CHAPTER-6

In preceding chapters I have tried to analyse Mulk Raj Anand's fiction in the light of his conception of compassion. Anand has chosen to show the element of compassion on the exploited classes and the sufferers who are the central figures of his works. He does not follow the classic idea and tradition of the hero, and hence he selects common men such as coolies, untouchables, sweepers, labourers, suppressed and the exploited to be the protagonists for presentation of the real picture of the society.

As advocated in his following long confessional essay, Apology For Heroism (1946), he always kept in mind the functions of the novelist:

Because of his addiction to truth, the writer can help to educate humanity...for more enduringly 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 expensive and intensive. And he is possessed of the necessary apparatus to help, to exalt man to the full heights of their dignity, to equip them with the necessary spirit to tackle the task 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.¹

In the same book, the author speaks of “the revolutionary
aspect of art”² 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 says that “the writer
alone, if he is honest and brave, is in a position to understand the
world qualitatively to perceive the most delicate process of the
human sensibility, on the aesthetic as well as the cognitive and
conative plans. And, if he 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.”³ Like George Orwell, he seems to me to be a committed writer
which he has himself thus endorsed:

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 mother-tongue, about the agony of aloneness of people, in the depths of degradation, in the wretchedness beyond wretchedness forced upon human beings by others human beings through casualties 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-hero 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 their strength of their resilience.  

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." However, he criticized communism for denying "to people the very liberties and human rights for which the revolutions were fought" and he refused to join the communist party because he honestly 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 around his orthodox adherents. Besides the influence of Tolstoy (1828-1910), Ruskin (1819-1900), Morris (1834-1896), and Gandhi (1869-1948), 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 beings such as, a profound respect for man, love for him and faith in his capacity to strengthen his back and look at the stars.”7 The following extract from his letter to Srinivasa Iyengar, 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.8

Anand’s love for novelty and originality enable him to carry the tradition of Tagore (1861-1941) and Premchand (1880-1936), Bankim Chandra (1838-1894) and Sarat Chandra (1876-1936) 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 ground and made a departure from the tradition of Indian fiction. Anand actually succeeded in doing was interpreting the soul of India 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. As Anand himself acknowledges in the "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 I owed them for much of the inspiration they had given me to mature into manhood, when I began to interpret their lives 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 being 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. 9

The truth Anand, the artist, interpreted "from the realities of his life" focuses on man's inhumanity to man. It tells us that

1. Casteism is a crime against humanity and everyone who believes in human dignity should actively strive to eliminate it.
2. 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”. 10

3. Superstition, belief in Fate or Karma, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are enemies of healthy social life, progressive thinking and individual and national prosperity. They should be totally removed from the mind of the people by inculcating rational thinking.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Machine is important for the rapid growth and modernization of nation. Is 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.

7. 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.

9. Ill-treatment of woman, the mother of mankind, is a barbaric act. Woman should be given equal right with man both in theory and in practice.

10. 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.

Since the present study has mainly concentrated on the element of compassion which is mainly caused by human suffering, exploitation and mal-treatment meted out to humanity at large, Anand’s commitments both to the society and the literature help us a lot in understanding and analyzing his fictional world. His views such as his love-hate attitude to both-tradition and modernity become quite evident in the novels under discussion. He attacks the ossified system of traditional life with the hostility of an inconoclast and, at the same time, clings to tradition with nostalgic fondness. He not only presents modernity as an alternative to traditional ways of life in novel after novel but also reveals the dreary face of modernity, which he attacks with no remorse.

I also see as regards his social and political attitudes that have been revealed in his novels, he is a Marxist and not a true Marxist, a democrat and not a democrat. Through a Marxist, he always looks forward to democratic ideals enshrined in Indian Renaissance as represented by Gandhi (1869-1948) and Nehru (1889-1964), and
through a liberal democrat, he always turns towards Marxism to seek fulfillment for his humanistic aspiration.

The alternation in Anand between a class humanism with its championing of the proletarian cause and a humanist universalism with its ubiquitous compassion regardless of class considerations is well manifested in his needs. On the base of compassion, he emerges as the authentic fictional voice of the mute sufferers and a powerful indiquer of all forms of exploitation. He carries his 'Yoke of Pity'\textsuperscript{11} for the exploiter too, and sees with tearful eyes the anguished human being underneath the enemy's skein.

Each of the novels examined in the present dissertation shows that the creative tension of the novelist, arising from his conflicting loyalties is attempted to be harmonized in the form of the work through a synthesis of narrative forms and modes drawn from Indian and Western literary traditions. The novel does not show this synthesis in its perfected form, but reveals the very process towards the synthesis with its inevitable interactions, and hence the tension is felt at the heart of work.

Infact, it is his keen awareness of the human predicament that propelled him into creative writing. Therefore, the themes which Anand has chosen for his novels have a bearing on such problems as casteism, and human suffering caused by a variety of factors-political, economical, social and cultural. He uses the element of compassion to create in the readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils, to stir the springs of tenderness in them and to activate them for the removal of these evils in order to attain a desirable, just and social order.
Anand launched his literary career with *Untouchable* (1935) which shows the sufferings of young outcaste Bakha. Because of dirty work, he does not find shelter in the society. People curse and abuse him because he is an untouchable boy. Anand has presented the evil of untouchability with moderation and equanimity and “the whole story is tender and touching.” The novel is superb in point of technique, dealing with the problem of casteism in general and untouchability in particular Prof. C.D.Narasimhaiah has rightly remarked:

> 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. ¹²

*The Road* (1961) has the same theme as *Untouchable* (1935). It points out that the untouchable 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 and, of course, practise these values conscientiously.”¹³ It exhibits, in the words of Arnold Bennett the “essential characteristic of the really great novelist is a Christ-like, all embracing compassion.”¹⁴

Bhkhu, the protagonist of the novel, through his sufferings and humiliation successfully reveals Anand’s all embracing compassion for the oppressed and the doomed people of India.
The caste system is an indigenous phenomenon in our country, which we come across in the *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves And A Bud* (1937). They deal with the evils of the class system covering a wider range. These proletarian novels bring into sharp focus the capitalist domination which cuts across caste, cultural, intellectual and racial distinctions, because money and power play a very dominant role in them. Anand has charted out there different courses of life for Munoo and Gangu. Even though both are Kshatriyas by birth, *Coolie* (1936) portrays the tribulation of an individual, while *Two Leaves And A Bud* (1937) pictures the same problem as a group experience. But Anand has resolved the tension through a dexterous use of compassion and through the melting power of all-embracing pity and largeness of vision which leave a lasting imprint on our head and heart.

The evil of superstition, orthodoxy and war are Anand’s social concerns in “*The Village Trilogy*” comprising *The Village* (1939), *Across The Black Water* (1940), and *The Sword and The Sickle* (1942). These novels present the struggle of a sensitive Punjabi peasant boy, LaL Singh, first against his own people and then as a soldier in British Indian army and at last as a freedom fighter.

The novels of the *Triology* in which there is an attempted synthesis of the historical and mythical, stand the test of fictional integrity which remarkable success. Here the novelist discovers a form adequate to communicate the social reality of a specific period of history, and here the historical and the mythical successfully coalesce in the narrative. The skilful use of literary traditions such as social realism and tragedy from the West, and the epic, the moral fable and folk tale from the East and, above all, the use of compassion which interacts
meaningfully in the narrative, significantly contributes to the internal unity of these works.

The *Seven Summers* (1951), *Morning Face* (1968), *Confession of A Lover* (1976), and *The Bubble* (1984) are the most autobiographical novels dealing with childhood and adolescence of the life of Krishan Chander. He suffers at many places but his mother and aunt have compassionate feelings for him. Buddha Singh’s hatred and compassion of Head Master along with his money problems, we witness here quite a few touching scenes, with a wider scope the novels present the intersection between tradition and modernity in a comprehensive manner. The treatment by the class conscious people and their attitude towards the muslims and low caste people speak volumes. Mulk Raj Anand’s compassion for the badly treated and his anger at their exploitation forcefully hits at communalism and racism.

*Private Life of An Indian Prince* (1953) presents the predicament of an Indian prince Victor, at the most significant moment in the history of India. What happened to Victor happened to almost all the princes of India when they have to give up their crown. The novel is based on an authentic story, and beautifully presents Anand’s profound character study.

*Lament On The Death of a Master of Arts*, (1939) dramatises the last days of Nur, a student’s career. Anand has dexterously used the method of interior monologue to give a comprehensive picture of the protagonist’s suffering soul. As Nur’s profession and status are decided by his birth, his M.A. degree does not help him secure any official post. It is merely the irony of fate of our countrymen who are not born in privileged families. As P.P. Mehta says the “novelette suffers from a
flimsy situation which is more pathetic than tragic in its unrestrained sentimentality and its loose plot. 15

The Big Heart (1945) deals with the mechanization and the nature on its impact of traditional Hindu society. The themes of caste and class system have been dexterously fused in the novel. The novel shows that these two co-exist and coalesce in the society. Anand gives a free rein to his temper while dealing with class system. The novel is also concerned with the pro and anti-machinery reactions and resultant despair.

The Old Woman And The Cow (1960) where opposition of society is offered not by one, but two individuals Gauri and Panchi. The author has chosen here for the first time in his fictional understanding the frame work of a Hindu Scripture The Ramayan, as part of his technique. The aim is not to endorse or justify the myth but to use it as a fictional framework for a modern tragedy. Gauri is the modern version of Sita, not the self-effacing goddess of the Ramayam. Here the novelist has successfully made a touching appeal through Gauri for the women’s cause.

In the last novel Death of A Hero (1964), Maqbool Sherwani sacrifices his life fighting the Muslim fanatics. He, who championed the cause of brotherhood, is branded an infidel by the people deeply rooted in religion. The Pakistani invaders indulge in indiscriminate killing in the name of religion. This novel is a revolt against an unholy alliance between religious fanatics and political aggressors. The protagonist of the novel is a Christ like figure. He prefers to sacrifice his life rather than his cause.
Religion is not dealt with at length in any particular novel but there is hardly any novel that has a perfectly deferential opinion of God or religion. Anand’s aim ever remains to project exploitation in all its facets, the practice of religion being one of them. Counterfeit sainthood is a ubiquitous phenomenon in our society and Anand covers the priests of different religions- Hindu, Islam, Sikh and Christianity with contempt and crushes them beyond redemption, because they have reduced religion to rank religiously and crass communalism.

Anand is unhappy to learn that education, expected to be a powerful instrument of social reconstruction, has not served its desired purpose. The prevalent education system is an imitative one, and so it is not related to the life of the Indians. The acquisition of sapless bookish knowledge does not offer much help. Furthermore, the people with real knowledge are helpless to get jobs, because recruitment to jobs is made on the basis of recommendations rather than merit. It is for this reason that the country faces the twin problems of unemployment and under-employment.

Anand has probed deep into human problems-both social and psychological and has artistically realized them in his novels. He does not try to mystify the readers but goes straight to the core of the subject and suggests solution in simple terms. He has no mixed mercenary motives behind his creative writings. On the contrary, his novel and fixed motive of artistic interpretation of human problems strengthens the quality of his novels. He had presented social evils in myriad manifestations and has covered many different layers of human experience in his novels. His wide reading and excursions have enabled him to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. His close
association with the suffering folk has given his novels an intimate quality of really felt life. His commitment to human values is deep and abiding. His passionate recording of the events confirms the authenticity of his fiction. When some works of art tend to inform and others try to reform, Anand’s novel aim at transforming the very ways and attitudes of the readers. There is no denying the fact that Anand’s novels touch the reader’s heart because they are the true expression of the inner feelings of his own heart.

Thus it can now be said for certain that Mulk Raj Anand is a committed creative artist who called upon his fellow creative writers to shift their emphasis from. “evasions for easy sales, fake fame and cheap popularity to genuine passion.”16 His novel forcefully reveal his passionate concern for the poor and the oppressed and his deep and abiding commitment to human values.

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References

2. Ibid., 131.
3. Ibid., 130-131.
7. Ibid., 95.
10. *Apology for Heroism*, 163-64.