CHAPTER VII

ARGUMENTATION

The present study of Mulk Raj Anand's non-autobiographical novels with special attention to his social concerns and their implication for his art has yielded certain conclusions. This chapter contains a brief summary of the major findings and conclusions of the study which forms the nucleus of this research endeavour.

Anand's social criticism is sustained by his faith that an artist can contribute immensely towards social change. Of all Indian creative writers writing in English, Anand is perhaps the most concerned with the basic purpose of literature. His views on the subject are spread over many essays and articles. Some of the more important ones are: "Preface" to The Hindu View of Art (1933), "Introduction" to The Golden Breath (1933), Apology for Heroism (1946), "English Novels of the 20th Century on India" (1943), "New bearings in Indian Literature" (1961), "The Writers' Role in National Integration" (1962), "Creative Writing in the Present Crisis" (1963), "A Note on Modern Indian Fiction" (1965), "Is Universal Criticism Possible?" (1966), "The Role of Creative Writers and Artists in the Developing Countries of Afro-Asia" (1966), "The Story of My Experiment With a White Lie" (1967), "Old Myths and New Myths: Recital versus Novel" (1969), "I believe" (1969), "Pigeon-Indian: Some Notes on
Indian English Writing" (1971) and "The Changeling - an Indo-Anglian Novelist's Credo" (1972).

By far his clearest and most acceptable views on the functions of a novelist are to be found in his long confessional essay, Apology for Heroism. He writes thus:

Because of his addiction to truth, the writer can help to educate humanity...far more endurably than can the scientist or educationalist. For, as I have insisted before, the creative writer or the poet is in a position to expose the perverters of words, aspire to truth, to take a whole view of the world, a view which is both extensive and intensive. And he is possessed of the necessary apparatus to help to exalt men to the full heights of their dignity, to equip them with the necessary spirit to tackle the tasks before them. By giving vent to their inmost desires, by revealing to them the true nature of men and by informing their will, the writer thus helps men to take part in the drama of revolt from which emerges the new society. And he trains the higher type of human being who may not always have to seek sanction for his behaviour in the external and arbitrary rules of conduct enforced on him by others, but is an individual with the inward monitor of his own conscience, who will bend before no tyrants but only follow his own enlightened will... (135)

In the same book, the author speaks of "the revolutionary aspect of art", by which he means "the way in which it can change life". He agrees with
Shelley that creative writers or poets are "unacknowledged legislators of mankind" and further writes thus:

The writer alone, if he is honest and brave, is in a position to understand the world qualitatively, to perceive the most delicate processes of the human sensibility, on the aesthetic as well as the cognitive and conative planes. And, if he is possessed of true creative ability, he can transform his knowledge into a vision such as can claim the loyalty of men in his own locality, and across national frontiers, and lead them to a universal awareness of life, thereby possessing them with the will to renew it and change it. The writer is like a God who realises' his own many freedoms and confers them on others...

(Apology, 130-31)

George Orwell, celebrated for his committed writing, is one English writer who analysed his own attitude to writing and to commitment in depth. In his essay "Why I Write?", George Orwell points out four reasons that urged him to write which he thought were to be found in every author, though mixed in different proportions. Firstly sheer egoism, namely the desire to be remembered after one's death and to be talked about during one's life, Secondly, aesthetic enthusiasm, an understanding of beauty, a pleasure taken in the impact produced by the contiguity of sounds, a sense of rhythm, a desire to share important aesthetic experiences, thirdly historical impulse which he explains as a "desire to see things as they are to find out true facts and to store them up for the use of posterity"
and fourthly political purpose, the enthusiasm to guide the world in a certain direction, to "alter other people’s ideas of the kind of society that they should strive after". Orwell in the same essay reiterates that these impulses may be at war with each other and each contesting for supremacy. He himself felt that had it not been for his involvement in the Spanish Civil War, the strength of the first three would have outweighed the fourth.

Like Orwell, Anand too participated in the Spanish Civil War and like him Anand too found a new direction for his art after experiencing the terrible days of malaise and darkness during the war. Like Orwell, Anand too analysed his own attitude to writing and to commitment in depth and presented it in an essay of the same title as Orwell wrote, namely, "Why I write?". The essays of Anand and Orwell of the same title and revealing almost the same attitude of commitment show that they both are apostles of the same aesthetic philosophy. In a characteristic passage in "Why I Write?", Anand speaks of what became a mission of his life:

But the compulsion to pursue the truth of human relations has, I confess become the mission of my life. I could not have written all the twenty or so novels, and hundreds of short stories, if I had not been possessed with the sources of love which Gandhi touched off in me, and if I had not had the deep inner desire to reveal the beauty, the terror and the tenderness in the lives of the characters. I wanted, against the injunctions of the critics, to write in the time-bound contemporary world,
about the here and the now, seeing everyone with a naked vision, in all the starkness of the human predicament, relieved by people's smiles, by the smiles of women for their children and by love. I wanted to see people as they were, growing in this world...

My searches have led me to roam round the world. And I have written in the rough ballad rhythms of an Indian English, in which there are inevitable echoes of the mothertongue, about the agony of aloneness of people, in the depths of degradation, in the wretchedness beyond wretchedness forced upon human beings by other human beings through causalties often unknown to them. I had to soak myself in the lives of men and women from within their tormented senses. I immersed myself in the sub-world of the poor, the insulted and the injured, through continuous pilgrimages to the villages, the small town and the big town bastis of our country. I had to journey away from the Bloomsbury literary consciousness to the non-literary worlds, whose denizens have always been considered "vulgar" and unfit for respectable worlds. I had to become uncertain as my anti-heroes. I had to go through their sufferings and little joys as my own. I had to become weak with their weakness. I had to become strong with the strength of their resilience…(Why, 14)

Such passionate pronouncements in several of Anand's critical essays clearly spell out his "predilection d' artiste". They are also helpful to the critics to determine the nature of his commitment. Jean-Paul Satre,
George Orwell, and Mulk Raj Anand are great exemplars of committed writing. Sartre’s arguments for commitment in the specific conditions of Post-War Europe, rested upon his belief in its inevitability. He writes thus:

If Literature is not everything, it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by 'commitment'. It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to songs. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society, then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by its literature?... (Why, 90)

The statement reveals Sartre's total disapproval of pure art and his whole-hearted support for commitment in creative writing. Anand and Orwell have a different level of commitment. Their commitment does not make them zealots. However, their mild and tactful revelation of commitments is detectable from what they have to say.

The story of Anand's emergent commitment is told in many of his critical essays. His observations and experiences made him lean towards Marxism and the Marxian postulate that, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Apology, 184) However, he criticised communism for denying "to people the very liberties and human rights for which the revolutions were fought", (Apology, 202) and he refused to join the communist party because he
honestly believed that he would never, as an intellectual, be able to accept the almost religious discipline demanded by a group of people who evolved changing tactics around a minimum manifesto with maximum sanctions. He refused to be a votary of the dogmas propounded in the name of Marx by many of the verbal jugglers among his orthodox adherents.

Besides, the influence of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Morris and Gandhi counteracted upon his views on socialism. The ethics of socialism and its humanism were more convincing to him than its dialectical aspect. Thus, instead of committing himself to a programme of political action, Anand dedicated himself to the grievous cause of suffering humanity. His commitment to the philosophy of humanism is at the very centre of his creative enterprise. He believes firmly in "a new conception of the role of man, an emphasis on the importance of the human being as such, a profound respect for man, love for him and faith in his capacity to straighten his back and look at the stars. (Apology, 95) The following extract from his letter to Srinivasa Iyenger, written in July 1961, clearly shows where his commitment lies:

I am doing some village social welfare work in order to integrate my love for the poor with actual work for them...I never realised, as intensely as I do now, the reasons why both Tolstoy and Gandhi chose the
peasantry for their devotion. After writing for many years about pains of these people, I now feel that, for their sake, it may not all have been in vain. The Old Woman and the Cow and The Road will confirm the poetic truth that the alleviation of pain and its expiation are the only values given to our intelligentsia in the present time… (Letters, 356)

Anand was at the height of his powers in the thirties, when he wrote his first four novels, Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud and The Village - all pregnant with artist's understanding of the sociological situations he was writing about. Anand's presentation of the socialism of the thirties in these novels as solvents of the social problem of India was similar to the effort made by James Farrel and Richard Wright through their fictional works to call attention to the social problems of their communities in America. Anand was frank enough to admit that his literary efforts were directed towards a goal and that this goal was the alleviation of the suffering of fellow human beings. While Anand's commitment demanded that literary works have the power to move the world to compassion and kindness, his artistic purity can suffer no subjugation. He is thus able to bring to Indo-Anglian fiction new matter, new technique, new style and new attitudes.
In the "Preface" to the Second Indian edition of *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1951), Anand observed that until he began to write about the outcastes, the pariahs, the under-dogs and to resurrect them from the obscure lanes and alleys of India, nothing very much had been heard or written about them in polite literature in the languages of this sub-continent. In spite of their nationalistic concern, Bankim Chandra's novels were but romances distantly imitative of Walter Scott with a historical or mystical slant. Tagore was chiefly interested in the upper-landed gentry of Bengal and the 'bhadra-lok', the middle-class section of Calcutta city and Sarat Chandra in the lower middle classes; and Munshi Premchand chose his themes from the defeated peasantry and humble folk of Uttar Pradesh. Their forms and techniques hardly kept abreast of modern developments in the novel. None of them could produce realistic or naturalistic novels after a Balzac or a Zola. Anand's love for novelty and originality enabled him to carry the tradition of Tagore and Premchand, Bankim and Sarat Chandra to new heights. He modernized the Indian novel by his creation of protagonists from the pariahs and the under-dogs who had not been allowed to enter the sacred precincts of the novel. He broke new grounds and made a departure from the tradition of Indian fiction. What Anand actually succeeded in doing was interpreting the soul of India, the real India of the villages to the West in the form they could easily understand and appreciate. His interpretation of India is based on realism as his protagonists are based on real characters with whom he freely mixed for
play and friendship, paying no attention to their caste, class or creed.

Anand acknowledges thus "Preface" referred to already:

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 the real people I had known during my childhood and youth. And I was only repaying the debt of gratitude owed them for much of the inspiration they had given me to mature into manhood, when I began to interpret their life... in my writing. They were not mere phantoms. They were flesh of my flesh and blood of my 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 his life...(2)

The detailed study of the select novels of Mulk Raj Anand for the present research task sharply focuses on man's inhumanity to men. They observe that casteism is a crime against humanity and everyone who believes in human dignity should actively strive to eliminate it. Secondly, the chosen novels affirm that inequality in society and the ill-treatment by "haves" and "have-mores" of "have nots" is a national tragedy. The nation can be saved from this tragedy only by following the path of democratic socialism, a way of life in which the moral and material urges of the people can have the fullest play. Thirdly, superstition, belief in fate or Karma, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are enemies to healthy
social life, progressive thinking, individual and national prosperity. They should be totally removed from the mind of the people by inculcating rational thinking. Fourthly, social, economic and political freedom is the birth-right of all men. To ensure this to common man, society should be set free from the influence of its arch-enemies, capitalism and imperialism. Fifthly, war is the greatest plague that can afflict humanity. It destroys not only states and families but also international harmony and world peace. As war is due to the failure of human wisdom, disputes should be settled by applying human wisdom across the negotiating table and not in the battle-field.

The novels further demonstrate that machine is important for the rapid growth and modernization of nation. It should be introduced keeping in mind the welfare of the society as a whole and not for turning the poor, poorer and the rich, richer. Feudalism is a terrible evil crushing the peasant folk. If land, the principal means of production in the village economy, is under monopoly ownership of the few people who are called landlords, then the landless peasants and tenants will remain in a state of perpetual beggary and slavery. Only the abolition of landlordism by land ceiling legislation and giving the right to ownership of land to all can the diabolical exploitation of the peasants and tenants be stopped. Anand describes ill-treatment of woman, the mother of mankind, as a barbaric act. Woman should be given equal right with man both in theory and in
practice. He further advocates in the chosen novels that modern education is futile and produces only frustration as it gives merely degrees and not jobs. Education system should be reformed to suit the need of the times.

The first malpractice Anand has attacked as a social critic is the caste system, which in the words of Raja Ram Mohan Roy is, "the supreme root of all our social evils", (254) and it is presented through the painful experiences within a single day in the life of an untouchable boy, Bakha. This internationally renowned novel, **Untouchable**, is a *tour de force*. In point of technique the novel is superb. It reminds of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The novel deals with the problem of casteism in general and untouchability in particular in vivid artistic terms and its artistic power is evident in every page. Anand has rarely achieved that concrete effect in any other novel. Art and idea are dexterously fused in this novel. As Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly remarks thus:

> In the novel (*Untouchable*) doctrines and dogmas are assimilated into a total sensibility which shapes his (Anand's) imagination and gives life to an epoch and its hopes and aspirations and its curses… (*The Writer’s Gandhi*, 70)

Anand’s depiction of untouchability in the novel has an ingenuous quality indicating the author’s staunch sincerity and freedom from
sentimentalism. The evil of untouchability is presented with moderation and equanimity and "the whole story is touching and tender". The natural progress of the novel and the author's determination to give the art an upper hand over the idea makes the novel really superb. The immense popularity of the novel is evident from the fact that a play based on it, staged in London and the Provinces of the United Kingdom could draw full houses for a period of four months.

Anand is not as triumphant in his novel *The Road*, which has the same theme as *Untouchable* and was published Twentyfive years later. Though art and idea do not intermingle altogether well in this novel, they are somehow made to co-exist without any observable degree of artificiality. But the main defect with the novel is its weak characterisation of the protagonist. Bikhu, the central character in the novel fails to emerge as the hero. All his enthusiasm and energy is derived from another character, Dhooli Singh, who actually appears to usurp the cynosure in the novel. Further, the stage is cramped with too many characters and scenes and this distracts the attention of the reader from the central character. The author's gratuitous introduction of the love motif too destroys the authenticity of the novel. In spite of these minor defects, *The Road* has a powerful focus and it points out that the untouchables tortured and condemned for centuries deserve a better deal and this is possible only if men give up the age-old belief in caste and *karma* and
spread the message of love and tenderness. According to Arnold Bennett
the "essential characteristic of the really great novelist is a Christ-like all
embracing compassion". (133) As Untouchable and The Road
artistically reveal Anand's all embracing compassion for the oppressed
and doomed people of India and they are fictional works of the highest
order.

Anand's second and third novels Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud are
directed mainly towards the evils of class system. These novels show
class system as a greater evil than caste system. A 'low caste' man can
enjoy a lot of freedom in these modern days as long as he has money
with him. But a "high caste man" who belongs to the wealthless class is in
perpetual slavery. The tragedy of Munoo in Coolie and the horrible
exploitation of Gangu and the ill-treatment of his beautiful daughter, Leila,
in Two Leaves and a Bud amplify this truth.

Coolie is a novel of the poor and the downtrodden. It offers a chance to
the reader to really experience the unending pain, suffering and
prolonged struggle of the poor and as the misery of poverty is presented
through an orphan boy and it particularly evokes a deep sorrow in
readers. The novel amplifies the view of Bernard Shaw that poverty is the
worst crime of all and its eradication is the prime task of any socialistic
society.
The novel contains some of Anand's best nature descriptions. The whole book is an impressive painting in black and white. As the action of the novel moves from the village of Bilaspur in the hills of Kangra, Punjab, to Sham Nagar, from there to Daulatpur, and then to Bombay, and finally to Simla in the North, the reader is made to experience a video vision of the varied scenes and sights of India that would rivet his attention.

The plot of the novel is episodic in character. It is a chain of incidents joined together keeping Munoo as its unifying figure. The portrayal of English characters, especially in the Bombay Chapter is not realistic. The author's zeal in over-emphasizing the picture of exploitation too does some damage to his art. The final part of the novel, Simla scene is introduced in the novel by the hackneyed device of accident. This part of the novel gives the impression of being sketchy, hasty and it is slightly unconvincing. But the overall impression that one gets of this novel is that it is a sensitive and impressive work credibly portraying the tragic tale of a poor boy's hard and agonising struggle for survival and his ultimate defeat and death in a world where the poor man's blood is cheap and the bread he gets very dear. It remarkably succeeds in rousing humane feeling for the poor and the oppressed and it possesses enough energy and fire to enkindle one's soul to work for an egalitarian society where compassion and kindness will be an unwritten law. The novel may remind the reader of both Dickens' *Hard Times* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* in its thematic
and comprehensive coverage of society in which the hero struggles to survive. It is also reminiscent of Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly praises it for its unparalleled amplitude and power of narration, and calls it "a prose epic of modern India". (Indian, 267)

*Two Leaves and a Bud* gives expression to the unending anguish of tea plantation labourers under extremely selfish British masters who treat the malefolk among the labourers as bonded slaves and their women and daughters as objects of sexual gratification. The novel is a powerful crusade against imperialism and capitalistic exploitation. As a social critic Anand is extremely sensitive to the evils of capitalism and imperialism and that sensitiveness sometimes tells upon his fictional narration. The author's portrayal and open criticism of the British is harsh and unconvincing. Of the English characters in the novel, the most inartistically created is the author's own mouthpiece, Dr. Dela Havre. His frequent remarks condemning imperialism and capitalism his very role in the novel lack credibility. There is too much of Anand in the character of the doctor. Much of what the doctor says in *Two Leaves and a Bud* is available in Anand's own critical essays like *Apology for Heroism*. Andre Gide's advice to novelists is never to present ideas except in terms of temperaments and characters. Anand has failed to pay any heed to this good advice while writing *Two Leaves and a Bud* and therefore the
artistic and the social strands do not merge well in this novel. His hatred for the evils of Imperialism and Capitalism accounts for the many gusts of barren tirades in the novel.

The evil of superstition, orthodoxy and war are Anand's social concerns in "The Village trilogy", comprising *The Village, Across the Black Waters* and *The Sword and the Sickle*. These novels present the struggle of a sensitive Punjabi peasant boy, Lal Singh, first against his own people, then as a soldier in British Indian army and at last as a freedom fighter. The first novel in the trilogy, *The Village* gives a realistic portrayal of an Indian village caught in the cross-road of transition - the poverty and ignorance of the villagers, their fear of accepting modernity, their exploitation by money-lenders, landowners and priests, their zealotry, hypocrisy and arrogance, and the non-conformist hero's bitter struggle against these social predicaments and his eventual escape from his close-to-heart village. The novel is imaginatively vivid, refreshing and original. Readers are made to experience the simplicity of the village life not only through actions but also through the style and naturalness of speech in it. Even though the plot is weak, the novel has many dramatically significant episodes, such as Lalu's visit to the 'King George Vth Hair Cutting Saloon' at the Fair and the events that preceded his enlistment in the army.
The description of nature in *The Village* is a remarkable achievement. Saros Cowasjee makes a positive observation in *So Many Freedom*:

No Indian writer has pictured landscape as vividly as Anand, nor possessed the breath of his canvas which ranges from mountains to valleys, from the rich golden field to the parched, dried earth. And I am familiar with no writer, Indian or English, who has used the smells and colours to better effect. Even a psychological novel like *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, concerned largely with palace intrigues, is full of beautiful descriptions.

Many Indian writers attempt to show some sort of inter-relation between man and nature. Anand as a realist makes no conscious effort to harmonize nature's moods with man's; he gives to nature an independent existence and reveals her both in her beauty and in her cruel aspects. Central to his theme is man's struggle in society: the poor are too occupied making a living to communicate with nature, the rich too engrossed in becoming richer…(103)

Against this evocation of nature in *The Village* stands the social critic's concern for the suffering of the peasants caused by the social leeches - the landlord, the money-lender and the lawyer. The money is lent at an unimaginably high rate of interest and from the very start there is little hope of it being repaid. Then the landlord comes in and he increases his territory by buying the mortgaged land. If the poor peasant ventures to
approach a lawyer, he too jumps upon the penniless peasant to suck his remaining blood. *The Village* holds a mirror to these realities of Indian society and the novel admirably succeeds in blending together the author's art and social criticism.

*Across the Black Waters* is the continuation of *The Village*. It describes the hardships, agonies and frustrations of the first division of Indian troop who had been brought to fight in Europe during the first World War. The book is full of excellent characters: Lal Singh, a non-conformist and the protagonist of the novel who under inevitable circumstance unwillingly said farewell to his village and got recruited in the army, together with his intimate soldier friends, Uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanoo and Havildar Lachman Singh, make up the conscience of the novel. Their silent suffering, terrifying actions tastelessly performed, and their quips, puns and comments at moments of relaxation expose the barbarism and immorality of war. The conversation between the soldiers is picturesque and is spiced with abuses. The story is told with vivacity and vigour. Though the novel is without much of a unified plot, the story remains interesting. The descriptions of the fight are very realistic and one can see the trench warfare going on under one’s own eyes. Anand's overriding concern in this novel, namely the devastating effect of war upon the individual is excellently exposed and the novel has a sentimental appeal for both the Indian and the English reader. The author's condemnation of
war presented in a humorous manner makes the novel undoubtedly sovereign.

*The Sword and the Sickle*, the last volume of the trilogy, describes the global imperialism of Britain which initiated it to be a participant in the World War I caused extreme misery even in the remote villages in India. The war took place at a time when Nature was particularly cruel to the Punjabi villagers. The monsoon failed to arrive in time and drought gave mortal blows to man, cattle and plants. When the war finally ended, the hero’s heroic deeds during the war gave him nothing but a dismissal order and that made him a rebel and as a natural consequence, he joined the peasant struggle but that too ended in futility.

The stage of the novel is unmanageably cramped with just too many characters and episodes. Some of the episodes, like the funeral procession of Chandra’s corpse, which has a melodramatic flavour, are not well integrated into the novel. The hero is not given a central position in the novel. It is the Count who dominates the scene. But the characterisation of the Count has no consistency. His regal, serious and lovable nature displayed here and there in the novel appears in sharp contrast to his ridiculous, silly and fantastic role in many other scenes. Anand maintains distance from his characters in the first two volumes of the trilogy, fails to maintain the artistic requirement of distancing the author from his characters in this novel and the novel has many long
speeches and orations on the evil of landlordism, British imperialism, communism and Gandhism and almost directly presenting the author's point of view. Hence, *The Sword and the Sickle* is artistically inferior to the first two volumes of the trilogy.

In the pre-independent years, the progressive social and political groups in India recognized the direct and indirect benefits of industrialization. Though they differed in their views on industrialization whether to follow the capitalistic or the socialist path, they all stood for rapid and all-sided expansion of industries. While sharply divided on many vital issues, they put up a united demand for it. They jointly worked for the removal of various obstacles to industrial development. The demand for industrialization thus became a national demand.

Anand's *The Big Heart* supports the demand for industrialization made by the progressive social and political group in India. But the author's support for it in the novel is not without reservation. He could foresee the disastrous consequences of industrialization if it ignored the welfare of the traditional village artisans. To avoid complications in society, Anand pleads in *The Big Heart*, for industrialization with caution. Apart from this main concern, the novel has many other things to say, such as reproval of the caste system, capitalism, male-chauvinism and the need for practising the humanistic religion. As the hero of the novel, Ananta is modelled after a person of the same name with whom Anand had intimate relation and
the portrayal of him appears natural. It is the author’s "real life-application" that helps him to bring out the hero’s perfections and imperfections. The supreme merit of The Big Heart is its powerful and realistic characterisation of the hero Ananta and his beloved Janaki. This vital experience of the novel helps the reader to extenuate its only weakness, namely the polemical presentation of social problems.

The theme of tradition versus modernity which forms the central conflict in the novel is convincingly portrayed. The death of Ananta in the defence of the machine as well as the society's cruel character assassination of Janaki for not living the conventional life of a widow are the sins of tradition. They are committed by a society which is extremely selfish and parochial as well as opposed to modernity and progressive thinking. Anand's social concern is evident in his downright castigation of the society.

Most of Anand's heroes share the love for machines. Bakha, in Untouchable, at the close of the day could feel happy by the thought that one day machine, to be precise, the flush-system, will eliminate the dirty work he is forced to do. Munoo, in Coolie, is extremely excited at Sham Nagar when he sees things he has not seen before, like telephone, gramophone, shaving machine, and "a box; which talks" and the like. The Indian soldiers after reaching France, as described in Across the Black Waters, become wonder-struck at seeing big vehicles and
machine to milk. The conflict between tradition and modernity is well illuminated in the very opening scene of *The Village*. Nihal Singh who has spent a great part of his life travelling on bullock-cart faces a lot of difficulty in adjusting himself to travel by train. When he equates the arrival of the train to the arrival of "the age of darkness", his progressive minded son could not keep quiet. To Lal Singh, the train connecting towns and villages is a boon for the progress and prosperity of the nation.

In *The Road*, the hero Bikhu considers the building of the road as the first step against social exploitation. The hero's mentor, Lambardar Dhooli Singh, proclaims, "it is only roads and roads and more roads, and electricity - that will bring prosperity". (*The Road*, 76)

This research endeavour entitled, “Social Consciousness in the Works of Mulk Raj Anand” reveals the fact that Anand's vision throughout his long career has not undergone any major transformation. For example, in 1933 he wrote *Untouchable* to present the evils of untouchability. After a long gap of thirty years, in 1963, he took up the same theme in *The Road* and the second novel repeats some of the incidents given in the first and the concern expressed in both the novels is the same. To consolidate the point further, It is apt to quote a passage from the article of Meenakshi Mukherji, "Beyond *The Village* - An Aspect of Mulk Raj Anand":

He (Anand) published his first novel in 1933 and is still writing to-day, but there is very little to distinguish his
earliest work from the latest. To take the example of the recent work, *The Old Woman and the Cow*, the characterisation here is done in the same black and white terms as before. There is the same number of good men (Rafiq Chacha, Adam Singh, Dr Mahindra) and bad men (Amru, Birbal, Panchi’s uncle). There is the same saga of an individual persecuted by society as in *The Village*, the only difference being that the sufferer now is a woman; there is the same tyranny of the money-lender and the landlord. Like Lalu in *The Village* more than twenty years back, the new protagonist Gauri believes in progress, in the necessity of cleaning up the village, in the use of modern scientific methods...No development from his earlier work is perceptible either in treatment of the theme or in style. But for a few references to Partition and Independence and Vinoba Bhave, one could mistake this novel to have been written in the thirties...(243)

Anand’s novels are marred here and there by an overdose of sentimentality, pathos and excessive reformatory zeal. But a novel has to be evaluated not bit by bit, like the study of an organism under an electron microscope, but by taking into account the overall impact it has on the reader. In the microscopic analysis of Anand’s novels, one is sure to see certain defects at least in some of his novels like *Two Leaves and a Bud, The Road and The Sword and the Sickle*. However, when all is said and done, he emerges as a great artist possessing at once a sensuous and a moral understanding of life.
The charge of propaganda levelled against him by some critics is largely false, but his presentation of ideas in some of his novels gives the impression that his art almost thrives on what may seem propaganda. This is mainly due to the author’s unwillingness to distil out the social concerns from his art. But Anand is never an aggressive propagandist. He is what George Orwell was an expositor who makes artistic exposition of the exploitations he sees, a political novelist, who portrays his characters and their deeds in relation to the great and sudden social, economic and political changes of his time. Anand believes that political passions are often nourished by literature and literary taste is much affected by politics. Hence, he considers those who appear to be politically indifferent or who make a show of detachment as tacit supporters of the prevailing system. According to him literature and life are parallel development.

Anand's attempt to influence opinions and actions in his novels as a whole is inbuilt in a natural way within the dramatic or fictional situations. Therefore, Mulk Raj Anand is not at all in the strict sense a propagandist. If Anand was bent on propaganda, or was a hardboiled leftist, he would not have presented the workers as both good and bad, thereby compelling the Marxist Progressive Writers' Association to declare him a decadent in 1949. He should also then have made his proletarian heroes ultimately victorious, a marked feature of proletarian literature of the
thirties in Europe. But being a realist and not a propagandist, or a doctrinaire writer, he cannot but see his heroes finally defeated. It is the defeat of his heroes which has provoked even some of his friendly Russian writers to criticise him. To illustrate the point, one may quote Y.Tupikova who while admitting the ideological and artistic merits of Anand's early novels, regrets that in *Coolie*, Anand "underrates the conscious factor in the workers' movement in 1928-1929, often does not see where the struggle must lead, and presents his revolutionary characters, in rather a sketchy manner..." (*Soviet Literature*, 161)

Anand is particularly annoyed by the fact that the charge of propaganda against his novels is mainly an accusation of Indian critics and in a letter to Saros Cowasjee he complains thus:

But nobody in the many languages into which *Coolie* has gone has suggested that it is propaganda, except some Indian critics who are unconsciously Sanskritists and regard contemporary themes, especially from the lower depths, as extra-literary material. They are still in the days of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. ...And oddly enough, they take refuge behind the categories of Western academic criticism and dismiss anything about raw life as 'naturalism' or 'realism' or 'social realism'. They will accept Tolstoy and Dickens and Hardy, but should an Indian try to portray the peasants of India, or slum children, or the maid
servants, you are then written off as a communist propagandist...(22)

Whatever Anand says in defence of his works, there can be no denying the fact that his novels like, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Road and The Sword and the Sickle are weak, primarily because they do not embody a harmonious fusion of art and idea, thereby giving them a look of propaganda much more than they actually are.

However, the central argument in this book has been that Anand could not have written even a single novel if he had not been deeply involved in social questions. His social concerns are catalysts that have enabled him to envision the lives and deeds of a heroic but ill-placed generation of Indians. In his best works like Untouchable, The Village and Across the Black Waters, his social concerns strengthen his art immensely and in them art and social criticism make for the finest quality of fusion, giving a conclusive proof that the driving force behind his writing is the undeviating concern for the welfare of the wronged and the exploited sections of the human race. Like Aldous Huxley, Anand is more interested in life than in art and in art only in so far as it serves life. He is a committed artist and one should be grateful to him for ably demonstrating in his best works that art need not be the handmaid to life.
Anand's novels reveal his passionate concern for the poor and the oppressed and his deep and abiding commitment to human values. He is a story-teller of the highest order - thinking through his stories about the agonising sociological questions of his society, as most great novelists have done in the English, Indian and perhaps many other traditions as well.