INTRODUCTORY

The Indian novel in English barely existed when Mulk Raj Anand embarked upon his writing career in the thirties. The very fact that he was writing about the socially and economically suppressed masses, makes him a realist, an innovator and a rebel. He holds the mirror up to nature in portraying the conflicts both private and public - that have raged in the subcontinent from the early twenties to the present day. His realism is free from sentimentality and melodrama. He writes about things which he intensely experiences, and which move him very deeply. The inspiration behind Anand's prolific social writing, is clearly expressed in his Apology for Heroism:

'For if I was to write, as I had just decided to do with a view to discovering the causes of the mental and material chaos in India and the world, and of my own failure as well as the failure of my generation in the face of it...'.

As a reaction to this 'mental and material chaos' of the thirties generation and the desire to seek the universally meaningful values 'which will fill the world's moral and political vacuum', Anand believes that,

'we would have to look at the whole of the European and a Asiatic traditions, compare and contrast them try to achieve some kind of synthesis even through the welter of confusion, and get to work to build the new India'.

When Anand writes about the poor he has more than the average experience of the degrees of poverty obtaining in this
country. They do not fall within the knowledge of the average British and Indian writers. And, India offered a greater challenge to Anand than to most other writers, and his novels emerged from such a challenge.

Anand stresses the need for a romantic as well as a realistic point of view in creative writing to encompass the whole gamut of human experience. He observes:

'The novel of revolutionary romanticism...seeks the desire image, that is to say to suggest what the writer would like life to be like, by implication as against what it is, in the negation of life.'

Ira Morris has this to say on Anand:

'Mulk Raj Anand is more than a creator of literature and an art critic of highest distinction; his love of India, as well as a respected leader in the international peace movement — a position recognised by reception of the International Peace Prize of the World Peace Council in 1952.'

The object of this thesis is to study Mulk Raj Anand's novels in the perspective of 'Miseries, Struggles and Splendours', which Anand says, 'seems to me an original idea to follow in your thesis...'

As for the title of the project, I must mention that while initiating me into the present research work, Anand had clearly outlined the plan of this thesis. In a letter to me he wrote:

'You can change the title of your thesis to what you have suggested, 'Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of Miseries, Struggles and Splendours in his Fiction'. Your first chapter 'Shaping of Consciousness' will
be introductory and may deal with the departure point
of how I began writing and trace briefly the emergence.
The compulsion to write, as well as the 'return to
the native country(to achieve Indianness) and the
ultimate evolution of humanism.
Section I 'novels dealing with miseries'.
Section II ' novels dealing with struggles'.
Section III 'novels dealing with splendours', through
insights into the creative life of happiness.
Conclusion....'6

This scheme has been followed in preparing this thesis. The
first group of novels concentrate on the victims of the social
and economic exploitation and injustice, the evil offshoots of
imperialism and capitalism. In the second group of novels Anand
presents people who show greater awareness, and who protest
against exploitation, and demand and struggle for justice. The
novels in the final group reaffirm Anand's faith in man and his
potentialities. They make it clear that so long as there are love,
sincerity, compassion and devotion to service, there is always
the hope of a better world.

Anand's short stories have been excluded from this thesis
because, they are so varied, rich and numerous that they consti-
tute a separate area altogether and demand an independent study.

The first three chapters, namely, 'Shaping of Consciousness',
'Indianness' and 'Anand's Humanism', are meant to present a
fairly complete picture of Mulk Raj Anand, the man and the novelist.

During the second meeting I had with him in Bombay on
May 30, 1977 and the following days, Dr Anand explained the background of his writing and solved some of the major problems I had with the first three chapters and the novels. He also suggested me that I write his 'Literary Critical Biography' which I propose to take up after the present work. As per his instructions, 'Even the essays in the thesis have to be critical, the criticism being interwoven into the exposition', I have tried to incorporate critical comments along with the exposition of the subject matter.

However, this thesis has for its main aim a study of Anand's make-up as a writer, a thinker and a reformer, and a thematic analysis of his novels. It also proposes to trace the various stages of the development of his ideas, and reactions vis-a-vis the social and economic problems of this country. Above all, it is a study of the novels as a deeply committed humanist document. Therefore, value-judgement is not central to this work. It does not propose to evaluate Anand's status as a novelist. Nor does it attempt a comparative study between him and other eminent Indo-Anglian novelists like R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. All the same, it goes without saying, that no study, interpretation or analysis is possible without a degree of judgement. This is particularly so, as the present writer is convinced of Anand's major status as a novelist. Hence, it is inevitable that certain points in praise of Anand's fictional art, should have crept in.

It is also necessary to point out, the present researcher has had to face the same disadvantages as all those who choose
an Indo-Anglian writer for study, because of the dearth of
critical material, though there are few excellent works. Hence
one has to depend largely on one’s own resources, apart from
the primary sources themselves. Moreover, it is felt that most
of the Western theories of fiction cannot be profitably applied
to a writer whose sensibility is thoroughly Indian. However,
the limitation of reference material has its own advantages.
It gives the maximum scope to originality, and the present
writer modestly trusts that he has achieved something in this
direction.

References:

2. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Quoted by H.C. Harrex in his The Fire and the Offering: The
English Language Novel of India 1935-1970, Vol. 1, (Calcutta:
4. Contemporary Indian Literature. Vol. V, Issues 11-12,
5. Mulk Raj Anand's letter to the present writer dated April 14,
1976.
6. Mulk Raj Anand's letter to the present writer dated April 30,
1976.