CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Indian women in India have been glorified as – Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth, Sarawathi, Goddess of Education, and Shakthi, Goddess of Power, which are necessary for a successful life; but in reality these are denied to some extent to the women, the embodiment of Goddesses. This horrible situation in real life asserts the need of the research for the enrichment of women. It is not only the problem of Indian women but also the problem of womankind. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional services centre Bangkok, Advisor, Mr. Roohi Metcalfe reports:

Challenges to GE shared by countries in the Asia Pacific region include addressing entrenched attitudes and behavior related to gender roles and women’s status. The issues are: restricted mobility; basic human abilities related to education, health and nutrition; lack of access to economic assets, such as land and infrastructure; resources such as income and employment and political such as representation in political bodies. There are also security issues such as vulnerability to violence and conflict. (Carole Goldsmith 38)

Though Gender Equality (GE) is a universal burning issue, only predicament of Indian women is focused in this research. Hence, an attempt is made to analyze the impact of the social milieu on the existential predicament of women in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand.
Society has its impact on the individual and the individual has its impact on society, directly or indirectly. Impact means “a powerful effect that something, especially something new has on a situation or a person” (Cambridge 707). It is based on the milieu in which the individual exists. The impact of the society on the individual may differ according to the milieu. The Cambridge Dictionary defines ‘milieu’ as “the people, physical and social condition and events which provide a background in which someone acts or lives” (Cambridge 896). Every creature in this world has the natural desire to exist. Existence means living. For existence women have to lose their self dignity.

Problems vary due to their economical, social, educational and cultural backgrounds. So the predicament may vary according to the individual based on the milieu in which she or he exists. The Cambridge Dictionary defines predicament as “an unpleasant situation which is difficult to get out of ” (1111). Predicament is the same whether it is for male or female. Unfortunately, the traditions imposed on women make their predicament worse than ever before. Traditions may be good. But the interpretation of the belief behind the tradition was not being properly conveyed through generations as there was no record in those days. But mere rituals are followed without any significance. Due to this taboo women suffer a lot. To eradicate the predicament of women the social reformers fought against the social injustice along with political freedom.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the writers who protested against this predicament through his novels. In those days, the Indian society was considered ideal in all aspects - culturally, economically and socially; but after colonization, the settlers dominated the natives. Gradually, the natives were socially, economically, culturally, politically and sexually exploited. Bearing this in mind the objectives for this research are chosen.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The objectives of this study are to undertake a critical study of Indian women characters of Anand’s novels with the special reference

1. To probe deep into economic backwardness of women
2. To correlate the illiteracy level of women characters to their suffering.
3. To analyze the gender bias in the society.
4. To study the development of women from Pre-independence to Post-independence period.
5. To trace the racial issues due to colonization and its impact on innocent women

Conceptual framework was drawn through the self-introspective questions given below to reach those objectives.

- What are the factors that kept women as dependent?
- Why do these factors remain as the hindrances for the development of women?
- How was the tradition imposed on women?
- What are the superstitious beliefs that affect women’s independence?
- Who are the people involved for the development and underdevelopment of women?
- When does money act as a deciding role of authority?
- Where does the institution of marriage play a negative role?
- What problems exist for women due to conflict between races and religious groups?
The subjects of his novels are relevant even today which are analyzed in the newspapers as it was in his time, both pre-independence and post-independence. Racial exploitation, economic exploitation, social exploitation, religious exploitation and sexual exploitation are analysed.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Content Analysis of the Primary Sources**

To achieve the objectives of this study, content analysis of the primary sources is done with the socialistic and historical approach. These approaches opened avenue to analyse the predicament of women in their social milieu under the banner of historical development. The sources for this study consist of:
a. Primary Sources - Books written by Anand

Before analyzing the books written by Anand, the social milieu that inspired Anand is summarised. During independence movement India had many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who protested against the social evils through their works. They influenced such great Hindu religious and social reformers and thinkers as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswathi, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan. Tagore and Premchand produced a good harvest of fiction both in English and regional languages. The theme of protest has become a potent weapon of social change in the hands of several writers.

Women writers like Kamala Markandeya, Nayantra Saghal and Anita Desai rendered their services through their writings from feminist perspective. Under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian English novelists of the pre-independence period chose the struggle for independence as the major theme. The Gandhian movement made a definite impact on the writers of this period and gave a special impetus to them. Then, the great trio Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan in Indian English fiction explored all the possibilities of Gandhian theme. “Ideologically, Mulk Raj Anand is quite akin to Gandhi. His sympathies are with the underdogs of society and he is against all types of exploitation whether ‘by white sahibs’ or the ‘brown sahibs’. He does not believe in caste discrimination or class distinctions” (Sudharshan Sharma 63).

As the researcher is born and brought up in a village, she has an urge to explore the predicament of poor women in villages even today. To serve this purpose, Mulk Raj Anand is one of the best writers to analyse problems of working class society. “A novel written by an Indian writer will certainly be
Indian without any conscious effort on the part of the writer to the extent to which it depicts Indian life and culture, reflects faithfully the life and spirit of the Indian ethos and grapples with the problems and tensions generated by the unique way in which an individual’s life and characters are determined by home, family and society in the Indian social milieu” (Ramamurthy 4). Social realism is the most representative trait of his novels. As a social realist, Anand brought in a new wave of realism in Indian Literature. His novels express his dreams. One can see realism, naturalism and socialist realism get mingled in his fiction. He writes in the Preface to Two Leaves and a Bud (TLB), “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” (1). Thus the life of Mulk Raj Anand is summarised in nutshell.


Mulk Raj Anand was born in Peshawar (Pakistan) on December 12, 1905. His father Lal Chand was a coppersmith in Amristar, but he joined the British Indian army and served as a clerk. His mother Ishwar Kaur came from central Punjab. Though his parents influenced him “the young novelist could not compromise with his father’s subservience to the British and his mother’s faith in ritualistic observance superstitious gullibility” (Nath 129).

Mulk Raj Anand, the most prolific and versatile of all Indian fictionist, has written novels, short stories, essays and articles on numerous subjects. He is a multifaceted genius and his creative work clearly reveals his wonderful stamina. He has been a professor, social worker, and educationist and so on. As a novelist Anand is an expositor of evils in India to the West. “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” (George 196).
Anand’s views and attitudes, which condition his works, are the resultant of a number of influences that operate upon him from childhood onwards. His heredity, his social milieu, his education, the books he has read and the people he has met, have all conditioned his art.

Anand developed a sense of hatred towards the superficial trappings of religion. He was shocked by the incident of excommunication of his aunt for fraternizing with a Muslim lady, which eventually led to her suicide. He could not help but condemn a society, ridden by caste and class distinctions which preached piety, but committed murder and survived on its pretence to holiness.

Anand’s mind was very much influenced by the British oppression in Jallian Wallah Bagh. Young Anand could not remain uninfluenced by the Indian struggle for independence. As a student, Anand also suffered a brief imprisonment due to his participation in a non-violent campaign. In 1924 he went to London on a scholarship to obtain a Doctor’s degree in philosophy. In London, he came under numerous literary, political and social influences. He was deeply impressed by the human values underlying Marxism, and among these values, according to him, the dignity of man is the highest values.

During his studies in England, Anand fell in love with Irene, the daughter of a Welsh Professor. The girl wanted to know all about his nature and nurture. It was a love affair in the Wales that led to the awakening of the novelist in him. At her behest he wrote a kind of confession modelled on Rousseau’s *Confession* which she had given him to read. Soon it ran in about 2000 pages and later became the source – book of his writings. As nobody came forward to publish the narrative, he took some of the characters and incidents from his confessions and moulded them into fiction. *Untouchable* was the first of these products.
Anand is a voracious reader of literature, art and philosophy. He himself admitted in his letters, preface and articles that he has lived and written under the impact of countless writers. He tells us that it was the reading of Tolstoy’s War and Peace, during a short time in jail that awakened him to the possibilities of an epic novel like Coolie. Later he read Doestoevsky’s The Possessed and was overwhelmed by it. But he was mainly influenced by Darwin’s The Origin of Species. He also read Freud, Jung and Einstein. In London, he read Joyce Ulysses and other novels. The stream of consciousness method of James Joyce’s created a deep and great impression on Anand. In his work, Anand has tried to achieve a synthesis of the influences of all these books.

Indian fables of the Panchatantra and Punjabi folk tales also influenced Anand considerably. Iqbal, the well known Urdu poet, conditioned his view of God and literary creed. As G.S. Balarama Gupta rightly says, “He is a man of varied interests and achievements and his life itself reads like an exciting romantic tale full of struggle, quest and achievement” (Gupta 1). Not only this most of his characters are drawn from real life with the rural setting of Punjab and North India. This is evident from his following brief summary of his novels.

**BRIEF SURVEY OF MULK RAJ ANAND’S NOVELS**

**UNTOUCHABLE**

In this novel Untouchable, Sohini and her brother Bakha had to face so many problems as they were untouchables, poor and uneducated. They were scavengers. For water and food they have to depend on the mercy of the high class Hindus. As it was woman’s duty to fetch water for cooking, cleaning, Sohini had to wait for long hours. Pandit Kalinath, a religious hypocrite, asked her to come and clean the temple courtyard while she was
waiting for water near the well. Pandit Kalinath tried to molest her. As she protested against this he makes hue and cry over the so called pollution. Ironically the passion of lust knows no caste system.

**COOLIE**

*Coolie* describes the pathetic life of an orphan boy. His father died of shock and grief because he could not pay the interest due to the landlord on the money he had borrowed. His farm and cattle were taken away by the callous landlord. The landlord had seized his father’s five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and the harvests bad. His father left his mother a penniless beggar, to support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms.

**TWO LEAVES AND A BUD**

*TWO LEAVES AND A BUD* describes the pathetic plight of the Indian labourers in Assam Tea-plantations. It deals with the problem of indentured labourers who had to lead a life of inhuman subjugation. It describes the ruthlessness and injustice of India’s white rulers. Gangu, a Punjabi farmer, goes as a labourer to the tea plantations of Assam. His wife Sajani was a victim to malarial epidemic. The white tea planter, Reggie Hunt was fascinated by the blooming Punjabi beauty. One day he followed Leila. Leila ran to her hut. Her father came to rescue her, but he is shot dead by Reggie with his bullets. Nobody’s wife, mother or sister was safe. The white jury tried the case and acquitted Reggie Hunt. Due to lack of nutrition, Shama’s (Sajani’s neighbour) breast had no milk to feed her child. Besides this, there was an epidemic in which she had lost her children already.
LAMENT ON THE DEATH OF A MASTER OF ARTS

The novel is about the futility of the education system. As the title suggests it is a lament on the Master of Arts, Nur who was affected physically by tuberculosis and mentally for not getting suitable job. His father married a girl with whom Nur played and quarrelled. Nur was burdened with an arranged marriage. Iqbal, Nur’s wife spent her life with her bed-ridden husband. He deliberately detached himself from her as she was not a fashionable woman. Muslim girls were not allowed to get education.

LALU SINGH'S TRILOGY

1. The Village
2. Across the Blackwaters
3. The Sword and the Sickle

War and its impact on the peasants are depicted in these novels. In the Trilogy Anand traces the career of Lalu Singh over a period of some years, from shortly before the First World War to the disturbed post-war in India - the Gandhian age. Thus boyhood, youth and early manhood are the themes of trilogy. The Village deals with Lalu’s boyhood in a Punjabi village. Disintegration of a family due to poverty is depicted here. He made the trip across the black waters to fight along the side of the British soldiers against the armies of Kaiser Wilhelm II. In the second novel of trilogy (Across the Black Waters), Lalu’s experiences in France from the moment of his arrival in Marseilles to the time of his capture by the enemy are depicted. The theme of the novel is the Indian sepoy’s experience at the war. The Sword and the Sickle tells of Lalu’s involvement in the Indian Independence movement. It describes the life of soldiers and the peasants. After the close of First World War, Lalu becomes free and returns to India, with a desire to gain some sort of stability in life.
THE BIG HEART

*The Big Heart* presents the life of a small community of coppersmiths. The coppersmiths are rendered jobless by a factory. Ram Saran and Binde Saran are brothers of a coppersmith family. They sell their daughter in the name of marriage. So Anand reveals that the atmosphere of marriage is contagious. Ananta, one of the coppersmiths has modern ideas. But it was not accepted by the society. Ananta’s mistress Janki, a widow remains true to him after his death. Ananta loved and lived with her. But he did not have the courage to remarry her because of his fear to face the society. Through Ananta, Anand depicts the pathetic condition of young girls in Bombay and Ahmedabad where they are sold for brothel.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF AN INDIAN PRINCE

The novel deals with the contemporary political history of India and the story of an individual’s life. The individual is Victor, the ‘Indian Prince.’ After his three legal marriages, the hill woman becomes his Cleopatra and his ultimate doom. The loss of love and loss of kingdom upsets his balance and he goes mad. The story ends with him in the lunatic asylum. Problem of prostitution is revealed here through Ganga Devi. ‘Devadasi’, ‘Rajadasi’ and ‘Yellamma’ cult reflected in this novel. It also discusses the private life of Ganga Devi.

OLD WOMAN AND THE COW

Revolt against oppression is the theme of this novel. Poverty and its impact on peasants are revealed here pathetically by depicting Gauri’s life. It was the custom to give dowry to the girl by the boy’s family. In the novel, *Old Woman and the Cow* (OWC), even before marriage Panchi has imagined: “For there was a prospect of the prize of a girl—a girl whom he could fold in
his arms at night and kick during the day, who would adorn his house and help him with the work on the land” (OWC 5).

Due to joint family system Gauri was tortured by the superstitious beliefs. Woman is considered polluted during her menstruation. Panchi sent her to her mother’s house. Her mother’s poverty forced her to sell Gauri. After a long struggle she returned to her husband. But Panchi questioned about her chastity. At last, Gauri has the will power to protest against the society and left him. She wanted to give birth to her child in a good environment. So she continued her service as a nurse in Dr. Mahindra’s hospital.

THE ROAD

The theme of The Road is problem of the untouchable even after independence. But there is a change in their attitude. Laxmi, mother of Bhikhu does many jobs to earn their livelihood. They get money for the work as their wages. She was so innocent that she was unable to understand the cunning nature of the upper caste boys. Their houses and cattle were burnt into ashes by upper caste cunning boys. But she thought that it was the result of the Kali Mai’s anger. Rukmani even before her marriage has the dream for a married life, though there was no money for marriage to give as dowry.

DEATH OF A HERO

It deals with the Pakistani aggression on Kashmir by the tribesmen. Maqbool Sherwani is young poet and leader of the national conference. When he hears of the attack he goes back to Srinagar to Baramula to help the people and to help them to withstand the aggression. He reveals the fact that Indian army was reaching soon to avert the attack. He finds out that most of the Muslim people have sided the invaders. He is declared an infidel and shot
dead after he has been captured. The novel is an attack on religious fanaticism and blind nationalism.

SEVEN SUMMERS, MORNING FACE, CONFESSION OF A  LOVER, BUBBLE

The orthodox household, superstitious and religious mother, dominating father, early marriage, relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and superstitions like digging well to beget children are analysed through the narrator and central character, Krishan Chander.

It depicts the growth of the hero, Krishan from his childhood to adolescence. It depicts the pathetic condition of his sister-in-law Draupadi and Mumtaz, his brother’s mistress. The Jallianwallah Bagh atrocity affects him almost directly. He is arrested. His mother who has patriotic fervour obtains his release. He is expelled from the school for taking part in a political demonstration.

Devaki, a young widow was the victim of economical, social and religious exploitation. She has the desire to learn to read Bhagvad Gita, but it was criticized by her respectable family members that it was to write a love letter. She was excommunicated for interdining with the Muslim woman. This excommunication led her to commit suicide.

Yasmin, a Muslim girl was educated but suffered a lot due to her arranged marriage to the railway guard who has already had two wives. She was tortured by her drunken husband. After her marriage she met her lover, Krishan with the help of her sister and Nur. This kindled the lost love of Krishan and Yasmin but, she had a doubt towards the attitude of Krishan to her children. Finally she passed away. Her life was a tragedy.
The brief survey of Anand’s novels reveals that Anand’s characters are downtrodden sweepers, coolies, the unemployed coppersmiths, the debt-ridden farmers, poor simple soldiers and simple suffering mothers, wives and daughters. He had known, seen and felt the rural life of the Punjab. He had seen the village life sucked dry by parasites like British officers, the village money lenders, the businessmen and religious priests.

Anand exposes the contemporary situation through an analysis of predicament of men and women he knows. Anand saw India in terms of enslavement, caste, poverty, religious archaism. The women that reside in Anand’s novels are all preys of habit where man is ascribed the pride of place.

WOMEN CHARACTERS IN MULK RAJ ANAND’S NOVELS

Mulk Raj Anand portrays myriad faces of the new women who gradually learnt to fight for their rights and lived not only as a wife, mother or daughter but also as an individual. The women of his novels like Sohini, Leila, Sajani, Iqbal, Devaki, Draupadi, Yasmin, Krishan’s mother, Gauri, and Gauri’s mother, Laxmi seek not only economic independence but also intellectual independence.

To achieve this they have to adapt the changes or to adjust themselves in the changing society; otherwise they end as failures. They may be rural or urban; they may be educated or not but they are exposed to different situations and experience. They have been governed by economic and social aspects ever since their childhood; these aspects are closely related to the psychological growth of their inner self.

Anand is a novelist with a mission and his philosophy on humanism aids him to write for the betterment of the underdog of the society. He has always firmly believed in the role of a writer. He discards the dictum
of Art for art’s sake and asserts that Art is for life’s sake. Through his novels
Anand wants to refine, ennoble and stir up men to act in order to achieve the
well-being of mankind as a whole. “Anand is no spinner of fairy tales for
mere amusement or a fabricator of escapist literature. On the contrary, he has
always written to emphasise the essential dignity despite of his weakness –
and to engender compassion in the hearts of men for the oppressed and the
downtrodden.” (Gupta 10-11).

His novels are saturated with the element of protest - social and
political. They are the spontaneous expressions of a protest against the painful
spectacle of human misery. Anand emerges in all his novels as an effective
advocate of the weaker sections of the society. He has been the vehement
critic of the existing social evils and has completely identified himself with
underprivileged and exploited sections. He has proved that a writer has his
vital role to play in the process of mitigating the suffering humanity. Being a
committed humanist, Anand proclaims a creative struggle to bring out a new
look to the society. To achieve this he does not indulge in diatribe but makes a
constructive protest through his writings. As Sudharshan Sharma says, “he is
determined to expose the caste and class based exploitation of the society so
that a salutary, social change may be brought out where all irrespective of
status and profession, live with peace and self –respect” (65).

Anand is distinguished from other writers of Indian English by his
sense of commitment, humanism, realism, creative vigour and abundant
sympathy for the weaker sections of the society. He was awarded
Padmabhushan in 1967 for his distinguished contribution in the field of
literature. His novel Morning Face was chosen for the Sahitaya Academi
award for 1971. In 1978, he won the E.M.Forster award of Rs.3000 for his
novel, Confession of a Lover. This is the first annual award instituted by M/S
Arnold Heinemann. According to him, human behavior is determined by its
social environment. In order to appreciate his art and to view it in a correct perspective it is necessary to have some familiarity with his more important novels.

Born and brought in a Punjabi soil, Anand portrays Punjabi characters and Punjabi life with great minuteness and realism. We find in his novels convincing and credible accounts of the social manners, customs and beliefs of the Punjabi people. “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” (George 196).

Anand’s realism can also be seen in his use of literal translation of Punjabi exclamation and swear –words. Expressions like ‘rape mother’(OWC 279), the ‘illegally begotten’ (Coolie 6) and ‘son of a bitch’ (Coolie 18) are frequent but sound empty and innocuous. Other features of his novels follow this basic quality of realism with photographic accuracy.

LITERARY REVIEW

After categorizing the works of Mulk Raj Anand, a literary review of Mulk Raj Anand’s novels was done. This research is not just mere content analysis of the novels. It involves the study of the history and the ethos of the age, in which it is produced. The present social milieu in the villages is reflected in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Influences of Mulk Raj Anand and influences on Mulk Raj Anand are analysed with a view to compare the social milieu now and then and to correlate the relevancy of the research. For this research, books on feminism, Indian history and Mulk Raj Anand by both male and female critics were read.
Simmi Jain analysed the status of women in the book, *Indian Women through the Ages* in 4 volumes. In the first volume he described social status of a widow, ideology of motherhood, divorce and remarriage, the Devadasi system, the sati system and rights to property in the ancient India. In the second volume diverse aspects of women’s life are depicted during the Muslim rule in medieval India. In the third volume women’s participation in the Independence movement is described. Historical perspective and legal review, Gandhi and socio-political regeneration, status of Dalit women, vision of Annie Besant, women and family welfare, role of women in labour force, domestic roles of educated working women and social position of women in modern India are described in the fourth volume.

Pranab Bandyopadhyay in his book *Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Social Reformer* traces the Indian history and the exploitation of widowhood and the protest against the social evil. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar traces the history of Indian English literature in his book *Indian Writing in English*. K.K.Bharadwaj threw light on various perspectives of Gandhi in his book *Gandhian Thoughts* such as non-violence, religious reformation, women and higher education, untouchability and the various social issues. Jayabalan visualizes the economical condition of India from ancient days to present days in his book *Economic History of India*.

Various types of feminism are analyzed in the book *Feminism* by Jane Freedman. In this book problem of working women, exploitation of unpaid labour in the home and issues regarding reproductivity are analyzed. *Changing Status of Educated Working Women (A Case Study)* by Raghunadha Reddy analyzed various problems of educated working women like their expectations from the life partner, conditions that forced them to work, motivation for individuality, and the innate desire in exposing their knowledge. Shakuntala Rao Shastri, in her book, *Women in the Sacred Laws*
traces the social history of women in the Vedic period and the portrayal of women in the Vedas, women’s property rights, marriage and *sthridhana*. Periyar’s speeches are compiled by Veeramani and translated by Sundara Raju. In this book *Periyar on Women’s Right* the pathetic condition of women in South India is portrayed. In this book he advises that women are not dolls or decorative animals to wear jewels. She must prove her individuality.

The book, *Mulk Raj Anand* is an anthology edited by Agarwal. All these research papers are the analysis of Anand’s socio-economic vision. B.R. Agarwal edited various articles by various authors on different themes of Mulk Raj Anand in his book *Mulk Raj Anand*. B.R. Agarwal in his article “Subaltern Concern in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand” analysed different types of subalterns. The conventions of society create a subaltern status for a woman, who is denied to take decision, even in the family. “Thus a study of the subaltern concern shown by Anand in his novels reveals that all tall claims of social reformation and technological advancement, nothing really changes for the subaltern in our Indian society” (Agarwal 22). In this collection, Suparna Mishra in the article, “Predicament of Indian Women in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand” analysed the sufferings of women. The critic says: “The women that reside in Anand’s world are preys of habit where man is ascribed the pride of place and thus allowed the socio-cultural confirmation of the female banishment” (159-160). In this article women characters from *Village, Across the Black Waters, Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Old Woman and the Cow* are analysed. After this analysis the critic concludes, “Anand’s women, with few exceptions (Gauri) are not dissatisfied with their society. They love to remain mere wives” (Suparna Mishra 170). From the same anthology, the article, “Search for Identity in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand” by Sangeeta Das analysed the problems of male characters like Bakha, Munoo, Gangu, Lalu, Victor, Krishna, Bhikhu and Maqbool. They all struggle to establish the identity and they are thwarted in the end.
Through the article, “An Approach to the Problem of National Integration in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand” by O.P. Mathur in *Modern Indian English Fiction*, Anand “can prove to be a bridge of understanding between the North and the South, the Hindu and the Muslim and the East and the West” (Mathur 64).

T.M.J. Indra Mohan edited the book *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A New Critical Spectrum*. Binod Mishra analysed the despair and delight of the protagonists, Bakha, Munoo and Gangu in the novels *Untouchable, Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* he analysed the problems of Sajani and Leila. In this book Ramesh Kumar Gupta analysed the humanistic note in *Old Woman and the Cow*. He says that Anand is basically an iconoclast. He is against orthodoxy and bigotry in any religion.

Ashok Kumar Bachchan pinpointed the humour and irony in the pre-independence novels. N.P. Ravikumar in his article “*Two Leaves and a Bud: A Proletariat Novel*” depicted the living condition of the debt ridden labourers.

Anand’s novels are born of his authentic experience. Anand himself accepts that he has written autobiographical novels and not autobiography. This perspective is analysed by Marlene Fisher in his article “The Art of Self and the Self of Art: Mulk Raj Anand’s Confession of a Lover” in the book *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand* edited by R.K. Dhawan. C.J. George in his book *Mulk Raj Anand: His Art and Concerns* threw light on various exploitations -- social, economical and racial. Exploitation of men were analysed very well and neglected a few minor women characters. It is the study of Anand’s non-autobiographical novels only.

Niven Alastair in his book *The Yoke of Pity: A Study in the Fictional Writings of Mulk Raj Anand* analysed Anand’s emphasis on the
importance of pity and love to the fellow beings than the faith in God. Anand’s experience in writing novels and impact of Gandhiji are analysed in his article “The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie” which is reprinted in *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* edited by M. K. Naik, S.K.Desai and G.S.Amur.


Prof. M.Haridoss in his M.Phil., thesis The Theme of Protest in Anand’s Early Novels focused the three novels, *Untouchable, Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Anand protests against the social evils in these novels. The M.Phil., thesis of this researcher Mulk Raj Anand’s Two Leaves and a Bud: A Critical Study analyses underlying themes like social exploitation, racial exploitation, sexual exploitation and justice exploitation. An M.B.A., project on Systems Approach to Improve the Effectiveness of Higher Education by Dr.S. Padmasani Kannan gave an insight to approach the women’s issues holistically.

**NEED OF THE STUDY**

The sufferings and trials are the same in the society whether they are male or female. Literary review of the above books reveals that much concentration is on men characters like Bakha, Munoo, Gangu, Lal Singh, Bhikhu, Ananta, Victor and Krishan. Hence, an attempt is made to analyze
the problems of female characters in Mulk Raj Anand’s novels. Many critics neglected the sufferings of female characters in Anand’s novel whether they are major or minor. Anand himself deliberately attempted to portray some women characters as mute. Some characters express their ideas and protest vehemently against the social taboos. There are a host of women characters like Sohini, Sohini’s mother, Sajani, Leila, Shama, Munoo’s mother, Lal Singh’s mother, and his sister-in-law, Ganga Dasi, Iqbal, Janki, Kausalya, Krishan’s mother, Devaki, Draupadi, Gur Devi, Parvati, Mumtaj, Yasmin, Gauri and her mother Laxmi, Rukmani and Bhikhu’s mother, Laxmi.

The researcher for the purpose of convenience grouped his novels based on the social milieu and the issues such as – Social novels, War novels, Feministic novel and Autobiographical novels. Though the novels are categorized into four types all the novels in the four categories explored the various social issues. For an easy understanding his novels are grouped. In the social novels the problem of the society (in which the individual exists) is given an attention. In the War novels the impact of war is described. The researcher categorized the novel *Old Woman and the Cow* as feministic novel. In this novel the author presents his woman character from feminist perspective. Gauri is a simple woman who emerges from self effacement to self realization. In the autobiographical novels the narrator Krishan’s (Anand) family is portrayed.

(I). Social Novels

1. *Untouchable*
2. *The Road*
3. *Coolie*
4. *Two Leaves and a Bud*
5. *The Big Heart*
6. *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*
All these social novels focus on many issues of women in the contemporary society. The two novels, *Untouchable* and *The Road* analyse the untouchability. Solutions to eradicate the discrimination are explored. Due to lack of water and food they suffered a lot.

*Coolie* describes the pathetic life of the orphan boy and explores the impact of the mortgage. *Two Leaves and a Bud* describes the pathetic condition of indentured labourers in the Assam Tea Plantation under the British planters. Dowry problem, industrialization and the pathetic life of a widow are analyzed in the novel, *The Big Heart*. *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* focuses the futility of education system. Iqbal, an uneducated Muslim young girl suffered at the hands of her unemployed husband, Nur, the Master of Arts.

(II). **War novels**

1. Lal Singh’s Trilogy
   a. *The Village*
   b. *Across the Black Waters*
   c. *Sword and the Sickle*

2. *Death of a Hero*

Lal Singh’s trilogy dealt with the World War II and its effect on the peasants is described elaborately through Lal’s experiences as a war prisoner. Men fought against war not of their own but for a foreign country. Anand depicts the pathetic condition of a peasant and its impact on women in these novels. *Death of a Hero* dealt with the Kashmir problem. Kashmir problem is remaining now as a problem to the innocent victims.
(III) Feministic Novel

*Old Woman and the Cow* is the only novel in which a woman (Gauri) plays a vital role. Mulk Raj Anand expressed the views through her. Later, Anand renamed this novel as *Gauri*. Like barrenness, child bearing is also the problem that created by the husband to his wife by questioning her chastity. In Anand’s novel *Old Woman and the Cow*, Gauri was tortured by her husband, Panchi, by sending her to her mother’s house for blaming her for bad luck. There, her mother, Laxmi, sold her in lieu of cow with her uncle, Amru. Gauri was neglected everywhere and by everybody, except by the doctor. There were often quarrels between Gauri and her mother-in-law. She was compared to Sita. Her chastity was questioned as that of Sita. Unlike Sita, she protested against her husband with vigour and courage.

(IV) Autobiographical novels

Anand decided to plan his autobiography in seven stages. Krishan Chander Azad, the protagonist narrates his experiences in all these novels. Though Mulk Raj Anand has written his autobiographical novels after independence it revolves round the period of pre-independence. It is recapitulation of his life. *Seven Summers* depicts the childhood days of Krishan. *Morning Face* depicts life of school days of Krishan and his college life is depicted in the novel *Confession of a Lover*. *The Bubble* depicts his higher study in a foreign country.

1. *Seven Summers*
2. *Morning Face*
3. *Confession of a Lover*
4. *Bubble*
Though all novels are summarised briefly, all are not taken for the research study. As this research focuses on the women characters of lower class and middle class, who lived before independence and after independence, the concentration is only on ten novels. *Lal Singh’s Trilogy, Death of a Hero, Bubble* and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* are not taken for deep analysis. The novel *Bubble* depicts Krishan’s higher study in a foreign country. His depiction of western women is not taken for consideration as the tradition and culture vary from Indian women. *Private Life of an Indian Prince* depicts the debauchery life of Prince, Victor. At last, Victor’s loss of love and kingdom led him to lunatic asylum. The problem of princely life is different.

As the concentration of this study is on Indian women, the following major and minor characters of these novels are chosen for analysis.

**NOVELS**
- Untouchable
- The Road
- Coolie
- Two Leaves and a Bud
- Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts
- The Big Heart
- Seven Summers
- Morning Face
- Confession of a Lover
- Old Woman and the Cow

**CHARACTERS**
- Sohini
- Laxmi, Rukmani
- Munoo’s mother and aunt
- Sajani, Leila, Shama
- Iqbal
- Janki, Kausalya
- Krishan’s mother, aunts,
- Gur Devi, Aqqi
- Draupathi, Devaki, Mumtaz, Parvati
- Yasmin, Nargis, Naseem
- Laxmi, Gauri, Kesaro, Hoor Banu
Besides these major and minor characters, many women are mentioned and discussed by major characters. They are brought into limelight as they are observed by the other characters. Based on their social milieu and the issues his novels are categorized such as -- social novels, war novels, feministic novel and autobiographical novels. His women characters are victims of various exploitations – economic, social and racial. If one approaches the problems systematically one can find how one exploitation leads to another. Thus they are in a vicious circle. Hence, the chapter division is based on themes (exploitation).

**Chapterisation**

The analysis will be discussed in the following chapters.

1. Introduction
2. Social History of India till Independence
3. Economic Exploitation
4. Social Exploitation
5. Racial Exploitation
6. Conclusion and findings

**Chapter I**

This chapter examines the relevance and the need of research by analyzing the growth and development of the Indian novel and the trends in Indian English fiction that led to the establishment of the social and protest novels. Literary review gives scope for further research.
Chapter II

It deals with social history of India from Pre-independence to Post Independence period. Further it aims to exhibit the impact of the social milieu on the predicament of women in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Status of women various periods is analysed. Position of women in the Vedic period, Medieval period and Modern period is analysed to find out the basic factors for their predicament.

Chapter III

This chapter highlights the desperate struggle of poor women for existence in a commercial world. Hunger and poverty, the result of economic exploitation - by traders, money lenders, house owners, low wages, industrialization, migration, monsoon, war and marriages - are explored.

To meet the family expenses the woman was exposed to the society to earn money. Women had to face problems while collecting fuels from the woods and working in the lands as bonded labourers for meager wages. Migration and exploitation of monsoon led the farmers to mortgage their land and other possessions like cow, jewels, house, and the articles. Unfortunately, they could not redeem them due to their poverty imposed by the traders, lawyers and moneylenders. The middle-men sucked blood callously. These are described elaborately in his novels. Economic exploitation by their men folk and the colonizers led to racial, sexual and legal exploitation of the natives.
Chapter IV

This chapter focuses on the social exploitation of the innocent women in the name of religion, tradition, customs and morals which forced women whether young or old to suffer a lot. Gender discrimination is focused in this chapter.

Society imposed so many customs on men and women. Some of the customs are followed without any rational thinking which affect the weak and innocent intensely. The problems of the lower class or caste are acute. Discrimination based on caste is undesirable. Both the upper caste men and women ill-treat the untouchable as they are economically backward. Collecting food from the houses where they worked, depict the pathetic condition of the untouchable women and they were insulted for demanding food as wage for their strenuous work like cleaning the toilets. Due to social stigma they lacked money, education and nutrition and faced dreadful diseases. However, even the upper caste women were exploited on the basis of religion by the hypocritical ‘sadhus.’

Superstitious beliefs affect women more than men. Superstitious beliefs about menstruation, purdah, pouring oil to the lamp on Tuesday, dig a well to beget a child according to the suggestion of a Sadhu, made them suffer in the society. Added to these even the young girls are deprived of education. Traditional duties of women like cleaning, skimming, washing, cooking, pressing the feet of the husband, the responsibility of maintaining the family even before marriage are existing in the society as the hindrances for women inside the house. She would not find time for her intellectual development. Apart from this, women outside the family have to suffer due to poverty.
Chapter V

This chapter brings out the ruthless racial exploitation of the labourers by a few selfish and self-complacent British planters in Assam tea plantation. No Indian woman can be safe in that plantation. Indian soldiers and their family suffered a lot under British rule. Hindu–Muslim issue also is analysed in this chapter.

The problem between the colonizer and the colonized is depicted in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. The problems of the indentured labourers under the British planters are explored. Anand shows how the Indians suffered due to lack of basic requirements such as clean water. Law and justice were in favour of the Britishers. His novels portray how Hindu-Muslim problem was loomed large by Britishers.

Chapter VI

This chapter sums up Anand’s portrayal on the gradual development of women through the ages by depicting the impact of the social milieu on their predicament. After analyzing the development of women from pre-independence to post independence it is revealed that the impact of British rule on Indian economy changed their social milieu. Before independence women accepted the life as it was. They worked hard to exist in the hostile society. In the pre-independence novels Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud one can hardly find male domination in the family. In their impoverished condition they worked hard as a family to sustain though there was difference in wages. There is equality in the family. They have their commitment to look after the family. They do their jobs monotonously. They do not express their ideas. Lack of basic amenities remained as a problem. In these novels both men and women were illiterates. Though untouchability was prevailed even after independence there is a change. They got wages for
their work. The road to town will help to develop their trade. For example, an untouchable woman, Laxmi in *The Road* taught the lesson of *Gita* to her son. In the novel, *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*, the pregnant, uneducated Muslim wife only shares the miseries of her post graduate husband who is suffering by tuberculosis.

Tradition versus modernity is depicted in the novel *The Big Heart* by analyzing the character of Janki. Janki, a widow and tuberculosis patient became a mistress of Ananta. Though he loved her truly he did not have the courage to marry her. After Ananta’s death Janki’s character is criticized by society for not living as traditional widow. Further, in this novel, Anand mentioned also the pathetic position of a daughter from the family of a coppersmith, who was affected by Industrial Revolution. Through the advent of machines the coppersmiths are rendered jobless. *The Big Heart* is a novel of transition of social times of India.

In his autobiographical novels *Seven Summers, Morning Face* and *Confession of a Lover*, Krishan is the mouthpiece of Anand. Krishan’s mother wanted to inculcate good habits among her children. To bring up her children with discipline she mentioned the reasons for the punishment from the divine though it may be superstitious. She had an awareness of giving education to her children. To protect her children she was ready to fight against the men whoever he may be. Dev Dutt who belonged to Arya Samaj married Parvathi, a child widow. But he was not living happily with her. So she commented on him secretly as a pretender of an Arya Samaj. Yasmin and Devaki wanted to come out from the racial clutches. Anand through his novels insists harmonious relationship between the races of Hindu and Muslim. More than caste system and class system, issues in the personal life like estrangement between husband and wife, maladjustment between daughter-in-law and sister-in-law have increased. But most of the women approached the issues
idealistically and practically. Some achieve success; some do not. Feministic novel, *Old Woman and the Cow* is the only novel in which a woman succeeds against all exploitations such as – social, economical, sexual, racial, physical and psychological.

Unfortunately, many women characters were the victims of racial and social exploitation. In that social milieu they could not come out from their predicament. In his autobiographical novels women wanted to protest against the prolonged social taboos but in that social milieu they could not express their ideas freely and fearlessly. Women do various jobs. Even educated and economically independent women also suffered by the customs of the society. So, it is necessary to have the knowledge of the social milieu to understand the predicament of women. As the milieu changes, the problems also change. Even, after the invention of modern technologies, the basic issues remain unsolved.

There have been many researchers analysing the predicament of the situation. To understand the various outlook, a series of study was undertaken by the researcher that gave her an insight to probe deep into the lives of women characters of Anand.