated some of his Bengali works into English which helped in laying the foundations of the Indian English novel. His novels are mostly novels of ideas.

He adopted the novel genre to depict the inner changes in the lives of characters in relation to time and space. Tagore’s influence is all pervading, as seen in the novels of his successors Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and score of others. Sarath Chandra and Prem Chand carried the novel a little further by extending its range. Their preoccupation was with the downtrodden and the destitute. Their realistic and bold depiction of the misery of the lower classes, foreshadows the best fiction of Mulk Raj Anand in English.
The novels of the 1930’s reflected the progressive philosophy of the writers. They were vocal about injustice, cruelty and exploitation that the masses faced. Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and Bud* (1938) took the creative imagination from historical romances to social realism. G.V. Deseni’s *All about H. Hatterr* (1948) to it further to the psychological probing into individual personality.

The Fifties was a period of socially conscious novels such as Kamala Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), K.A. Abbas’s *Inquilab* (1955) and R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide* (1958) which were imbued with didactic rumblings in the agonized psyche of the characters. Nayanatara Sahgal’s *A Time to be Happy* (1958) traced the development of nationalist movement and the contrast offered by the old devoted nationalists with young pragmatic mercenaries.

The Sixties showed the development of psychological novels which highlighted the Indian identity under the onslaught of the cultural influences of the west, while Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) was an attempt on the terrorist movement in India. Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *shadow from Ladakh* (1966) and R.K. Narayan’s *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) gave a perspective analysis of the historical process of social changes in India after Independence. Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner* (1968), on the other hand, rendered the alienation of Indian expatriates in the quagmire of inter-cultural flux.

The Seventies was a decade of the novelists’ protest against the political tyranny and autocratic tendencies. An attempt was made to portray and project the scenario which was trying to stifle democracy and curb freedom. Political consciousness of the people
was awakened by referring to the period of emergency. The fictionalized world of the period was given due prominence so that the same sort of happenings may not take place again. A new lease of life with renewed pledges is promised through the fictional projection of the futuristic vision vis-à-vis socio-politico-economic situation in modern India.

The nineteen eighties was a fruitful period with Salman Rushdie getting the Booker Award for *Midnight’s Children* and Vikram Seth stirring the Indian mind with the publication of *A Suitable Boy*. Alongside the richness, variety and abundance of ideas in the work of the old stalwarts, there existed a plethora of works by younger novelists illuminating the milky way of Indian fiction in English. It was an epoch-making and trend-setting era for Indian novel in English opening new vistas and showing possibilities of new avenue for fiction-writing.

The decade of the Nineties was the harbinger of more profitable business to the Western publishers and it gave a special niche to Vikram Seth, Shobha De, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee and they made quick bucks. The Western readers suffering from the angst of depression and melancholia needing some kind of diversion have turned to Indian novel in English for getting spiritual solace. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*, Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and Balraj Khanna’s *A Nation of Fools* highlighted their divine propensities. Mistry was a runner up for Booker Award in 1991. Githa Harilharan too hit the buzzer with her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*. Amitav Ghosh won acclaim for both his fiction and non-fiction.
Feminism has grown from Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, R.P. Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal to pave way for Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande, Nina Sibal, Anees Jung, Raji Narsimhan, Bharati Mukharjee and others. These newer female voices have highlighted the interior landscape of the emancipated woman’s sensibility and her psychological pragmatism.

This changing scenario in Indian fiction in English has witnessed change in tone, temperament and thought-content as a result of the novelist’s newly acquired conviction and maturity. Modern woman has now acquired substance and an unconventional character and has paved way for a new dimension of the Indian novel in English. The novelists of today have begun to delineate the psychology of the characters and the complex environs which has greatly affected them.

Many Indian novelists have based their fiction on the raw material of history. This is true in the case of novels like Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*, Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* and *Delhi*. Again, Salman Rushdie mingled history and fiction in his newly-released novel *Shalimar the Crown*. Set in the age of hyperbole and bloodshed, Rushdie’s new work is inspired by Indian mythology, Los Angeles fakery and Hindu culture.

There is yet another category of novels with a focus on a particulars city, viz. Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*, Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay* and Nayantara Sahgal’s *A Situation in New Delhi*. In Suketu Mehta’s first book *Maximum City: Bombay Lost & Found*, the city has finally found its restless chronicler.
Dorothy Figuiera remarks:

The novelist is a new kind of god, who loves people, who overcomes his own isolation, puts his own knots alongside theirs, grows with them, manifests himself in the multiplicity of their beings and releases them into their own unique life, and co-exists with them in the joys and sorrows of their human life (Dorothy 41).

In the nineteen-thirties the indispensable trio of the gigantic Indo – Anglian writers Viz. Mulk Raj Ananad, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao and a few other Indian novelists began to write fiction in English. They were genuine novelists for whom the art of fiction was an end in itself and not just a means of communicating other kinds of truth. Particularly the three writers who were distinguished not only for their own work but “[…]as the inaugurators of the form itself, since it was they who defined the area in which the Indian novel in English was to operate drew the first models of its characters and themes and elaborated its particular logic. Each used his own version of an English freed from the foggy taste of Britain transferred to a wholly new setting of brilliant light and brutal heat” (William 62) Indian English fiction is rich and varied with a wide range of themes-social, historical, romantic, detective, rural, psychological, freedom movement, partition, cross cultural conflict etc., .

R.K. Narayan is the conspicuous star in the galaxy of fictionists, by virtue of his achievement. It is certified by the fact that his novels are translated into the major languages of the world, which also indicates his wide popularity the world over. He is one of the founding fathers of Indian English fiction. There is no ‘good’ and ‘bad’
characters in Narayan’s novels. Human nature is presented veraciously and interestingly and memorably. ‘Malgudi’ is Narayan’s “Casterbridge”. In fact, Narayan’s main characters take life so seriously that they appear little spiritual and mostly secular. He is a species by himself. He has immortalized himself by the creation of Malgudi, a real life character provided him with the original of The Guide, the most popular of his novels.

Narayan is a master of realism and angst. His characters and situations, incidents and episodes, are real and true to daily life. Man appears, passes through self-made travails of life, and vanishes into life. That is the central theme of Narayan’s fiction. He portrays life as a mighty force to which man has to bow, willingly or unwillingly, his head ultimately and accept it. The achievement of Narayan is that he effortlessly sustains below the selfish current of the clownish an undercurrent of stainless splendour.

The third of the trio, Raja Rao is the most individualistic of Indian creative writers in English and the most conscious of the dignity of his vocation. His first novel Kanthapura (1938) was hailed by E.M. Forster as the finest of its kind about India that had appeared till then. It deals with the problem of untouchability, along with other issues like freedom struggle, toddy drinking and labour wages. Inspired by Gandhian ideals, Moorthy and his supporters work for the betterment of the untouchables at the social and economic level. The reactionary forces also seem to be active to sabotage their progressive work. But, as the untouchables join hands with Gandhians, the reactionary forces do not succeed in their attempt. As the narrator is able to recollect the past and the present and to visualize the charge in the future, there is a suggestion of social change as a probable remedy for the problem of untouchability. His novels have mythical background and metaphysical treatment of characters. Through his experiments with
languages and form, has given the Indo-Anglian novel a distinctly Indian preoccupation with metaphysical question.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is a major voice among the Indian English novelists of our times. Social realism is the most important feature of Bhattacharya as a novelist. He is a humanist and a novelist with a purpose. He is interested in the happiness and well-being of humanity. He is also a conscious artist who occupies a prominent place among the Indian English novelists.

The themes of his imaginative writings have welled up from his own life. Bhabani Bhattacharya is a novelist who is interested in the problem of social change. He is a realist keen about the exploring realities of life in the country. He has a sensitive understanding of the problems of contemporary Indian society. He has acquired it from his minute observation of life of the common folk. Reality to Bhattacharya is a “Soul of art” art should convey truth—“a truth of emotion which is the ultimate realism” According to him, “the creative writer’s final business is to reveal the truth”.

On the literary map of Indian Women’s writing, Anita Desai appears to be a leading luminary. In the critical perspective, she is rightly considered to be ‘an Indian Jane Austen and Virgina Woolf”. Her artistic short stories, trend – setting novels and carefully constructed other literary articles have earned for her a literary fame of a serious and skilful author of the world in our modern age. In Indian writing she has established herself for her remarkable contribution to the development of art and ethos of novel-writing technique. Her novels create the colonial effects on our mind and heart for the
varying Indian social values and present the microcosmic study of man-woman relationship in the changed atmosphere of the modern time.

In the novels of Anita Desai, the interior of the human being forms the core of scrutiny. Unlike Ruth Prawar Jhabvala who gives graphic details about reality, Anita Desai is interested in the study of the lives and working of the mind of the characters. The most prominent feature of Desai’s art is the delineation of character. She is primarily interested in the portrayal of female protagonists as living in separate, closed, sequestered world of existential problems and passions. Each individual is portrayed as an unsolved mystery being hyper-sensitive, solitary and introspective. The women have their material needs taken care of by wealth and servants, but their emotional needs remain unsatiated.

Ruth Prawar Jhabwala is the first woman novelist of Indian English fiction. She has a discerning eye for the changing pattern of Urban life in modern India, especially in and around Delhi. She shows a considerable narrative power in drawing an ironic, comic, yet sympathetic portrayal of the middle classes. She is undoubtedly a very skilful writer of domestic comedy with a penchant for irony and social satire. Her portrayal of India and Indian scene, though marked by detachment, has become somewhat controversial. Her stories have appeared in the “Encounter”, “The New Yorker” and other prestigious Journals. She gives graphic details about reality.

The 1980’s witnessed efflorescent of new Indian fiction in English heralding a new era of change in its tenor, tone and content. The new crop of writers produced their maiden works and brought a new conviction and maturity which was all its own. The
1980’s witnessed a second coming of the Indian novel in English. Its messiah seems to have been Salman Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie is a name with which almost the entire literary world is familiar. It won’t be wrong to call him the bold voice of the contemporary Indian subcontinent. His *Midnight’s Children* became a seminal book for most of the writing that has come from the third world. He stands with his ability to peel off the cicatrices of reality to show beneath it the raw flesh of deep feeling of dispossession and displacement.

Realism in art and literature is an attempt to portray life as it is. It shows life with camera fidelity, omitting nothing, that is ugly or painful, and idealizing nothing. To the realists, the artist’s main function is to describe as accurately as possible what is observed through senses. Realism began as a recognizable movement in the 1700’s. By the mid 1800’s it was a decrement art form. In part realism which has been a revolt against classicism and romanticism is a unique literary phenomenon that never endeavours “to distort life by forcing it to agree with their own desires or with the formulas of art”.

However in the process of selecting and presenting their material, the realists cannot help being influenced by what they feel and think. Even the most thorough going realism is the result of observations and personal judgment. It is an effect as well as a cause, it is subservient to ideas, to motives of sentiment and principle, and these motives can be of extremely different character.

The growing popularity of realism has been more than simply ‘a reaction against the pretty worlds of romantic fiction’. It has gained currently as well as due to two major factors. One is the development of modern science with its emphasis on facts and figures
and the other is an increasing desire of artists and readers for realistic understanding of different social problems. Even social realism is not an object, to be identified, pinned down and appropriated. It is rather a vary of describing certain methods and attitudes, and the descriptions, quite naturally, have varied in the ordinary exchange and development of experience.

Realism is a ‘many- splendoured’ thing. It has its sociological, aesthetic, philosophical, political regional and psychological nuances, which merit a careful study in depth- especially when we have to take stock of currents and crosscurrents – affecting for better or for worse- the authenticity, the literary excellence and credibility of much of Indo – English fiction. No doubt, the realistic movement both in the East and the West gathered strength in the mid- nineteenth century, with a student note of protest against the traditional sentimental, sloppy stuff: mysteries, romance, legend, religious sermons and utopias of wish-fulfilment. Novelists like Tolstoy and Turgenev in Russia, Balzac, Maupassant and Flaubert in France, Dickens and Hardy in England, Sarat Chandra Chatterji and Prem Chand in India blazed the trail (in most cases) faced social and political Persecution but ultimately found themselves canonized into saints and savants of realism. They lashed out –among other things –at social inequities, mental inhibitions, moral and religious taboos, economic disparities, political systems and metaphysical subtleties in a spirit of strong, healthy humanitarianism.

Turgenev’s *Sportman’s Sketches* (1852) focused the attention of the public on serfdom and the evils connected with it. The same year Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* forced a debate on the slavery movement in America. Benjamin Disraelis *Sybil: or The Two Nations* (1845) Mrs. E.C.Gas Kells’ *North and South* (1855) Charles
Kingsley’s *Alton Locke* (1850), Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1852): all these novels were sociological in their intent and highlighted the evils of factories and law courts the problem of the emancipation of women, the inhumanity of war and beatific vision of a future society.

No wonder Karl Marx (no aesthetician or theorist of fiction then) wrote to the German romantic poet and critic - Heinrich Heine to give up writing about the pangs of passionate lovers and devote himself to the sufferings of the oppressed. As a result of Marx’s advice Heine blossomed into a socialist poet who wrote that immortal *Song of the Silesian Weavers*.

The word realism was first applied in France to Courbet’s paintings around 1850, but was soon extended to literature as well. In the year of the Mutiny in India (1857) it was applied to George Eliot’s *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Gustave Flaubert the same year was persecuted by the Government for the first realistic novel – *Madame Bovary* for ‘outrage of public morals’. It was evident that now the contagion of realism had spread throughout the whole continent. Victor Hugo who was the ‘avant- garde’ of romanticism in France around 1830 developed a socialist trend in his master piece - *Less Miserable’s* (1862). Dealing with basic human emotions – parental affection, revenge, compassion and gratitude- its theme ranging from battles to the sewers of Paris.

Mulk Raj Anand is an Indian English novelist who depicts the lives of the poor peasants, women and the downtrodden in his novels. He is one of the three pillars of Indian Writings in English, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan being the other two. These writers have tried to bring respectability and identity to Indian English Literature through
their writings. They have made a sincere attempt to articulate the subdued feelings and suppressed emotions of their countrymen.

Indian literature was identified as a literature of fairy-tales and fantasy stories in the World. Bengali novelists like Sharat Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore made an endeavour to bring a note of realism in their works. The trend was continued by the trio. These novelists now gathered courage to voice the sufferings of the people under British rule and also under the pressure of outdated customs and oppressive traditions. Age old practices of discrimination on the basis of caste and class continued to crush the free spirit of man and also continued to separate man from man. The weak, backwards and have-nots have suffered at different levels and at all levels but could not think of uniting regardless of any bias under one banner of humanity. They remained disintegrated under different flags.

The third decade before Independence marked a phenomenal success of Indian writings in English. The years 1935-37 were particularly productive. In the nineteen – thirties the indispensable trio of the gigantic Indo- Anglian fiction writers, viz. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao and a few other Indian novelists began to write in English. Mulk Raj Anad, who is famous chiefly as a writer of sociological novels incorporates some of the most glaring social evils like untouchability, exploitation of labourers and poor workers, position of women etc. to arouse the social conscience. In fact, there is hardly any ugly or depressing aspect of the Indian social life which has not been attacked by Anand in his fictional world.
He is one of the most widely translated of authors and his work has been edited, criticized, interpreted, reinterpreted and researched into. These researches have been done on his sixteen novels, half a dozen collections of short stories, several books on art and painting, and a large number of articles on a variety of topics – literature, art, politics, religion society and its institutions and their influences. Anand has attempted to solve the problems of heterogeneous audience by choosing themes and situations that have more or less the same validity all over the country. Anand is a versatile personality. He is a thinker, novelist, short-story writer, essayist, critic, connoisseur of art and educationist. But all these roles also convey a converging and holistic view of Anand’s vision of life.

The Doyen of Indian English fiction, Mulk Raj Anand was born on December 12 in 1905, in Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province of pre-partition of India. His father Lal Chand was a coppersmith who matriculated and rose to the position of the Head clerk in Dogra Regiment of the British Army. His mother Iswar Kaur hailed from a peasant family, whose songs and stories drawn from Indian myths, epics and folklore were a source of inspiration to him. And then crossed the sea to get his further education at Cambridge and London. Anand attended Khalsa College, Amritsar, and entered the University of Punjab in 1921, graduation with honors in 1924. Thereafter, Anand did his additional studies at Cambridge and London University. Later he divided his time in 1930s and 1940s between literary London and Indian freedom struggle.

Anand was educated at Lahore, London and Cambridge. He completed his thesis on the thought of Locke, Berkley, Hume and Bertrand Russell. He was awarded Ph.D degree from London University. He met Jawaharlala Nehru in 1928. He toured Paris, Rome and Vienna. Anand joined the struggle for Independence and fought with the
Republicans in the Spanish civil war. During world war II he worked as a broadcaster and script writer in the film division of the BBC in London. When he returned home, he stayed with Gandhi in Sevagram and with Rabindranath Tagore in Shantiniketan. After the World War II Anand returned permanently to India and made Bombay his home town and center of activity. In 1946 he founded the fine-arts magazine *Marg*.

Anand also became a director of Kutub Publishers. Anand taught at various Indian Universities between 1948 and 1968. He was a fine arts chairman at Lalit Kala Akademi from 1965 to 1970. In 1970 he became the president of Lokayata Trust for creating a community and cultural centre in the village of Hauz Khas, New Delhi. To understand Anand as a writer, we have to understand the age and the world, in which he was born in and brought up. He left for England in 1925 at the age of twenty to pursue research in philosophy. The boundaries of his thinking were extended. The reality of the first half of the 20th century – Indian as well as Western needs to be taken into account for proper appreciation of Anand’s fiction.

Mulk Raj Anand certainly enjoys the reputation of being a major figure in the field of Indo-English fiction. Anand is Dickensian in his ultra-sensitivity to the existence of social evils in protean forms. In fact, it is the keen awareness of the human predicament that propelled him into creative writing. Therefore the themes which Anand has chosen for his novels are based on such problems as casteism, and human suffering caused by a variety of factors – political, economic, social and cultural. He says categorically; “I would no longer live by the dead ideas of traditional philosophies, the ritual of the old religions or by the tame words of the classics” (Tiwari 26). He tries to create in the readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils to stir the
springs of tenderness in them and to activise them for the removal of these evils in order that a desirable, just social order may come into being.

He travelled widely, studied books on philosophy, literature and art. After publication of Untouchable in the following years he acquired and enjoyed the friendship of great English and International writers and poets like, Ernst Toller, Andre Malraux, Ralph Fox, Stephen Spender, Cuthbert Worsly, Ernest Hemingway, Dylan Thomas, Philip Henderson and Edith Young. He is recipient of many prestigious awards Padma Bhushan, the International peace prize and Sahitya Academy Award. As one of the Bloomsbury Group, he rubbed shoulders with celebrities like T.S. Eliot, George Orwell, E.M. Forster, and Herbert Read.

Anand’s fictional output is massive enough. He is a prominent Indian author of novels, short stories and critical essays. His most popular novels Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936) examine the problems of poverty, ill-treatment and exploitation of the poor by the rich. Among his other remarkable novels are Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940); The Sword and the Sickle (1942), Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts (1939), Seven Summers (1942), The Big Heart (1945), Apology for Heroism (1946), The private life of an Indian Prince (1953). The Old Women and the Cow(1960). The Road (1961), The Death of a Hero (1963) and Morning Face (1968).

His major novels reveal his basic concern for the downtrodden. The characters he chooses for his novels are the reflections of the people from the life around him. He himself acknowledges.
All these heroes as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories, were dear to me because they were the reflections of real people I had known during my childhood and youth. They were flesh of my flesh and blood and obsessed me in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist’s soul. And I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of life (Sinha 28).

Till the last day of his life, he used to be a voice protesting against all kinds of expression, exploitation, communal Frenzy. Fully aware that his should be a cry in the wilderness he never minced words nor lost an opportunity to give his clarion call. Though he was initially attracted to Marxism; eventually he matured into a confirmed humanist, and this philosophy of humanism, he not only professed but practiced till his last breath.

Anand has observed the life so closely and keenly. His felt experiences give authenticity to his fiction especially the part of it which deals with the swarming life of the houses the streets of the cities and also of the villages. The throngs of beggars, the urchins playing in the streets, the hand in craft men, sweating and working in the lanes and by-lanes of these cities. The Lallas sitting and cheating the common people, the markets with its jugglers its quarrels, the factories, the roads of Bombay in contrast of high luxury and low misery all provide not only the back ground of Anand’s fiction but form the very surface and texture of it.

Mulk Raj Anand, the pioneer of Indian writing in English is a unique synthesis of the ideas of such diverse masters as Nanak Iqbal, Marx, Gandhi and Nehru. His
humanism is a happy blend of the teachings and insights of these and other thinkers affected profoundly. His contact with European and Asian thought and culture. Anand lived in the midst of intellectual influences like Russell’s ‘rationalism’, Lawrence’s Rousseauistic ‘Naturalism’ Middleton Murry’s mystical view of ‘the supreme beauty of poetical experience’ Mr.Wyndhem Lew’s satirizing every one” but all these views failed to impress Anand. He points out that the growth of humanistic values in him was the consequence of the influence of Buddha, Guru Nanak, Ram Mohan Roy, M.N.Roy and Jawahar Lal Nehru. His humanism is the mainspring of his philosophy and life and is largely founded on Lord Buddha’s concept of ‘Karuna’, the yoke of pity. He sought Buddhist compassion, because he believed that through Buddhist compassion alone one could understand, the insults men heaped on each other.

Anand had been inspired and influenced by the style of the Indian folk-tales and fairy stories since his childhood when he used to listen to his mother’s recounting of these tales. Here is a synthesis of traditional Indian style of the short story and western psychological approach in his short story writing. Apart from the deeply spiritual bond Anand experienced, through his mother he was nourished with the songs, tales, myths, and epics of the village community.

He develops a compassionate view and interpretation of life. Anand’s novels are landmarks in Indian English fiction and his social realism that goes with a poetic view of life. His sensitive and humanistic grasp of the inner processes of human life and his empathetic receptiveness to the longing and groaning and the wisdom and beauty in the lives of the poor people of his country add richness and depth to the content and form of
his fiction. Anand insists upon the duty of the novelist to transform words into prophesy for ushering in a new humanity:

What is a writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his own torments, urges and exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations and aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience – thus becoming the seer of a new vision in any given situation (Nigam 41).

As a social realist and critic, Anand attacks injustice of every type, socio-politico-economic exploitation with its myriad ramifications in the realms of caste, religion, sex, colonialism, feudalism and industrial capitalism form the major content of Anand’s perceptive investigation. The forces of prejudice, superstition and ignorance come under his critical scrutiny. Casteism, for instance, is attacked as an age-old lie- a heinous crime – because it perpetuates advantage to some and injustice to many, and he rejects it outright. *Untouchable* and *The Road* illustrate his state of mind against the malady of caste.

The philosophy of humanism permeates the whole corpus of his fiction. The basis of his humanism rests upon his faith in the creative imagination of man rather than on a Divine Supreme being. It has a reverent attitude towards the last members of society-towards the weak and the underprivileged where ever they may be. It calls for the liberation of man from the morass of superstitions and poverty and urges man to promote humanness and humane values.
G.S. Balarama Gupta rightly observes, “For Anand is a humanist all the way and his prime concern is the human predicament in all its dimensions. As a novelist Anand displays an unflagging interest in restoring the basic human rights to the underprivileged and the dispossessed in the Indian society. An exposure of the economic exploitation of the deprived and a castigation of the existing caste and class distinctions in India has been a major pre-occupation of the writer” (Mitra 55-56). “Mr. M.K. Naik has aptly referred to him as “the novelist of the social man” (Naik 1).

Mulk Raj Anand, as the late professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observed, rightly earned the name. “The veritable Dickens of the East” Who critiqued all sorts of societal and systemic exploitations that led to human depravity and deprivation. But, as a dissenting pilgrim – artist, he also facilitated a catharsis vis-a-vis the compunctious visitation of the readers conscience. A carrier pursued with a resolute social conscience for almost seventy five years. These creative seventy five years were inextricably intertwined with his ‘search for a Just, equitable and forward – looking India’.

Untouchable (1935) is Mulk Raj Anand’s very first and powerful novel which highlights the social wrongs of Indian society. It is written in James Joyce’s stream of consciousness’ technique. It is an acknowledged classic since it covers the events of a single day in the life of Bakha in the town of Bulashah. The novel has been translated into many languages. Bakha, the hero of Untouchable is a victim of caste-conscious society. He is a prototype of the protagonists of Anand’s several novels. He is a sweeper’s son and he is considered an untouchable. He is well built with distinctive physique and broad intelligent face – “Each muscle of his body, hard as rock when it came to play, seemed to shine forth like glass. What a dexterous workman! The onlooker
would have said. And though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean”
(Anand 7-8). But he is hated for the job he does. He has to clean latrines, bring
cleanliness in place of filth and possible disease. Where ever he moves, he is belittled
with words as “defiled and polluted” and society heaps abuses on him because of his low
origin.

Another dichotomy is, when Bakha’s young and beautiful sister Sohini goes to the
village to fetch water. She waits for some time and then Kalinath, the priest of the village
takes pity on her and fills her pitcher. While filling the pitcher he invites the girl to his
house for cleaning the courtyard. When the girl goes to cleaning the courtyard Pandit
Kalinath has made indecent suggestions and tried to molest her. When exposed, he crises
out, “Polluted, polluted”, and accuses her of defiling the platform and polluting him by
her physical proximity to him. Such brazen insolence of the Brahmin priest is tolerated
by the Hindu society, because in the caste hierarchy Brahmin is superior to everybody
else. But Bakha was alive to his dignity and honour of his life. A temple priest’s attempt
at molesting Bakha’s sister, Sohini, is an alarming exposure of the hypocrisy of the
Brahmins who clearly lived in double standards. The priest who avoided even the shadow
of an untouchable surrendered to his sensual and sexual urge with absolutely no qualms
of conscience.

Bakha has to bear everything, he was unable to do anything and it is also feel to
be moved by the bitterness of the language of the so-called highcaste persons when they
began to chide Bakha in an abuse language, ‘Swine dog,’ ‘You brute,’ ‘Dirty dog,’ etc.
His crime was only that he inadvertently touched a caste Hindu in the market. Bakha was
helpless, he continued to listen all this and bent down his head mumbling something.
“This dirty dog bumped right into me. So unmindfully do these sons of bitches walk in the street! He was walking alone without the slightest effort at announcing his approach, the swine” (Anand 39). Despite all this Bakha is a dedicated worker. He begins his day even before dawn at the rude command of his father. Bakha avoids all alibis accompanying idleness and goes about with strength and vitality. He finished the fifth round of work even before he could have his morning cup of tea. But it is irony that society pays no credit to his devotion to duty.

Through Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand draws our attention to number of questionable customs and social ways of the Hindu society of the thirties, particularly the caste system. It makes us conscious of the various problems of the untouchables who are ill-treated, underfed and exploited by the upper strata of our society. This orthodox social system made Anand’s conscience paint the picture of caste-ridden society, having been divided since ancient times, on the basis of caste, into four sections – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras.

Coolie (1936) is the second novel of Anand, Just as Anand’s childhood friendship with a sweeper boy named Bakha helped him to write Untouchable, his awareness of the sufferings of his childhood playmate, Munoo, who was compelled to labour in a pickle factory and who accepted his lot with a fatalism peculiar to Indian peasantry, urged him to write Coolie. The novel was written in three months and was published in 1936 by Lawrence and Wisker. Coolie is one of the most popular works of Anand. It has been translated into more than 38 languages of the world. It has been called an ‘epic of misery’, ‘The epic of modern India’ and the odyssey of Munoo, ‘the coolie’.
Coolie is a powerful social tragedy due to the artistic treatment of the cruel, inhuman social forces of poverty and exploitation. The premature death of the protagonist becomes all the more tragic, because he is an innocent child. Anand presented Munoo with sociological significance by making him represent various phases of proletarian existence.

His life is a saga of pain and suffering. First he is tortured by his aunt and uncle as he was an orphan. They send him to the house of an officer to serve them as a domestic servant. He receives sub-human treatment there also. He changes the job and joins a pickle factory and later on serves as a coolie in the Bazar of Daulatpur. His search for a better living brings him to Bombay where he serves as a labourer in a cotton mill. He gets injured in a clash between the capitalists and labourers. Getting hurt, he is pitied upon by a European lady and acts as her rickshaw puller. Unable to bear the burden and strain of this job, he meets his tragic end. The entire novel is a story of Munoo being knocked from one end to another by his tragic fate like a shuttle –cock. The novel is a sad commentary upon the status of main Indian society where man is not judged as man but is judged on the basis of class and caste. It is a sad commentary upon the values cherished by the people. Munoo says, “All servants look alike. There must be only two classes of people, the rich and the poor” (Iyengar 126). Poverty is an evil itself and Munoo is victim of this evil of poverty. The tyranny of the class system weighs so much upon his mind that it finally becomes the cause of his death.

*Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) mirrors the plight of workers in Indian society. It is one of the greatest novels of Anand. This novel dramatizes moral issues. It shows a tremendous dramatic power through the counter pointing of good and evil and through a
conscious manipulation of characters and incidents Gangu, the hero of the novel, leaves his native village in the Punjab and Journeys to distant Assam to take a Job with Macpherson Tea Estate owned by Englishmen. He is accompanied by his wife, Sajani, and by his daughter and son, Leila and Budhoo. Gangu, an unheroic hero, is a typical farmer facing debt, hunger, malaria, insult and even death with a strange natural dignity. The journey has been arranged by Buta, the Sardar and coolie-catcher of Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam. Soon Gangu discovers that the promises made to him were all false, that the world of a tea–plantation is like a prison house.

The labourers were constantly ill-tREATED and put to hard labour. Their women were molested. Escape from these oppressive conditions was almost impossible. Any sign of revolt was dealt with a heavy hand. Soon malaria breaks out and wife of Gangu, Sanjani dies, Gangu receives a severed jolt. After he is kicked and chased out from Croft-Crooke’s premises where he went to request a loan for Sajani’s burial, he reacts with the resigned indifference of the Hindu saying. “It was only one more reward for the misdeeds of his past life” (Anand 113).

Two Leaves and a Bud, has unmistakable echoes of Forster’s A passage to India. The callous and unfeeling British represented by Croft-Crooke, the manager and Reggie Hunt, a drunkard and a womanizer, are in flagrant disagreement with the humanist. Dr. De La Harve and his beloved, Barbara, both of whom are clearly for the Indian’s and condemn the latter’s exploitation by the British imperialists and capitalists. It is perhaps not unfair to suggest that Two Leaves and a Bud is more an extended moral allegory than an exercise in creating believable human figures. The symbolic value of Anand’s characterisation can be discussed in the context of The Two Leaves and a Bud.
of this novel is shown passionately engaged in a life and death struggle with society. In a world dominated by wrongs and injustices, the hero becomes the authentic voice of common humanity, the well and the conscience of mankind. He is both victim and rebel a symbol of the tragic and the ironic, the heroic and unheroic. As in the case of Gangu, he tries to escape from the clutches of Englishmen but he finds himself more in the grip of miserable conditions.

Its title is most suggestive and appropriate for it deals with the suffering and misery of the workers on the tea-plantation of Assam, workers who have to pluck, “two leaves and a bud,” day in and day out. *Two Leaves and a Bud* takes us to the luxuriant forests of Assam and reveals to us the horrid plight of the labourers in a tea plantation there. This novel draws upon the real life-account of plantation workers in British owned Tea-Estates in Assam. While unfolding Gangu’s tale Anand leaves no aspect of plantation life untouched particularly he throws light on the dubious values and dehumanizing motives of British colonizers.

*The Big Heart* (1945) also presents a realistic picture of the condition and the problem of the poor that their community vis–a–vis the capitalist coppersmiths of Amritsar. The novel depicts clearly the exploitation and humiliation of the unemployed craftsmen by the capitalists. Which the starving Thathiers have to accept, if they want to make both ends meet and not to starve. *The Big Heart* is the most humanistic of Anand’s all novels. All most all the principles and doctrines of Anand’s humanism find suggestive vindication in this novel. Anand’s humanisam believes that pain is the fundamental fact of the universe, but it cannot be avoided. Like Anand, his hero Ananta, too, believes that
the most of the sufferings of the poor are due to the pain and cruelty that some men take pleasure in inflicting on the less privileged members of the society.

The novel elaborates a single day’s events, which are chronicled in it. Its major character Ananta, a coppersmith, returns to his home town of Amritsar after having worked in factories in Bombay and Ahmedabad. He brings with him Janki, a young widow, whom he loves and who is now slowly dying of tuberculosis. In Amritsar, Ananta resumes his hereditary trade, but like most people of his brotherhood he has difficulty in making a living. The introduction of a machine has thrown the artisans out of work. Though Ananta suffers from the introduction of the machine, he can still see their usefulness. He knows that the machines are there to stay and he draws an interesting analogy between machines and dowry while talking to Janki.

The theme of The Big Heart is caste and class system and it is dexterously fused in the novel. Anand highlights casteism in all its complexity for we see it not in its rigidity but in its insidiousness. The relation between Lala Muralidhar and Kasera Gokal Chand, the managing partners, expected to be harmonious on account of money consideration becomes strained because of caste differences. We observe how these two evils, caste and class, exist simultaneously. The novel emphasizes here the impossibility of avoiding contact with the caste other than one’s own as a result of changed condition of life and the increasing use of machinery for a variety of purposes.

The Old Woman and The Cow (1960) is the reflection of the predicament of Indian women. It foregrounds the issue of a woman on the grounds of gender. Gauri is depicted by Anand as a female subaltern subject to an inferior status in a male-dominated
society. We find a mythological reality in this novel. *The Old Woman and The Cow* is the only novel in which Anand constructs the plots around a female character. His great concern for the oppressed finds emphatic expression in this novel. The removal of the disabilities of the Indian woman and her freedom from various forms of oppressions and suppressions has been an unending process.

Significantly, Anand uses myth as a part of his technique for the first time in his novel. It is the story of Gauri who is gentle and good like a cow, is given a way in marriage to Panchi, a temperamental youth of the village of Chota Piplan in the foot hills of the Himalayas. She is meek and suffering gentle and uncomplaining country woman offering a close parallel to Sita in her mute acquiescence. She puts up with everything at her husband’s home and settles down patiently to a life of unremitting toil, hunger and pain. The situation, however worsens because of drought and famine. Gauri’s meekness makes her vulnerable to abuses and beatings at the hands of her husband. Even her chastity is doubted. She pleads for her innocence and purity but to no avail; Driven out of her in–law’s home, she goes back to her mother where a still worse fate awaits her. Her mother mercilessly sells her off to an old, lecherous Seth. Unable to win her love by courtship, the old lecher tries to outrage her modesty; she firmly resists and angrily leaves the house.

Colonel Mahindra’s association brings about a metamorphosis in her. From the gentle, meek and docile “Cow’s acquiescent visage”, she is transformed into a self-willed woman with an individuality of her own. Colonel Mahindra helps her life of misery and travail. Instigated by the village gossip, Panchi compels her to prove her chastity. Gauri desperately realizes that she has no means to prove her chastity, for the mother earth
would not open her womb for her as she had done for Sita, nor would any god come forward to rescue her from humiliation. She, therefore, guided by her own inner voice, refuses to surrender to further humiliation and oppression as she had hither to been doing everything now and then. In the moment of crucial decisions, Gauri walks out of Panchi’s life, though she is bearing his child in her womb. She returns to colonel Mahindra’s clinic and resumes her job as a nurse. At this critical juncture, the arrival of colonel Mahindra dressed in army clothes, holding a leather bag in his hand, is symbolic of the advent of the modern gods decorated with virtues like wisdom, sense of responsibility, service and love.

Anand uses the Sita myth only to explode it at the climatic point, for he intends to show through the transformation of Gauri, how man must depend on himself rather than on God or supernatural powers to shape his destiny. Anand the artist and Anand the humanist work in harmony to point a vivid picture of the pitiable plight of the Indian woman, especially in the rural society, and hint at the changes that are in the offing through the heroic struggle of Gauri against man’s selfishness, greed, hypocrisy, hide-bound traditions and superstitious dogmas.

*The Road* (1961) like *Untouchable*, deals with the same problem but with a difference, as it is a novel of today where casteism is abolished and untouchability legally forbidden. The novel, however, shows that the Untouchables or ‘Dalits’ are still subordinated and live as subalterns. On a symbolical reading, the novel is a crusade against the inequality and inhumanity practised against a subaltern untouchable—the triumph of good over evil. As in *Untouchable*, casteism is practised in *The Road* and condemned because it disgraces human dignity. In this novel, Anand again focuses the
theme of untouchability. He wanted to show that even after Independence and political autonomy things have not changed.

One-third of Indian citizens, namely Dalits, still remain enslaved in India. Anand felt the need to hammer on the point again as he himself was a witness to the discrimination and humiliation to which Dalits were subjected to in the villages. Bhikhu is the new avatar of Bakha. He is literate but the society has not changed and there is no effort to provide dignity to this caste. Bhikhu is a poor road worker and with his people works to build a road to solve the problems of transportation. It will bring in an era of progress and prosperity in the village. All this work is done under the patronage of Dhooli Singh, a caste Hindu of Govardhan village who is quiet considerate to untouchables. The village landlord is Jealous of the untouchables.

The big people set their huts on fire but the untouchables do not leave their work and the road building is completed with the assistance of the government. Bhikhu leaves the village and goes away along the new road to Delhi. It is a changed world where tradition and modernity come into conflict. Road symbolizes progress. Bhikhu’s departure to Delhi suggests the disintegration of village community and the fascination towards modernity.

*The Road* is a rehash of untouchable. The Government hires Bhikhu and the other untouchables to build a road so that milk can be easily transported from the village of Govardhan to the city. The road would mean prosperity for the village, but the construction is opposed by the caste Hindus who refuse even to touch the stones quarried by the untouchables. They believe that the stones are contaminated by the touch of the
outcastes. There are two opposing factions. One led by Lambarder Dhooli Singh who, thought a caste Hindu himself has aligned himself with the untouchables. The other led by ‘Sarpanch Thakur Singh’- the landlord, who owns most of the village and the land on which the untouchables live. As the feud continues, ‘Thakur Singh’s son Sajnu, along with Dhooli Singh’s son, Lachman, burns down the huts of the untouchables, who now find shelter in the Lambarder’s house. Lachman repents his arson and goes to work with the others to build the road. Sajnu, after a brief period of repentance, rejoins his father’s crusade against the untouchables.

U.R. Anantha Murthy’s writings examine the nature of a traditional society that is trying to modernise itself. His works are widely discussed not just in Kannada, but in the country and outside too. His novels, short stories and essays have been extensively read and talked about. His works speak not just of a society, but also of individuals and their many realities. Hence, one finds that in most of his works the protagonists are only central to the plot and not central to consciousness.

Winner of Jnana Peeth Award in 1994, for his novel *Samskara* (1965), Udipi Raja Gopalacharya Anantha Murthy was born on 21 December 1932, in a remote village, Milige, in Shimoga district, Karnataka. U.R. Anantha Murthy is the product of a rare mixed education because he was born into a traditional Brahmin family and was educated in Sanskrit and Kannada as well as in English. After completion of his early education in Durvasamatha Sanskrit School, he had his later education in Thirthalli and Mysore. He completed his graduation and post-graduation from the University of Mysore. After doing his post-graduation in English Literature, he went to England for higher studies. In 1966, he earned Ph.D in English and comparative Literature from the University of
Birmingham, U.K. for his thesis on “English and Comparative Literature”. Here he worked with Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge, and Raymond Willings. It was in the University he began to write and revise his first novel *Samskara*.

Anantha Murthy began his career as a Lecturer in English in 1956 at Mysore University and later he became a professor. He is a distinguished scholar and has taught at various universities in Europe and the United states. He has served as a visiting professor at the Cornell University (2001), University of Iowa (1975), Shivaji University, Kolhapur (1982), University of Tubingen, Germany (1992), University of Pennsylvania (2000), University of Hyderabad (2001), and many other Universities. During the period 1987 to 1990, he served as the Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. Besides, he has also served as the chairman of the National Book Trust of India at Delhi in 1992 and 1993, Indian Institute of Social Sciences in 1998 and The Film and Television Institute of India at Pune in 2002. He was the president of the Sahitya Akademy from 1993 to 1998.


Anantha Murthy has travelled widely around the globe and delivered many lectures. He has undertaken innumerable tours, attended several National and International Conferences and has given a number of lectures on various topics since 1974. He undertook tours as an Indian delegate to West Germany in 1988 representing University Grants Commission, as a cultural representative. He visited North Korea and Republic of China in 1998 and Moscow as member of the International Advisory Board of *Inostroannaya Literaure* (Soviet Monthly) in 1989. He also visited book Festivals in 2002 at France, Berlin and Moscow.

Anantha Murthy has delivered lectures on politics, culture, literature, art and a number of other issues. He delivered a lecture on “Culture and Destiny” at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, “Indian Literature”, at the University of Madison and Chicago in 1985, “Indian Society, culture, politics, and Literature” delivered at the university of Birmingham, Alabama in 1987, “Colonialism and Indian Literature” delivered at University of California, “Art in the Modern Age” at Bangalore University in 1989. He has served on many important committees as Member Chairman. He has interviewed many celebrities for television and documentaries.
Anantha Murthy has won number of awards both from the Government and Academies for his invaluable contribution in different fields. He won the prestigious Padma Bhushan award in 1998, and the Jnana Peeth award in 1994. Besides these, he has won other awards including the literary distinction, awarded by the Government of Karnataka in 1984. Karnataka Sahitya Akademy conferred the Fiction Award and Award for Literary Achievement in the year 1983 and 1984 respectively. He won the Masti Award in Literature in the year 1994. He is also the winner of the Gana Krishti Award for literary distinction, Kolkatta, for the year 2002. Besides these, he has been the winner of a number of awards.

Bharatipura (1973) is another famous novel by U.R. Anantha Murthy which, like Samskara, has also become a classic. In this novel Jagannatha, the Brahmin and Landowner, goes back to his hometown after studies in England. His hometown is highly traditional in its values and he tries to change its social structures. He wants to enable the untouchables to enter the temple and with this meets the resistance of the higher castes. His attempt to create a just system around him and with this inner freedom fails Anantha Murthy deliberately writes in Kannada and not in English. To draw a analogy from the history of English literature, Bharatipura is Anantha Murthy’s Tintern Abbey.

Samskara presents before us a community of persons who are interlocked with each other through various complex relationships- caste, economy, gender, social hierarchy, religious questions and taboos ferment a complex web of relationships, against the backdrop of which the story line has been sketched. Superficially the novel deals with the dilemma of performing the last rites of Naranappa, a rebellious Brahmin who could not be excommunicated from his community by the rest of the Brahmins; yet at another
level it also Judges the quality of an entire way of life through the major characters, Praneshacharya and Naranappa Who are presented as foil and counterfoil to each other. These characters are affected, albeit in non-identical manner, by the traditions of their milieu help to define it, and are absolute, ends in themselves.

The novel *Samskara* opens with the dead body of Naranappa lying for cremation or Samskara. Though a Brahmin, Naranappa, had lived the life of a pleasure-seeker, and if at all he had continued to be a Brahmin technically, it was because he was not expelled from Brahmanism or evicted from an orthodox colony called agrahara. He drunk liquor, ate meat and fish, abandoned his Brahmin wife and lived with a low caste woman named Chandri. Even though Naranappa’s orthodox Brahmin friends had become very angry over his ways of living, they could not dare to throw him out of the Brahmin caste because of their own weaknesses, which he had exploited to his advantage.

*Samskara* was originally written in Kannada by U.R. Anantha Murthy, and published in 1965, and an English translation, by the eminent poet-translator A.K. Ramanujan followed in 1976. The novel depicted the degenerate ways of a group of Southern Brahmins living within an agrahara, a Brahmin colony. It had evoked serious controversy right after its publication. It was accused of attacking Brahminism, particularly by those critics who interpreted the novel as a realistic rendition of a social problem. When the novel was made into a film in 1970, when its English translation was serialized in the Illustrated weekly of India.

The purpose of Anantha Murthy is to make the Brahmin community come out of their hypocritical holiness and to live a normal life. As far as the theme of the novel is
concerned, Anantha Murthy has skillfully Portrayed Brahmin-Dalit conflict, problems of superstitions in uneducated Indian villagers and marginalization of woman in Indian social system.

The focal point of the novel is no doubt the problem-generating corpse of Naranappa who in his life time had openly flouted, mocked at and questioned the prescribed ideology and code of conduct for his caste, and exposed the hypocritical and sinful living of the fellow Brahmins, giving a challenge to the most virtuous Brahmin there Praneshacharya “the crest-Jewel of vedic learning”, the local guru and of the nearby agraharas, by saying once “All your Brahmin respectability, I’ll roll it up and throw it all ways for a little bit of pleasure with one female”.

There are apparently two male protagonists in the novel- Naranappa, the condemned one, and Praneshacharya, who is shown in constant conflict, agony and dilemma in the second half of the novel, struggling internally to find his own answers to many problems but if we analyze the causes of their predicaments, it is their involvement with Chandri, a low caste harlot (considered to be un-samskari, impure, unrefined, cultured because of her birth from a prostitute’s womb) who was brought by Naranappa to this hamlet inhabited by the higher caste Brahmins (supposed to be samskari-pure, refined, cultured since born in Brahmin families)- men and women. Naranappa’s open living with Chandri had caused commotion in the entire agrahara during his life time and now even after his death leaving his fellow Brahmins hungry and angry.

Praneshacharya ‘the crest-Jewel of vedic learning’ was unable to come up with a solution about how to dispose the corpse of Naranappa. Neither the scripture nor the
Maruti idol in the temple where he prayed for an answer offered any solution. Even in death Naranappa becomes an enemy of the Brahmins. His plague-infested body rots and evinces a stench since none of the Brahmins would come forward to perform his last rites for fear of sullying their caste. The entire ‘agraharam’ is threatened by the epidemic which Naranappa contracted in Shivamogge, ultimately Chandri cremates his body with the help of Muslim.

Jalki quotes the following lines of Ananta Murthy himself. “Ananta Murthy does not shy away from accepting that he criticizes Brahmins, “Hurting Brahmins for me born and brought up as a Brahmin, is not an issue that I like, but is inevitable. My writings like Samskara, ‘Ghatashradhha,’ Bharatipura, have hurt Brahmins… What I’ve written are the essential truth that Brahmins must face” (Sonia 143).

In almost all cultures and civilizations, woman is at the centre of life with her creative wisdom and myriad forms of her female angst. She has experiences of being patronised, by passed and ignored. Her feminine psyche has to cope with the pain, rather than the privilege of performing different roles in a male dominated society. In the midst of gender-based relationship, tradition Vs-modernity, love and friction, sexual exploitation, domestic chores, demands of children, experiences at work places, and her own menstrual cycle, she also seeks space to assert for womanhood, feminity and identity.

Indian women writers such as Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, by dint of their flair in creativity and imagination, have made landmark contribution to literature and remained as fountains of inspiration to the subsequent generation of novelists and poets.
There is today considerable body of fiction in English written by Indians. The contemporary women writers like Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Nayanatara Sahgal, Sashi Desh Pande, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai have made great strides in this direction.

The eighties and the nineties saw a flowering of novel writing in English, as never before. To name a few Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Sahshi Desh Pande, Anita Desai and many other dared experimenting with ethnic Indian experience for the English readers. Roy closely follows the Rushdieque style of writing to a great extent and all these writers have received global recognition. Indeed Salman Rushdie being awarded the Booker Prize for his *Midnight’s children* in 1982, Paved the way for others to follow this trail blazing path.

In recent years Indian writers have made a dent in the world literary scenario by their genius and awakened an interest in the riches of Indian culture and civilization, as well as in the changes that are taking place in Indian ethos. India is undergoing a sea change in the social, political, religious, economic and scientific fields which has been captured and highlighted by the literary luminaries in different literary forms, particularly the novel, which has caught the eye of the world. Indian writers have vied with the great writers of the world and have exhibited their excellence both the thought and expression and two of them have been able to win the most coveted Booker-Prize in the last two decades. It was in 1981 that Salman Rushdie surprised the world with his novel, *Midnight’s Children* and was awarded the Booker Prize. Since then there has been a spree of novels that have flooded the market. Again in 1997, Arundhati Roy with her
maiden novel, *The God of Small Things* won the World acclaim with the Booker Prize. Jason Cowley, one of the five Judges for the Booker Prize says,

*The God of Small Things* fulfils the highest demand of the art of fiction: to see the world, not conventionally, or habitually but as if for the first time.

Roy’s achievement, and it is considerable, is never to forget about the small things in life: the insects and flowers, wind and water, the outcastes and the despised. She deserved to win (Cowley 28).

This novel has many salient features, which required close examination, particularly the literary style, plot, structure, form; besides new elements and techniques in the novel. The primary concern of the book is human relationship, particularly man–woman relationship, Arundhati Roy presents a tragic vision of life. A close study of the love life of the characters belonging to the three generations of the Ayemenem house shows that love which is the founding stone of all other relationships, remains only an unfulfilled dream or just a fleeting experience for most of them. Familial ethic remains in conflict with the emotional urges of the individual. Marriage which seals the bond of love turns out to be a social obligation which has to be lived through for generation which vows by the family code. However, the succeeding generation is governed by no such rigid ethical code and finds a loveless marriage a burden fit to be shrugged off. The trend continues in the third generation when marriage breaks off even before it develops into a family.

Arundhati Roy draws special attention to the fact that a family which swears by male supremacy and which entrenches its familial code in the past is bound to come woe
sooner or later. The sacred façade of marriage either lacks harmony or comes crumbling down in such an imbalanced familial set-up.

In Arundhati Roy’s fictional world, man and woman remain only islands and fail to shape up as continents, because their relationship lacks mutual love, understanding and adjustment. Pappachi – Mammachi relationship is ridden with jealousy, violence and hatred. Neither the external appearance of the “beautiful…Unusual, regal” (Roy 166). Mammachi nor her talent as a successful business woman succeed in ensnaring Pappachi. On the contrary her flourishing business and growing popularity intensify his Jealousy and desire for vengeance. The edifice of their marriage survives, but its spirit crumbles totally when Pappachi, warned against beating, withdraws all communication with his wife.

The novel has some autobiographical traits Arundhati Roy seems to identify with Rahel who like the author is an architect by profession Ammu and her tragic travails are fictional adaptation of the various kinds of social ostracism that Arundhati Roy’s mother had to suffer due to her rebellious outlook. She too, like Ammu was separated from her husband. The resemblances between The God of Small Things and its author’s life are obvious and all pervading and have only too often been pointed out in popular articles. But fictionalizing “real” life—which is history exercise; the pain and lays the ghosts of the past; in the artistically successful work, the novelist at once recovers the past and is released from it. It would be doing The God Small Things an injustice, therefore, to read it only as an account of Roy’s childhood and her relationship with her famous mother and not - so - famous brother, as “a unique conflation of history and discourse, of veritable fact and aesthetic fabulation”, the autobiographical novel enables its author “to reassess his or her
past and to reinterpret a plethora of racial, sexual, and cultural codes inscribed on personal consciousness … transforming experience fictive fabulation, the author can reinscribe an alienated and marginal self into the pliable body of a protean text” (Henke 210-211). This is one of Roy’s most striking achievements in *The God of Small Things*:

They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much (Roy 31).

The above quotation points to the central theme in *The God of Small Things* - the theme of broken laws. Roy is not only critiquing the deep-rooted caste system in India, but the entire patriarchal structure and its concomitant devaluing of women. The novel has been aptly described as “one of our protest novels, radical and subversive and attacks several holy cows. In its taboo- breaking too, it goes farther than what has been attempted” (Lahiri 112).

*The God of Small Things* centres around the relationship between Ammu, a Syrian Christian young woman divorced from a drunken, Bengali Hindu, and Velutha, an untouchable, paravan carpenter. The doyen of English literary studies in India, C.D. Narasimhaiah, is symptomatic of the deeply entrenched caste and gender prejudices that still exist in our society.

The impact of the caste system can be felt even among the Christian community in India which is indicative of the fact that the dogma of equality of this religion has not been able to dissolve it. Christians in India have internalized the idea of caste ranks even though they live and operate in a largely Christian universe. Moreover, as far as caste at the lived
in level is concerned, purity and pollution are far more important than *Karma* and *Dharma*, and this is true for Hindus as well as Christians.

In the essay “*The End of Imagination*” (1998), which inaugurated the non-fictional phase of her career, Roy undertakes the task of measuring the enormous social cost of nuclear weaponry and its horrific consequences. She writes that a large number of Indians steeped in ignorance and illiteracy can hardly see through the mask of the government which purports to peace-loving by way of selling the theory of deterrence. She speaks that when ‘our bellies are empty’ and “all our larders are bursting with shiny bombs”. In this essay she focuses on the building of huge dams. These projects were commissioned without considering their impact on the environment and people. She hits the Indian government and World Bank hard for their insensitivity to the misery of millions of tribal people in the Narmada Valley.

*The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002) won the 2005 Sahitya Akademi Award. This book constitutes her clear-eyed response to the lurking annihilation in the wake of nuclear armament, to the insatiable maw of the multinational corporations eating up local resources, to the dangers of relentless globalization and the illogic of development in elitist government projects etc.

In *Power Politics* (2002), Arundhati Roy points to the tangled intertwining of transnational corporate capital and the domestic policies of the Indian nation state which typifies the radical criticism of globalization’s structural violence in rural India. A globally active opponent of globalization, Roy exposes the exploitative orientation of American multi nationals.
Public power in the Age of Empire (2004). In her major address to the 99th annual meeting the American Sociological Association on August 16, 2004, Arundhati Roy brilliantly examines the limits to democracy in the world today. Roy clarifies the political and human stakes of “regime Change” and reaffirms the importance of activism and protest she also discusses the need for social movements to contest the occupation of Iraq and the reduction of “democracy” to elections with no meaningful alternatives allowed. She explores the dangers of the “NGO-ization of resistance”, shows how governments that block non violent dissent in fact encourage terrorism and examines the role of the corporate media in marginalizing oppositional voices.

Arundhati Roy is one of the few Indian English writers actively interested in contemporary social – political issues which is amply evidenced in a number of articles, interviews and books she wrote on various topics in recent years. Mrs. Roy has authored such thought provoking works as “Confronting Empire”, “The Algebra of Infinite Justice” (2002). An internationally acclaimed essay calling upon the world not to use violence against innocent people in Afghanistan, and “War is Peace” (2002), another powerful essay. Her books like, “The Threat of Nuclear Weapons”. ‘The promotion of Equal Rights’. ‘The Narmada Dam Project”. The War on Terrorism and “The Cost of Living” (1999) have created great stir and put her in a storm of controversies that has only increased her stature as an intellectual.

Among her other notable essays are “The End of Imagination” (1998) ‘On India’s Nuclear Bomb’ and “The greater common Good” (1999) Her recent “Power Politics” (2002) which has been acclaimed Internationally, challenges the idea that only experts can speak out on such “Urgent matters as nuclear war; the privatization of India’s power supply
by Enron and the construction of monumental dams in the country which will dislocate millions of people”. She has also written War Talk (2003), An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire (2004), The Check book and The Cruise Missile (2004), Public Power in the Age of Empire (2004), The Shape of the Beast (2008), and Listening to Grasshoppers (2009).

Suzanna Arundhati Roy was born on 24th November, 1961. Her mother, Mary Roy, A Christian from Kerala, had been married to a Hindu tea planter and they had two children, Arundhati and her elder brother, Lalit. Arundhati Roy was born in Assam, Bengal, but following their mother’s divorce and return to Ayemenem, the children had little contact with their father. Roy states she has seen her father only a couple of times and that she does not wish to discuss him. She attended the school only at the age of seven in her mother’s informal school named Corpus Christi where learning was not a painful process sanctioned by exams, but rather a game, so to speak. The fiction of writers like James Joyce and Gabriel Garcia Marquez seems to have a deep impact on Roy’s mind.

The God of Small Things can undoubtedly be called the book of the decade is the much discussed The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy. The Booker citation describes the novel as one written with extraordinary linguistic inventiveness. Roy reveals a child’s vision of the adult world in this novel in one sense, she herself being an “unprotected child in some ways”. The novel can be said to be about several other things. Those interested in politics can claim that it is a satire on politics – communist establishment, to be more specific. One can call it a protest novel which is radical, subversive and taboo – breaking. Still another way may be that it tells the story of a family. Those worried about religion can certainly give a religious tone to it. An anti-establishment dimension can also be given to the novel if one wishes to do so. The book has in it a strong position taken against the way the “Untouchables” are treated in the society.
New York Times has made the following comments on Salman Rushdie’s novel Midnight’s Children which won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1981; The Literary map of India is about to be redrawn…. Midnight’s Children sounds like a continent finding its voice, an author to welcome “to world company”. Seventeen years later Arundhati Roy has brought the honour again, this time to a small state in the south of the country and, of course, to the country at large. The God of Small Things depicts the socio-political milieu of kerala during the sixties. It is all about atrocities against the small things childhood and youth, women-young and old, and the untouchable. Though at the centre-stage Roy places Velutha who is crushed to death. It can clearly be said that Roy follows the footsteps of Rushdie both in stylistic experimentation and content of the novel, which is appears, is a sure way to success. Rushdie’s Mid nights’ Children inspired and encourages the Indian novelist in English to experiment, explore and record the Indian experience in English.

Arundhati Roy writes in a style truly different from that of other Indo-English novelists – both male and female of this century. Her language is not the robust style filled with Punjabi expletives literally translated into English that the hallmark of Mulk Raj Anand nor is it Bhabani Bhattacharya’s transcreation of vernacular dialogue into English. Instead Roy writes with a linguistic stylistic exuberance which lends a flavour and colour, though artificial, of its own to the entire novel. She writes different to a great extent and in doing so breaks many of the accepted rules of language. The novel abounds in single word sentences, and paragraphs, mis-spellings, verbless sentences, capital at will etc.

Ideas come to Arundhati Roy like insects in the rains. Similes jostle each other, in measureless numbers and hustle her into making them talk loudly. Metaphors issue forth from her pen like incessant nector drops from heaven. It is a whirlpool of Similes, Metaphors repetitions, parenthesis, Idylls, Rhyme and Rhythm, Music and Dance.
Mythology and Modernity, Poverty and Riches; poetry and prose, Monologues and soliloquies, pleasure and pain, sex and sensations, Love and Hate; past, present and future.

Arundhati’s mind flashes forwards and backwards, jumps into the future and falls back into the past, which in fact pictures the present Heaven and Hell; Past; Present and Future all become one. Keats, in his odes, has given a Feast of colours’ a Feast of sound, a Feast of Seasons- separate feasts. Arundhati out –Keats Keats and feeds us with sumptuous. Feasts of all kinds on the same table simultaneously, like a Victorian Hostess serving different dishes but on the same platter- sweet, salty and Coconuts. It is all delicious. Roy writes in a Faulknerian style which is a combination of both a stream of conciouness novel and traditional or narrative style as it is used in The Sound and Fury.

*The God of Small Things* throws light upon hierarchical structures of power, and oppression at various levels in patriarchal societies. Arundhati Roy explores how these differences of caste, class, gender, race, function through social institutions and the way they affect human interactions and relationships. The story which encompasses three generations is seen through the stream of consciousness of Rahel who has witnessed the tragedy which over took the Ayemenem house. Several years later she returns to the house because her twin-brother Estha is Re-returned’. She relieves mentally the events of her childhood. Various happenings- historical, social, and political have meshed together to create one tragedy. The victimization of the weak has been common-place in human history. All patriarchal societies see women as secondary human. However, caste and class differentials generate hierarchies among women. Untouchables or Dalits women are the most deprived of all.
Works Cited


