Of all the Indian writers in English, Mulk Raj Anand has the credit of being not only the most prolific but also the most expressly committed writer. He is a man of varied interests and achievements, and his life itself reads like an exciting romantic tale full of struggle, quest, and accomplishment.

Mulk Raj Anand was born on December 12th, 1905 in Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province of prepartition India. His father, Lal Chand Anand, though originally a craftsman from Amritsar, became later a servant of the British Indian army. His mother, Ishwar Kaur, came from the sturdy peasant stock of Central Punjab. She fed the little Anand on songs and stories drawn from Indian myths, epics, and folklore. But Anand could gain no clear understanding of religion or firm faith in God.

As a boy Anand was extremely sensitive and physically rather frail. This resulted in his aloofness which, in turn, turned him into a dreamer and an adorer of hills and vales, trees and brooks. In almost all of his important novels we find descriptions of Nature in her varying moods.

Anand reckons his spiritual beginnings from the day his awareness received the first shock which happened when, at the age of eleven, he
saw his pretty cousin and playmate, Kaushalya, die before his eyes. This young girl of nine, laughing and playing, suddenly and secretly contracted T. B. and slowly withered away, as it were. It was very difficult for Anand to reconcile himself to this situation.

Further, the death of his uncle Partap, and later that of his good aunt, Devaki, added to his general mood of sadness and confusion. These incidents, however, forced Anand to question further the meaning of life and death. Death seemed dark and inevitable and this strengthened his love of life. Here, it appears, are the roots of his developing philosophical bent of mind and his leanings towards humanism, a fundamental tenet of which is the staunch belief in the here and now as against the unseen and unknown hereafter.

Another important event Anand remembers to have left a strong impression on his boyhood refers to the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by British Officers at the time of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre; it was only innocently that he broke the curfew order, but the police gave him eleven stripes of the cane on the back. No wonder Anand grew up into an uncompromising denouncer of imperialism.
Even as a college student Anand was a voracious reader. He read Urdu and English literatures as well as a lot of Continental literature, including Marx, Mazzini, Gorky, and Proudhon. He also read Hugo, Heine, and the English Romantic poets. His meetings with C. W. S. Harvey and Lalla Man Mohan proved to be very helpful. However, it was L. R. Puri, a mystic follower of the holy math at Beas, who impressed him most profoundly:

Anand was painfully shocked to notice the mendacity, ignorance, and superstition of his coppersmith brotherhood. Privilege and position dominated everything in the life around him. These contradictions forced him to sit up and think seriously. In philosophy, Anand was lured, no doubt, towards rationalism and the scientific method of inquiry. But, he also realised that even philosophy could be purposeful only if it was geared up to serve human needs.

While studying at the Khalsa College, Amritsar, Anand had the privilege of frequently meeting Iqbal, the great poet-philosopher. Following the fashion of the day, Anand wrote poetry in Urdu and discussed it, and many more things, with Iqbal. When he became a graduate, there arose the problem of his going abroad for further studies.
This resulted in a conflict with his father who opposed his son's prospective trip across the black waters. But Anand's decision was reinforced by Iqbal's encouragement and the sympathy of his mother who, without any hesitation, pawned her jewellery to pay her son's passage to London.

After arriving in London with the help of a scholarship, in 1925, Anand started researching in philosophy for a Doctor's degree, under Professor G. Dawes Hicks, an eminent Kantian scholar and a member of the editorial board of the famous *Hibbert Journal*. Now Anand wished if he had studied Sanskrit better in India and acquainted himself with Indian philosophy. His scholastic and collegiate education, he now felt, had after all been deplorably poor. It was absolutely necessary for him to get at the roots of Indian philosophy if he wanted to understand British philosophy in its proper perspective. This took him to the study of the original texts of Indian philosophy and their interpretation, particularly by Dr. Radhakrishnan.

Anand received the Doctor's degree for his thesis on the philosophy of Berkeley, Hume, and Russell in 1929. In 1932 he returned to India and visited several ancient Indian architectural monuments at places like
Mahabalipuram and Konarak. It was in the same year that he went and stayed with Gandhiji for some time in Sabarmati Ashram in order to ‘deepen’ his magnum opus, Untouchable.

The next year, Anand sailed back to Europe. There he again did some free-lance writing and also revised his Untouchable. Then he went to London where nineteen publishers rejected this novel. The twentieth, a small publisher, Wishert Books Ltd., published it—of course, only after Anand had managed to bring a protective preface from E. M. Forster.

In 1935 Anand wrote his second important novel, Coolie, which made his name reverberate in Russia as well as other countries of Europe. During the same year he attended, as a representative of India, the International Writers’ Conference against Fascism. It was during this year that he acquainted himself with the famous Gelders. His friendship with Kathleen Van Gelder, a stage actress, inspired him to plan a scheme for small theatre. Also he found the Indian Progressive Writers’ Association with the help of some close associates like Sajjad Jahir.

Anand is thus a humanist to the core. It is his abiding faith in humanism that has perhaps made him a lovable man with infinite charm and myriad interests. He is a loyal friend, a tireless worker, an
enthusiastic organizer, a prolific writer, an unceasing champion of the cause of the poor and the lowly, a relentless crusader against inequality and injustice, and above all, a staunch humanist with limitless trust in man and creative arts on which he pans his hopes, as made evident by one of his recent letters to the present writer.

It is only natural that a creative artist's works should be deeply coloured by the philosophy of life that he espouses. And Anand's is no exceptional case. He is generally regarded by critics as a committed writer, though it is not always made very dear as to what exactly he is committed to. A scrutinous study of Anand's fictional as well as non-fictional works reveals that what vitalises them is the strong undercurrent of a broad-based philosophy of humanism. Therefore, an attempt is made here in this thesis to analyse and evaluate Anand's fiction in the light of his humanist philosophy.

Anand's insistence on the dignity of man-irrespective of caste, creed, and wealth, his plea for the practice of compassion as a living value, his conception of the whole man, the profound importance he attaches to art and poetry as instruments for developing whole men, his crusade against superstition, feudalism, and imperialism—these are some of the chief
characteristics of his humanism. But, at the outset itself, it must be made clear that the kind of humanism that Anand has come to believe in is neither profoundly original nor very much different from the humanism that is generally professed by his contemporary humanist friends. But all the same, its importance lies in the fact that Anand has evolved and propounded it in such a way that it is pre-eminently suited to become a way of life for his countrymen. This does not mean that it is parochial. On the contrary, it is a product of his deep knowledge of the cultural histories of both the East and the West, and so it is broad-based. In fact, Anand insists on the urgent need for the recognition and preservation of whatever values of our traditional culture that can be made beneficially operative today, and synthesising them with such of the values of the western culture as may strengthen our efforts in building a new India and a brave new world. Universalism, the earliest hints of which are discernible in the early Vedic hymns and Upanishadic thinking, proclaiming man’s noble aspiration for the one world of thought and experience, is a concept which remains an unconsciously operative characteristic of our culture, and it has manifested itself today in the doctrine of co-existence. Further, the tendency to subject everything to
criticism with 'intolerant tolerance' results in catholicism of outlook and makes room for the voice of reason to be heard. The ancient Indians were made to cultivate this virtue by the necessity of allowing the incoming congeries of aliens to settle down with them. Thus, they assimilated different religions into the fabric of their culture. Today we find this concept of intolerant tolerance operating in the form of the right to freedom of opinion and India's love for peace and co-existence. Actually an extension of the above two characteristics, the sense of compassion or genuine understanding of the failings of individuals in order to facilitate their improvement is the third important characteristic which we have inherited from the past, and which needs to be resuscitated. Thus, universalism, intolerant tolerance, and compassion are, according to Anand, the three chief values that we should choose from ancient Indian culture and integrate them with the vast knowledge and power made available to us by the west. Anand fervently hopes that, despite the two great wars fought in his age, science has advanced enough to usher in an era of plenty and prosperity, of hope and peace, provided, of course, man wills it.
Anand, like most other humanists, starts with a declaration of his immense faith in the protagorean dictum, “Man is the measure of all things”. By this he means that he believes in measuring the value of all values and all actions in relation to human personality. Man is the maker and breaker of worlds. He is an entity in whose constant attempts at renewal and adaptation lies the beauty of life. Anand admires man, and even adores him. But this admiration does not blind him to man’s weaknesses. He does take cognizance of man’s greed, lust, selfishness, cruelty, and insensitivity. This does not, of course, dishearten Anand. He firmly believes that man is potentially capable of rising from these lower passions to magnificent heights of splendour. Man has in him enough creative energy and imagination to transform himself and raise himself to glorious pinnacles of dignity and to rid mankind of its unspeakable misery and pain, all through his tireless physical and mental energy. It is to enable man to achieve this end that Anand fervently pleads for the emergence among men of a new conception of the role of man in this vast universe. Men must realise and accept the profound importance of man-of man as such, shorn of all considerations of class, caste, creed, race, religion, and wealth. The most vital need of our troubled times is to
engender among men a genuine respect for man, love for him, and faith in his ability to live a life full of dignity. Anand believes that man can solve his many problems with the help of imagination, reason, and the scientific method. This idea of viewing man as the centre of the universe and as an entity capable of improvement is a point of view which is generally shared by all humanists.

But, Anand seems to be original in his approach to man in his emphatic insistence on the concept of the whole man. In fact, the most significant contribution of Anand to the philosophy of humanism is perhaps his theory of the whole man which forms the key-stone in the arch of his comprehensive historical humanism. He pleads for the all-round growth of man, for the development of all his faculties, and this must be geared up to serve the cause of the total development of other individuals in society.

Anand’s humanism implies in its essence that tenderness or compassion is a powerful force, the liberation of which enables man to emerge from the encircling gloom of violence, greed, jealousy, and narrowness, and live intensely and fully.
While Anand’s humanism has much in common with different varieties of humanism, it owes its origin as well as development to his pre-occupation with the whole man and his writings are frankly inspired by his love of man.

Since Anand believes that man is the master of his destiny, he refuses to believe in fatalism, a malady which has plagued the Indian masses for centuries. Fatalism weakens man’s faith in himself and insidiously persuades him to become a passive dependent on unseen and non-existent forces. So, naturally, fatalism is an essentially non-humanistic concept.

Anand’s humanism places man in the centre of all things. It also believes in the ethical equality of all men. Therefore, it cannot sanction any distinction, between men, say, divisions of Caste, creed, or race which are positive obstacles for human beings to grow to their full height and dignity.

Anand’s humanism recognises the fact that pain and cruelty are two other serious maladies of the world. But it believes that they are not unavoidable. With the aid of advancing science and technology, and with
the practice of love and compassion for the weak and the lowly, it is not impossible to reduce and even remove most of man's misery and unhappiness. Anand reminds us of our ancient saints like Kabir and Nanak, and the Buddha himself, when he unequivocally pleads for the brotherhood of man. According to him, the conquest of pain should be the supreme goal of all individuals, and all nations. He condemns the presentday tendency of the worship of Mammon and the tendency of extracting pleasure by inflicting pain on the less-privileged people. He firmly believes that one of the most urgent needs of mankind today is to infuse love and tenderness into the hearts of all men.

Anand's philosophy is an inveterate enemy of fascism, feudalism, imperialism, and all other similar tendencies which come in the way of man's efforts to achieve freedom. It believes in democracy and socialism, and the peaceful existence of all nations.

Anand is a humanist even in his political ideas. In fact, he wants us to work out his theory of humanism in the practical context of socialistic pattern of society, with its goal as 'Destination Man.' He has tried to explain coherently the political wisdom of Jawaharlal Nehru, himself a
humanist and a chief architect of modern India. Nehru gave life to such	noble ideals as peaceful co-existence, non-alignment and the socialistic
pattern of society. Anand wants us to pursue the ideals of Nehru so that
there may emerge a stable agro-industrial Indian civilisation based on
respect for the individual. Anand’s humanism believes that the State and
Government justify their existence only as long as they promote the
liberty and equality of all their citizens. A State whose ambition is pursuit
of power or profit-making is anti-human, and so it must quit,
categorically declares Anand.

Anand further says that all peoples must have freedom-social,
economic, political, intellectual, and emotional-without, of course, any
encroachment upon each other’s freedom. Bigoted and parochial
nationalism means only more war, and no one who has had a knowledge
of the vast destructive capacities of super-scientific weapons can desire
war. It is high time that all the nations realised the immediate necessity of
surrendering some of their power and sovereignty to facilitate the
formation of World Government, and not resort to war which may spell
the ruin of all. Love, compassion, peace, and prosperity are the watch-
words of Anand's philosophy. Bertrand Russell's influence on Anand is unmistakable here.

Woman, according to Anand's humanism, deserves to be treated on an equal footing with man. Anand deplores the fact that a majority of Indians still respect Manu's injunction that woman can have freedom at no stage of her life. Woman can no longer be considered a mere child breeding machine, never to be allowed to stir out of the four walls of home. She can no longer be treated as chattel. In fact, it needs to be recognised that woman is as important as man in the great task of social reconstruction.

It is necessary to note that Anand's humanism is diametrically opposed to Vedanta. Whereas Anand's humanism does not believe in the existence of God, like the humanism of Buddha, God is central to Vedantism. God or Brahman is described negatively as "neti, neti", or "It is not this; it is not that." This God, says the Vedanta, is realisable through intuitional experience rather than by means of the intellect or reason. But how many have realised God this way? May be, just a handful of mystics. But what these mystics experience remains inexplicable to the ordinary masses. This sort of quest for God is
necessarily a one-way traffic; men are led to God and they do not turn back. But Anand is little bothered about God or the other world, 'the never-never-to-be-here-after.' Rather, he wants to make this single sure life happier and more meaningful. He prefers the two-way traffic of the life of a creative artist where there is exchange between the artist and his audience.

Similarly, Anand's humanism implies a criticism of Existentialist philosophy which considers this universe as merely meaningless and absurd, and denies social structure. As stated earlier, Existentialism harps on despair and nausea, irrationalism and nihilism. But, humanism is profoundly optimistic, and considers this universe a place worthy of human habitation.

Thus, we find that Anand's humanism is a happy synthesis of the best and most vital elements in western as well as Asiatic philosophies of humanism. The Protagorean conception of man being the measure of all things, the great concern of the teachings of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates for man's well-being, the passion of Renaissance humanism for building a glorious human civilisation, the plea of Naturalistic humanists for
achieving human happiness here and now as well as their rejection of the supernatural, Huxley's insistence on recognising and utilising man's immense possibilities for a happier world-these are some of the points that Anand takes from western humanist schools of philosophy and assimilates them in his own philosophy of humanism. Some of the Asiatic ideas that his humanism readily recognises as valid even today are Charvaka's this worldliness, Buddha's compassion, Gandhi's "love of truth and non-violence and pity for the fallen and the disinherited, Nehru's ideals of coexistence, peace and prosperity for all nations, and the ideal of the brotherhood of men preached and practised by medieval Indian saints. Apart from these, the influence of several other thinkers like Mencius, Russell, and Roy is easily discernible in Anand's humanism. In fact, Anand claims no profound originality for his humanism.