Chapter-II
The Making of the Novelist
Mahatma Gandhi, who is a gift to humanity in modern times, does belong to the line of great men who influenced every aspect of human life. Gandhism was essentially a system of self-reformation and self-purification, a moral principle which allowed an individual unsullied freedom and steady mobility. All these ramifications and the ambiances are reflected in Indo-English literature much more prominently in fiction than in poetry or drama—Novelists like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, who formed an interesting "trio", attempted to write fiction incorporating Gandhian ideology and showing as to how the contemporary life, with all its undulating processes of turbulence, trauma and uncertainty, could be detailed into the ambient narrative patterns. Gandhian impact on history must be cherished by succeeding generations and human race in general. Gandhian impact was two-fold: (i) it was concerned with the choice of theme, and (ii) and the selection of a style which bore biblical simplicity.

The themes of pre-Independence fiction invariably carried the Gandhian impact in so far as they harked back upon the much cherished values of Gandhi’s nationalism, his advocacy of non-violence, and his
search for truth that became the subject matter of the whole corpus of fiction.

There was a conscious shift from the ‘city’ to the “village”, a contrastive juxtaposition between sophistication and simplicity. Gandhian influence that the fiction writers felt that it was a sacred duty to carry the spiritual and religious resonances of Gandhian ideology into their fiction. Writing about the essential predicament of the 20th century Indian novelists. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes:

"And the nationalist movement itself was not a single movement but a combination of many forces sometimes working together and sometimes in contrary directions. The Gandhian ideology may have been the prime mover... The Gandhian way, itself had different implications for different kinds of people. For some it was a philosophy of life, for others expedient strategy in achieving freedom. Some people turned Gandhiji into a saint and his teachings into quasi-religious dogma."
The turbulent years of the freedom struggle witnessed various forces of chaos and uncertainty, confusion and perplexity. The novelists dealing with such a period had, by necessity, "to impose an order upon the splendid chaos and thus discern a pattern in it, to illuminate the human situation."²

Indian fiction in English was perhaps the last to emerge as a distinctive genre and was heavily oriented to historical romance. The novels record the villagers' undergoing redemptive failures, their death-in-life predicament, though their spiritual values by and large remain the same. K.R.S. Iyengar writes:

"The excitement of modern heroic age with Gandhiji making men out of clary and heroines out common humanity."³

In fact, this deployment of mythical dimension enhanced the prestige of Indo-English fiction during the national struggle for freedom and also went beyond the national boundaries to become a universal myth, certainly Gandhiji heralded the dawn of a spiritual epoch in human history.
It is perhaps in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan that the theme of Gandhian politics get a fuller expression. Mulk Raj Anand, with his avowed perceptions of social determinism, attempted to fuse the ideological base of Gandhism, with his all encompassing historical humanism. Anand is inspired by Gandhian to an extent that it not only became a precept but also a religion to be avoidly endorsed and practiced. He was in a constant touch with Gandhiji and after graduating from the Punjab University, he went to England, researching in philosophy, under the guidance of Prof. Hicks. Though he bagged his doctoral degree in philosophy, he found himself totally involved in the politics of contemporary times.

Mulk Raj Anand's sociological commitment was so perceptive that he was caught, in the words of K.R.S. Iyengar, "necessarily in the shackles of a political evangelist and he became the advocate of down trodden and the underprivileged. Anand was a student of fine arts, poetry and of philosophy before he turned to political action through creative fiction."
Mulk Raj Anand offers a conspicuous contrast to Narayan and Raja Rao in many ways. Anand is neither concerned with R.K. Narayan's psychological revelations, nor Raja Rao's metaphysical explorations. He is prolific in output "committed" to his outlook and is vigorously demonstrative in his technique and style. The notable vitality of his fiction lies in the precision or radiant actuality that he seems to endorse.

Mulk Raj Anand is a realist par-excellence in so far as he is concerned with the festivities of human existence. He has laborious psychological pre-occupations which allowed him to 'emphasize the universal against the particular, and he prefers familiar to the fancied." he avoids the highways of romance and sophistication and explores the bylanes of the outcastes and the peasants, the sepoys and the working people.

Mulk Raj Anand is more concerned with poverty and traumas and deals with the debased Indian orphans and untouchables, and urban labourers. When he writes as a committed writer, he reminds one of Charles Dickens, who deals with London low-life. As a social reformer,
Anand has an elaborate programme to reform the fetishes of the Indian society.

Anand's novels are concerned with all forms of social discrimination, and he attempts to telescope the Indian milieu and its ambient structure. Anand accepts the sociological approach, and so strong is his sense of "commitment" to social reform that "he is not ashamed to admit that he is using literature as a means rather than an end in itself." He defines his 'Operative sensibility', in his *A poloty for Heroism.* He claims to be a realist who "allows his insight to be conditioned by time, the place and circumstance of his age" and affiliates himself with the 'progressive' writers of contemporary Indian literature. He is determined to write with a view to discovering the causes of the mental and material chaos in India and the world of his own failure of his generation. He accepts the doctrine of "art as the criticism of life";

"If the ultimate purpose of the novelist is to understand man to intensify his emotion, to arouse his consciousness and to create the condition for the experience of 'Rasa' or a flavour of beauty. His total 'Commitment' includes all his faculties"
and experiences, which form the raw material of human life and is likely to be involved in the creative process and it is only through the imagination that the raw material of human life can be illuminated and transformed and only the artist or can the new poetry of the novel form become a kind of criticism of life. 

Conceived and planned on a global scale, and written perfectly under the tutelage of Gandhiji himself.

Mulk Raj Anand’s first novel Untouchable is a recordation of the epic sufferings of an untouchable who is regarded as the scum of the Indian society and who is denied the opportunity of social betterment, and who is victimized and thoroughly dehumanized. Anand strictly follows Aristotelian “the three Unities” as in a Greek tragedy, and the action of the novel constitutes ‘a single revolution of the sun.’

The familiar story of Bakha’s sufferings and the various processes of social determinism and religious orthodoxies that thwart his purposive development into a human being form the warp and woof of the novel. The novel carried the tag of ‘dirt’, and it was only after E.M. Forster
wrote the Foreword to the novel, that it was accepted for publication. Earlier it was turned down by a dozen publishing houses for all the 'stark' realism it contained. Anand had undergone this redemptive experience at Gandhiji Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmadabad. "Untouchable is the most artistically satisfying novel of Anand." Bakha tells his father: "They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt." Bakha, who is mentally torn, attends the meetings of Mahatma Gandhi, who says:

"I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism."

Bakha had also a third solution offered by the poet, Iqbal, who says that modern sanitary system would bring about a much-needed change. As the poet observes:

"Then sweepers will be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a classless society."

Bakha is impressed by the poet's promises and feels that a better future is in sight. He returns home to tell his father "the Mahatma and
about the machine which cleans dung without anyone having to handle it — the flush system.”

Summing up his assessment of the novel, Professor Iyengar points out:

"Bakha is also partly the prototypical "Untouchable", for he is also himself, a unique individual even in some measure an exceptional ‘untouchable’... As a novelist, addressing himself for the task of exposing certain evils, Anand (it must be conceded) has been as effective almost Dickens himself."

Anand’s trilogy, comprising The Village, A Cross the Black Waters, and The Sword and the Sickle, is his most ambitious work and marks the turning point in his career as a novelist. These novels were written during the height of India’s struggle for freedom, the turbulence and uncertainty that characterized the whole epoch of the 1930’s. These novels are patterned on the picaresque tradition of the novel. The trilogy endeavours to trace the eventful initiation of the protagonist, Lal Singh into the seething whirlpool of life.
The Village deals with Lalu's formative years of boyhood in Punjab, while Anand's next novel, Across the Black Waters, gives an intimate account of the protagonist's career as a missionary soldier, undergoing all the gyrating processes of change and mutation. In the sequential novel of the trilogy, The Sword and the Sickle, which is perforce, the most important of the three. Anand attempts to record Lalu's headlong plunge into the Indian struggle for freedom. Like nationalist heroes, lalu exemplifies indomitable will and courage and an unflinching loyalty to the cause. He bears with him the burden of the race, spurns the custom and tradition which separates man from man and which leaves the individual a helpless victim of all determinism and social contingencies.

As an uncompromising realist, he begins to question the very supremacy of the social order that perpetuates misery and affliction on the masses. He is the symbol of a modern man who is aware of the adverse intimations of the traditional order and who willingly takes on to himself the representative burden both as an individual and a self-aware soldier to overcome the traumatic shifts in life.
The events of the novel filter through Lal’s consciousness and whole novel is replete with the suggestion of apathy and boredom. The three novels present a cross-section of the contemporary Indian life through Lalu’s ideological odyssey. But the ideological force of Gandhism seems to have been lost in the breezy similitudes of Anand’s sociological predilections, and the trilogy does not seem to come round to the lucidity of expression and clarity of vision. Anand needlessly clouds the canvas with men and events and episodes which, instead of leading into the story of a purposive direction contribute to the dilution of effect. As C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly points out: “but I am only objecting to the carelessness that has so pervasively crept into an otherwise admirable novel.”

II

Like Lalu Sng, the two poles of Anand’s nature are those of an aesthete who takes happiness by surprise and that of a socially conscious novelist who wants to rage against oppression, tyranny and injustice. These antitypes are obvious in Anand’s nature, for at one time, he looks like a gregarious, sociable extrovert, and at another, a shy retiring writer.
But the fact remains that, besides being a good novelist, Anand has combined a profound interest in the arts with a rare zest for life. Though he was a student of philosophy, his life-long interest in art criticism started with two early works, *The Persian Painting* and *The Hindu View of Art*. Anand expresses lucidly not only the philosophy of Indian aesthetics laid down in all leading religious texts but also gives a fine exposition of the rasa theory, and the relationship between theory and practice in Indian art.

It seems that with the advent of freedom, Anand wanted to devote himself to the rediscovery of India's artistic heritage. As a true believer in the Lawrence Cult, he has all along remained an ardent champion of the quick of the Sun and the warmth of human desire. Anand believes that from the Vedic period onwards, the belief in the universe as the outcome of the cosmic union between the male and the female had been a fundamental aspect of the Hindu faith. With such elaborate religious-philosophical hypothesis, Anand has succeeded in attaching certain mysterious sanctity to Mithuna poses. As an art critic *Kama-Kala* remains his most popular work.
Anand talks about the role played by the subconscious and the unconscious in the development of our response to a work of art. Anand provides an elaborate anatomical analysis of our response to a work of art through metaphors borrowed from mythology. Besides, he believes that the function of a work of art is to uplift man. Anand believes that the poems, the symphonies, and the pictures... open for him the possibilities of humaneness, of the total man. It is through these works of art that man is able to realize his full potential.

As an art critic, Anand has been profoundly impressed by Ananda Coomaraswamy. Anand was an early admirer of An Introduction to Indian Art which was inspired by "the faith in resonance of the experience of life as rhythm. Anand believes that the ultimate bliss has to be sought in rasa which is evoked by the beautiful object. But art criticism cannot be divorced from many other disciplines. Anand has always remained an ardent champion of Mughal painting. He has an equally uncanny gift of perceiving the precise greatness of Indian artists against the background of European styles. Anand defines myth as, "Myth may thus be called the sublimation of desire. And it has been, universally, the source for creativeness in so far as it seizes on the
concrete feeling, emotion or situation, instinctual-rational-intuitive image, rhythm, or rendering in words, and gives it expressive form.” With such mythic interpretation, Anand takes a deeply profound view about the place of art in civilization. With such serious concerns, he has been chiefly responsible for the revival of keen interest in the arts since independence.

As in Wordsworth, so in Anand, the sublime and the trivial exist side by side. His very first novel – Untouchable – drew great admiration because the theme itself had certain inherent fascination. His “Coolie”, like his celebrated short story, ‘The Lost Child’ shows that he is a poet of childhood. His imagination works wonders when he writes about the early days in his own life.

Seven Summers, the first in his three autobiographical novels published so far, is the most successful because it portrays the early days of Anand’s life.

Coolie is a brilliant novel because of its successful evocation of the child’s world. This can be seen from Munoo’s first reaction to a rich house. Coolie creates a great impact because Anand has genuine
sympathy for poor people. Munoo’s life in Bombay is worse than that in
the hills because poverty in a rich city is more crushing than that in a poor
village. It is significant that Munoo goes back to Simla and dies as a
rickshaw-puller to Mrs. Mainwaring. Even here, Anand is not able to hide
his hatred of Europeans.

The trouble with Anand is that he is not able to hide proletarian
sympathies. The characters in almost all the novels of Anand tend to
become types. They have no other dimension to their personality. His
sense of realism can often assume crude proportions. If one were to
compile a collection of Indian abuse, one can’t find better source material
than his novels.

Anand’s prose-style tends to be verbose, florid and uneven. He is
unfortunate in his models – Carlyle and Ruskin. He goes on piling clause
upon clause his style tends towards – proximity. His occasional lack of
linguistic discipline turns parallel to his occasional lack of artistic
discipline. Sometime it is surprising how he can allow the social reformer
to take precedence over the artist. When literature is treated as an
instrument for social change, it inevitably degenerates into propaganda.
Mulk Raj Anand is prolific without being disciplined. He seems to discover his mind in the process of writing his fiction with the result that his novels occasionally have no compact structure. He has too many other things to do; hence sometimes, his novels lack a satisfying sense of completeness. His writings have some bogus surplussage. In *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* one can be inspired to explain the Marxist's view of history to the Prince. If Anand had avoided such superfluity, he would have been a far more satisfying artist.

But what Anand has lost in intensity, he has gained in breadth. He is a man with wonderful vitality and gusto. Past his eighty fifth, the fourth volume of his fictional autobiography *The Bubble*, has been published. Very few people in their old age have the capacity to express at such length the emotions recollected in tranquility. Anand's *Confessions of a Lover* (1976) is remarkable for its portrait of Yasmin and his hero's longing and love for her, whatever may shake from the sieve in the days to come, Anand will always be remembered for his range and versatility. The human concern shown in his early novels is simply brilliant. Even after India's independence, he has not been merely content to live. What
he lost as a novelist, he made up considerably by serving the cause of art criticism in India.

Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan are not as prolific and versatile as Anand. Indian English fiction has flourished more successfully since independence than it ever did before. Strangely enough, the number of Indian English novelists has increased considerably. Mulk Raj Anand, however, still remains the most prolific and versatile of them all.

Mulk Raj Anand is a thinker, a novelist, a short story writer, an essayist, a critic, a connoisseur of art and an educationist and has published fifteen novels, half a dozen collections of short stories, besides several books for children and miscellaneous essays on art, literature and education.

What adds Mulk Raj Anand a distinctive place in the Indian English fiction is the high value he attaches to his vocation as a writer. He considers the writer as the prophet of his age and the true conscience of society and believes in the high ideological content and the social significance of his works. The novel for him is not a mere fantasy or a
fairy tale, "wholly and solely a means of relaxation, a harmless opiate for vacant hours and vacant minds."\textsuperscript{16}

It is a vehicle of conveying the considered opinions of a writer with the deliberate object of educating people and converting them to his opinions. In \textit{The Rebel}, Albert Camus remarks: "The novel is born at the same time as the spirit of rebellion and expresses, on the aesthetic plane, the same ambition."\textsuperscript{17} According to Mulk Raj Anand, "a novel emerges from the total of all the opinions, speculations, judgments, feelings and valuations which the author has stored up in his consciousness."\textsuperscript{18}

V.S. Naipaul talks of 'aimlessness of Indian fiction', or when he writes, "The only writer who, while working from within the society is yet able to impose on it a vision which is an acceptable type of comment is R. Prawer Jhabvala. And she is European."\textsuperscript{19} It is the travesty of truth, for infact no other Indian English novelist has imposed his vision on the readers more effectively than Mulk Raj Anand.

Anand had a staunch faith in the comprehensive historical humanism. In the article "How I Became a Writer" Anand himself points out:
"The compulsion to write was in my case the choice between life and death, the quality of love, the values which make men human... for consciously or unconsciously, in oscillating between Asia and Europe, I had evolved for myself the philosophy of synthesis in what I call my comprehensive historical humanism."\textsuperscript{20}

Though considerably influenced by Marxian philosophy, Anand is not a communist. Anand's faith in humanism has evolved out of his profound study of the thoughts of the East and the West. His Indian upbringing and familiarity with India's rich cultural heritage, the study of Western philosophy at University College, London, under Professor G.D. Hicks, the famous Kantian scholar, who belonged to the realist school in contemporary British Philosophy, and, above all, the reading of Karl Marx's \textit{Das Capital},\textsuperscript{21} have combined to reveal to Anand "a new conception of the role of man, an emphasis on the importance of a 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."\textsuperscript{22} He declares emphatically: "I believe, first and foremost in human beings, in Man, in
the whole man."23 This faith of Anand in Man is in no way alien to Indian outlook.

The deepest socialism is the only basis for perfecting the deepest human personality. Anand believes that only this new humanism can restore order and decency in the world. His faith in humanism has also made him optimistic about the future of mankind.

Anand’s humanism had led him to portray the miserable life of untouchables, coolies, peasants, poor village folk and the underdog of society to arouse the compassion of the Indian intelligentsia to work for the alleviation of pain and its expiation.

Anand exposes and describes the hard-heartedness, greediness, lechery, callousness, arrogance, selfishness and meanness of these agents of cruelty and exploitation. Addressing the coolies of cotton mills, Sauda, a Trade Union leader, points out that the world is divided in two distinct classes of people:

There are only two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor, and between the two there is no connection.24
Human dignity occupies a very important place in Anand’s scheme of ethical values and conduct. He believes that a writer should train “the higher type of human beings 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 experience, who will bend before no tyrants but only follow his own enlightened will.”

A man can, however, have his own dignity and assert his own enlightened will only in a socialistic society.

Anand’s heroes attach a high value to their dignity as man and result the indignities inflicted upon them by their tormentors. Bakha, Munoo, Lal Singh and Ananta have been created as ideal heroes and ideal men. They embody in their character the qualities which the author considers essential requisites for the new man of the modern age. They possess understanding, large-heartedness and passions and believe in action. Ananta exhorts his fellow labourers to work hard, for, “after all, men are better men when they are working than when they are idle” (p. 97). Both of them are humanists and have staunch faith in the great capacities of man for transforming the society. They are unorthodox and have no faith in religion or God.
Mulk Raj Anand has evolved his own aesthetics of the novel for the artistic expression of his new faith. The Keytone of this aesthetics is his technique of poetic realism which he has developed from his study of the foremost and outstanding English, continental and Indian novelists in their true historical perspective. Among the European novelists, he has particularly been influenced by Balzac’s sociological interest, Dickens’ reformative Zeal, Tolstoy’s wider vision and treatment of inner drama of human soul, and Gorki’s revolutionary temper.

Mulk Raj Anand calls this realism as “poetic realism” and declares: ‘I have been inclined to stress the need for a truly humanist art commensurate with the needs of our time.” Anand’s ‘poetic realism’ is an innovation in the technique of the Indian novel too, for it advances the Indian novel from where Prem Chand had left it, the earliest pioneer of the Indian novel. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, has mostly written historical romances after the style of Sir Walter Scott. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee discerns the evils infecting the Indian middle class society very keenly and analyses them very artistically. Anand extends the frontiers of the Indian novel by adding his revolutionary and humanistic outlook on life to the social consciousness and realistic treatment of life in the novels.
of Prem Chand, and the artistic perspective in those of Rabindra Nath Tagore. Anand’s “poetic realism” is based on the synthesis thus attained.

In the treatment of narrative and art form, Mulk Raj Anand lays stress on the dramatic representation of human relationships to preference to the epic, bardic and three-dimensional recital involving the participation of the story-teller, the characters and the readers in the action of the novel:

"The novel interprets the problems of man's destiny; it does not solve them, as did the old epic and bardic recital."27

The author should concentrate more on the inner conflict of his characters than on the superficial effects of outer phenomena:

"The novel then becomes a kind of soul drama in historical time, but with a certain simultaneous sense of all time, in which imagination recreates the crisis of character in every human situation."28

Anand believes that the novelist should allow “the tension of the struggle between the emotional, mental and physical life of human beings to reveal to the fascinated reader, without contriving a plot but through a
pattern, or direction, or the tendency of the characters as they work out their destinies. By following this technique Anand raises his novels far above the level of propagandistic works. Though a writer with a purpose like the famous dramatist, George Bernard Shaw, he maintains a judicious balance between art and social concerns in his novels.
References


11. Ibid., p. 170.

12. Ibid., p. 171.

13. Ibid., p. 171.


22. Ibid., p. 95.
23. Ibid., p. 93.


26. Ibid., p. 86.


28. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

29. Ibid., p. 33.