Mulk Raj Anand (1905 - ) has carved out for himself a niche among the all-time celebrities in the domain of the English novel in India. Hailed as one of the illustrious trinity, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao being the other two, Anand has dominated the scene for the past five decades and more. He is a prolific writer who has authored sixteen novels to date and has to his credit over half a dozen volumes of short stories. Being a versatile scholar, his interests encompassed a vast range of subjects. While his principal passion was tied up with the fortunes and vicissitudes of India's teeming millions, he wrote on sophisticated subjects like Indian art, poets, painting, architecture and even Indian cuisine. His Apology for Heorism is an autobiography of ideas, a remarkable literary venture at once fascinating and informative.

Anand was born at Peshawar in 1905. His father came of a traditional coppersmith stock, while his mother belonged to a sturdy Punjab peasant family. His father joined the army and distinguished himself as a disciplined soldier owing loyalty to the British. Anand must have inherited his insatiable thirst for adventure and novelty, his keen power of observation and attention to details, from his father whom he admired and
respected. It must be from his mother that he derived his robust common sense and his compassion for the poor and the downtrodden.

Anand had his education at Lahore, London and Cambridge and took a doctorate in Philosophy:

"From 1930 to 1945 he divided his time between literary London and Gandhi's India while undertaking his long editorship of the Bombay arts magazine Marg. Sophisticated and cosmopolitan, impatient of transcendentalism, sceptical of religion, Anand looks Indian life fully in the face. His realistic novels, angry at injustice, satirical yet warm, reveal generosity of heart and great sympathy with the unfortunate .... His fiction consistently upholds the value of living and awareness".


Indian writing in English or creative writing in the English language by Indians is, in its own right, an accepted genre with a history of nearly a hundred and fifty years. The term "Indo-Anglian" was given popular currency by Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. He wrote a book with the title Indo-Anglian Literature in 1943. This term is unacceptable to many scholars and students of English literature, although it had been in vogue
many years before Dr.K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar popularised it. Today the corpus of English works by Indians is called Indian writing in English. All said and done, "Indian English writing" as Dr. Anand has declared, has come to stay as part of world literature. Although it is a class by itself, this garden variety of English literature is deemed to be part of the larger phenomenon known as Commonwealth Literature. This variety of literature includes all the literatures in English, of the countries, once ruled and colonised by the British. The African writings in English fall under this category thus affording some common parameters for a comparative analysis between the literary works of different countries. Chinua Achebe, being a frontline novelist and short story writer from Nigeria, stakes his claim as one of the foremost African and commonwealth writers.

Indian writing in English has gone through a turbulent but chequered history. It had its origin in the first half of the nineteenth century. However most of the early experiments were in verse. Prose of a non-fictional variety existed. But the novel as a literary genre did not see the light of day until after many years. For a very long time the Indian novelists were confining their interests to history and romance. R.C. Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore were the illustrious fore-runners of fiction in India and in Bengal in
particular. Many of their Bengali novels were translated into English by them, thus providing the timely fillip to the contemporary Indian novelists in English. It is only with the emergence of this magnificent trio that the Indian English novel came to be recognised within and outside India. The approach of these writers was both philosophical and social. Of course Tagore brought the psychological dimension to the novel making a concerted effort to probe the innermost recesses of the human mind. Mulk Raj Anand who began writing fiction much later showed unmistakable signs of Rabindranath Tagore’s influence.

It is with the advent of the "Big Three" on the horizon of English novel in India that we notice remarkable change for the better. Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao with their mature approach to the techniques and content of fiction and an extraordinary command over the English language and idiom aided by an unparalleled zest for Indian history, culture and reality, guaranteed for Indian-English fiction a permanent position of eminence and importance in the midst of world literatures in English.

All the three novelists are more or less contemporaries and have occupied the Indian literary scene for the past five or six decades. Probably Mulk Raj Anand was the first to write and publish novels and his first novel Untouchable (1935) was an
instant hit. He followed it up with Coolie (1936) and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937). It must be remembered that Anand had to fight gamely before he could prevail upon the British publishers to accept the manuscript of Untouchable. The role that E.M. Forster played in getting his Untouchable published is common knowledge now.

The quality that distinguishes Anand from Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and from a host of his younger contemporaries, is his humanist angle. As a consequence of his social themes, realistic treatment and concealed option for the underdog in Indian society, his fictional approach has been called realism, social or socialist realism and his novel, protest novel, political fiction, humanistic or realistic novel or novel of human centrality. He has been accused of being Marxist in his convictions and sensibility on account of the consistently pro-poor or pro-worker stance that he has adopted.

A comparison of M.R. Anand with his contemporaries, particularly Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, may not be altogether fruitful or warranted. In point of fact, Anand himself disapproves of assessing or judging a writer on the basis of some pre-conceived ideas or theories or criteria. Anand asserts in his "Reflections of a Novelist: Some Notes on the Novel":
No critic can then, reproduce the essence of a novel, through neat little theories of realism, subjectivism, naturalism, social realism or anti-novel-novel metaphysics. Because, the novel is generally a whirlpool, in which we get involved, and go round and round, being unable to extricate ourselves until some startling event restarts the flow. (in Amur (ed); 1985, 10)

Given Anand’s avowal above, he can’t be expected to formulate a theory or code for writing a novel. Right enough there are only fragmentary utterances and statements about novel writing that convey Anand’s preoccupations or professed fictional strategies. Nevertheless from a study of his novels and short stories, one can easily derive or arrive at a set of rules that might have guided Anand. Although Anand may not advocate a comparison with other novelists, it may not be altogether out of place to study the relative merits of a few writers more or less contemporaneous with M.R. Anand.

Raj Rao’s novel has been termed as the "metaphysical novel". His essential fictive matrix is the Indian view of reality and he looks upon literature as "Sadhana", not a profession. For him "Sadhana" is the consequence of the metaphysical life. His fictional universe is universe as defined
by the metaphysical. We see a spiritual continuum in his later novels beginning with *The Serpent and the Rope* and ending in *The Cat and Shakespeare*. It is Gandhian strain that permeates the story, characterization, theme, and action of *Kanthapura*. He has fused poetry and politics, the perennial with the present, as Dr. K. R. S. Iyengar points out in his chapter on Raja Rao.

(Iyengar, 1962: 394)

Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao differ in their fictional strategies and approaches and to a lesser extent in terms of the subjects they deal with. While commitment to the underprivileged is the central quality of Anand, the metaphysical and philosophical probing and analysis engage the attention of Raja Rao. Likewise R.K. Narayan has his own approach and subjects that mark him out as a humorous writer, highly creative and culturally rooted. He is a master of south Indian middle-class psychology and manners. He is the father of the regional novel in India, as his prime interest lies in the imaginary township called "Malgudi" inhabited by South Indian middle class gentry. Among his numerous novels, *The Guide* is a tour-de-force of technique. He is a serious artist like Raja Rao and pays meticulous attention to smallest details of style, language, structure, plot and characterization.
Among these three novelists, R.K. Narayan is probably the most popular and enjoys the highest international renown as a novelist. Nevertheless Raja Rao has his select readership as his manner of writing evokes enthusiasm only in serious-minded and philosophically or religiously oriented readers. Anand's appeal is universal and for all time and categories of people. His novel read like stories and therefore appeal to children and adults alike. While the style of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao is urbane and elitist, Anand deliberately adopts a rugged and colloquial style often marred by an excessive use of Punjabi expressions and swear words transliterated into English. All said and done, Anand outshines the other two by his inimitable fluency of language. The flow and the force of his language is almost proverbial.

Mulk Raj Anand is still engaged in writing. He has yet to complete three more novels of his projected seven volume autobiographical work. As he has been writing continuously for the last six decades, he has kept company with a whole gamut of novelists. Apart from R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, a host of others like Ahmed Ali, K.A. Abbas, K. Nagarajan, G.V. Desani and a few others belonging to the 30's and 40's have been Anand's contemporaries.
During the period between 1950 and 1979 some more new novelists appeared on the scene. Sudhin N. Gosh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, B. Rajan, Arun Joshi, Chaman Nahal and a group of talented and versatile women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Jhabwala and Anita Desai are quite active even today and are contributing enormously to the growth and reputation of the English novel in India. During this phase M.R. Anand came out with some valuable collections of short stories. And others like Khushwant Singh and Bhabani Bhattacharya have also augmented the repertoire of short stories with their own collections. Moreover Anand continued his fictional vein and brought out four novels - The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), The Road (1963), The Death of a Hero (1964), and his largest novel Morning Face (1970). R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao also came up with a few titles during this period.

The typical trend of this period was the abiding interest in introspection and psychological investigation or probing into the inner goings on of characters. While this is found to be the principal and overriding concern of novelists of this period, it must be acknowledged that various traits of the successive phases were found to be overlapping in any one phase. Anand who is essentially a writer of social themes with an undercurrent of
satire and critique aimed at the colonial masters and the feudal and capitalist system, came out with a psychological novel entitled *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*.

Mulk Raj Anand, like R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, has made valuable contributions to the growth of the novel in India. They have experimented with different techniques in writing novel and thus blazed the trail for innovations. Anand perfected the Joycean art of the stream of consciousness in his *Untouchable* and set an example for other younger novelists to follow. Anand’s *Coolie* is a triumph of the picaresque genre in Indian writing. He has made extensive use of the technique of interior monologue in places where he is interested in laying bare the subconscious and innermost movements of characters. While he owes a lot to his Western education and to his readings in Western philosophical systems including the Marxist one, it should be conceded that he has always been committed to and interested in the social, political, cultural and other realities of India. Chief among these was the all-pervading phenomenon of Gandhism or Gandhian movement that becamc Anand’s passion for many years. This was the inspiration behind some of his novels.

All said and done, M.R. Anand occupies a unique place in the history of Indo-Anglian novel, as one who originated the novel of protest or the political novel centred on the uniqueness
of the human person and on the life and struggles of the disinherited and the wretched of India, to rediscover their identity as human beings and as Indians. It was a bold and revolutionary step that met with a lot of opposition and critical censure. Anand waged a relentless battle against all such hostile forces and eventually triumphed and established himself as a novelist par excellence of the oppressed masses, exploited in the name of religion, caste, class and ruthlessly kept out of the democratic process for ever.

Chinua Achebe is without doubt one of the highly regarded of African writers in English. Achebe literally burst on the African literary scene and in a sense put Nigeria on the world map of English literature with his first novel, a classic in its own right, entitled Things fall Apart in 1958. He followed this up with three other novels, No Longer At Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964), and A Man of the People (1966). It has taken nearly twenty long years for Achebe to produce his next novel, Anthills of the Savannah (1987). He has two collections of short stories namely, The sacrificial Egg and Other stories (1962) and Girls at War (1972). He has besides written some poems collected under the titles Beware Soul Brother and other Poems (1971) and Christmas in Biafra and other Poems (1973).
Chinua Achebe was born in Ogidi, E. Nigeria on 16th November 1930. After completing his secondary schooling at Government College, Umuahia, Achebe graduated from University College, Ibadan, in the year 1953.

He served in the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation from 1954 to 1966 and was in Nigerian government service during the civil War (1967-70). He taught in American Universities after war. Besides a chequered literary career as Founding Editor, Heinemann African Writers Services, Director, Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Ltd., Editor, Okike, a Nigerian journal of new writing and Chairman, Society of Nigerian Authors, he has the unique distinction of having been the recipient of an impressive array of awards, prizes and fellowships from different Institutes and Universities round the globe.

His merits and achievements as an African writer in English are summed up in the following manner in The Oxford Companion to English Literature:

.... Achebe’s reputation largely rests on his four novels which can be seen as a sequence, re-creating Africa’s journey from tradition to modernity. Things Fall Apart (1958) seems to derive from W.B. Yeats, its vision of history as well as its title; it was followed by No Longer
At Ease (1960); Arrow of God (1964) a portrayal of traditional society at the time of its first confrontation with European society (a traditional society recreated in Achebe's novels by the use of Igbo legend and proverb): A Man of the People (1966) which breaks new ground. Bitterness and disillusionment lie just beneath the sparkling satiric surface and the novel provides further evidence of Achebe's mastery of a wide range of language, from English of Igbo-speakers and pidgin, to various levels of formal English.

(Drabble (ed): 1989)

By his own admission Achebe is a political writer. He believes in the politics of human communication which is based on understanding issuing from respect. According to Achebe, the greatest casualty in the historic encounter between Europe and Africa was precisely this human understanding and respect for the human person. Achebe comments:

... Africa's meeting with Europe must be accounted a terrible disaster in this matter of human understanding and respect. The nature of the
meeting precluded any warmth of friendship. First Europe was an enslaver, then a colonizer. In either role she had no need and made little effort to understand or appreciate Africa. Indeed she easily convinced herself that there was nothing there to justify the effort. Today our world is still bedevilled by the consequences of that cataclysmic encounter.

(Cited in Kirkpatrick ed. 1986; 6)

Achebe derives his literary and fictional goal from this premise. In fact his first novel was a backlash against the traditional European representation of Africa in fiction. He is at pains to evoke the civilized values and recapture the egalitarian lifestyle of the pre-colonial Nigerian or Igbo society in this novel. He proceeds to establish his thesis that it was the colonial regime with its missionary, political, administrative and commercial imperialism that fractured and fragmented this time-honoured unity and brotherhood.

Achebe looks upon the role of the writer as a teacher or educator. The writer is committed to his society and therefore it is his duty to tell his people, that their society had poetry, philosophy, culture, literature and dignity before the
Europeans came into the picture. Thus it becomes incumbent on the writer to restore dignity and self-respect to the African people. It is the predominant duty of an African writer in today's context as spelt out by Achebe in his essays, lectures and interviews:

In his "The Novelist as Teacher", Achebe has contended:

Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important, but so is education of the kind I have in mind. And I don't see that the two need be mutually antagonistic.

(Achebe, 1965: 161-162)

Achebe and probably many others of his contemporaries have internalised this conception of a writer and have striven to reflect public concern in their writings. In African tradition, art has always been a public gift or exercise and therefore a sense of social commitment has been considered mandatory for the artist. This concept is so entrenched in African culture and psyche that a non-committal or uncommitted art is a contradiction in terms.

Africa, and Nigeria in particular, had oral traditions or orature from time immemorial. But the novel form took a long time to find a conducive climate for its growth and development.
Although the Africans had an ancient and rich heritage of stories, legends and myths, nothing was committed to writing. Thus it was the English novel form that was espoused and promoted by writers like, Tutuola, Aluko, Wole Soyinka, Achebe, Ekwensi, Ngugi, Ohot, Beti, Okara and Senghor. Although Amos Tutuola had published his two most popular novels, *The Palmwine Drinkard* (1952) and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954) before ever Achebe came into the limelight, it should be conceded that it was Achebe who not only blazed the trail as an African novelist with his all-time classic *Things Fall Apart* (1958) but drew international acclaim as an English novelist with a rare native charm and extraordinary commitment to his people and to his art. Other great artists like Wole Soyinka, Amadi, Armah, Awoonor, Farah, La Guma and Ngugi commenced their fiction writing only in the 1960s or after. Each of these writers has made his own contribution to the African belles-lettres and particularly to the art of fiction writing in Africa.

It was in this decade that the so called novel of disillusionment came into being with Achebe's publication of *A Man of the People* and Soyinka's *The Interpreters*. In other words, this moment in Africa's literary history was a significant turning point, even as African writers were turning their backs on a purely inward looking exercise of affirming the black race
and extolling the negritude or the virtue of being black. In the newly independent African countries, writers and thinkers began to sense the disillusionment caused to the people, by the failure of the indigenous ruling elite. It was in this atmosphere of disillusionment and anger that Achebe wrote his *A Man of the People* which virtually became a prophetic foreshadowing of the civil war that broke out soon after.

Like Achebe, T.M. Aluko has dealt with the subject of the consequences of the collision of values that marked the colonization of Nigeria in his *One Man, One Wife* (1959) and *One Man, One Matchet* (1964). Nevertheless it should be added that Aluko does not capture, as Achebe does, the complexity of this historic conflict.

Armah is another of Achebe's better known contemporaries whose commitment to the African past in terms of its influence over the present or its role in the transformation of the present is absolutely unmistakable. He reveals a quest for a new society or a new alternative through history, myth and ideology. In his *The Beautiful One's Are Not Yet Born, Fragments, Why are We so Blest* and *Two Thousand Years*, Armah is not only artistically recreating the past, but is pointing to a resolution of the present conflict and crisis through collective action.
Achebe’s contribution, however, has been unique as he set the tone for this literary reconstruction and retrieval of the past in a bid to restore honour and pride and importance to Nigeria’s and Africa’s traditional precolonial past and to expose the havoc wrought by the colonial regime. Achebe is certainly more sympathetic to the Western-educated elite who govern the country. As an artist Achebe far excels Armah and his other contemporaries in this that his novels, rich in historical and anthropological details, do nonetheless have compact structures and characters, who are credible individuals, and illustrate a use of the English language so apt in the mouths of his Nigerian characters.

Mary Ebun Modupe Kolawole has spelt out this common quest or concerns of the Nigerian or African writers in the following words:

Among other objectives, African novelists desire to reflect the past as well as reflect upon it to understand present. Existing socio-political and economic set-ups in Africa call for concern. Inchoate political systems create social unrest and economic burden. So, writers assume the role of social ventriloquists, exploring the historical hindsight to explain the predicaments that exist while searching for a future direction.
.... Grounding literature on concrete reality, they explore the effect of colonialism externalized and internalized as well as neo-colonialists, on the contemporary set-up.

(Kolawole : 125)

Wole Soyinka is more a dramatist than a novelist. Nevertheless he won international acclaim and attention with his tour de force The Interpreters. Soyinka is a powerful artist who commands extraordinary mastery over his language. He creates characters who are all cynics or reactionaries, albeit good, reflecting the creator's cynicism. Ngugi points out Soyinka's defect as a writer, in his essay "Satire in Nigeria":

Although Soyinka exposes his society in breadth, the picture he draws lacks depth, it is static, for he fails to see the present in the historical perspective of conflict and struggle.

(Pieterse and Munro (ed.), 1969: 69)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is counted among Africa's leading novelists. With his first novel, Weep Not Child (1964), he revealed his exceptional talent as a novelist. His other two novels The River Between (1965) and A Grain of Wheat (1967) appeared in quick succession, and earned him the singular distinction of a very young writer endowed with creativity and
linguistic ability. Ngugi's point of departure was, as with the other African writers, the clash of two cultures in the wake of colonial confrontation. Nevertheless his third novel revolves around the disillusioning developments in the newly independent Kenya.

The pattern that we perceive in Achebe is discernible also in Ngugi. Of course, Achebe has moved away from this bias with the passage of time. His latest novel *Anthills of the Savannah* is an eloquent testimony to Achebe's rich repertoire of fictional strategies.

Among all the novelists of Africa, Achebe stands out as the better known writer, with a universal appeal that transcends the boundaries of Nigeria and even Africa. He is the major exponent of the modern African novel imbued not only with the sense of the value of writing in authentic English, acceptable to the native speakers of the tongue but of the necessity of writing for a global readership in the context of Africa's prestige, pride and future. It should be asserted that Achebe has today become a household name not only in the anglophone African countries but in the English speaking countries all over the world. True to his avowed aims, he has earned for himself a permanent place in the English literary firmament. Perhaps, it is to a considerable extent, thanks to Achebe's example, that no African writer has
sought the raw material for his/her work outside Africa, or has turned his/her back on his/her own culture. G.D. Killam sums up Achebe's contribution to the African literary world thus:

Achebe is in the front rank of these writers and his prose writing reflects three essential and related concerns first with the legacy of colonialism at both the individual and social level; secondly with the fact of English as a language of national and international exchange; thirdly, with the obligations and responsibilities of the writer both to the society in which he lives and to his art.

(Killam, 1975: 3-4)

Both Anand and Achebe broke new grounds in using the novel as a powerful means of educating the masses and specially the intelligentsia concerning their national situations of injustice, inequality and unfreedom. In this sense they are pioneers of a new brand of fiction that is unorthodox and unconventional in its subject matter and treatment. While Anand's realistic portrayal often amounted to a commentary or documentary on social reality, Achebe's accounts are a nostalgic and imaginative recreation of the past in order to elucidate the present crisis and to extrapolate into the future. Anand's novel is political as much
as Achebe's is, as both these writers write with an explicit aim or programme. In this sense, both of them serve as models of committed writers who for the first time in their countries took a serious view of the writer's role as the voice of consciousness and conscientization or education of the oppressed masses whose power for societal transformation they recognised and wanted to harness.