It is problematic whether the novels of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand can be strictly placed in the genre of novel. Novel as an art-form distinguishes itself from other arts in its depiction of human situation in and through time. Awareness of time as a crucial dimension of human experience leads one inevitably to the search and struggle for certain human values, a search which is thwarted by the hostile historical environment. From this conflict between values and the thwarting conditions emerges the novel "A soul drama in historical time with a sense of all time" as Sartre defines the ethos of novel. In Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, the historical time is counterposed against the timelessness. Ramaswami seeks to breakthrough the illusory perspective of the Serpent to apprehend the correct perspective but this breakthrough turns out to be a leap. Raja Rao does attempt to capture the tension between the clashing perspectives in *The Serpent and the Rope*, between the sacred and the West, but the final leap summarily dismisses the possibility of struggle and creative interaction. Search for grace is the key-note of *The Serpent and the Rope*, a search without doubt and also without struggle which ultimately ends up in a retreat in the timeless past.
In Mulk Raj Anand's novels, one does get a sense of historical time, in the context of Indian society without, however, a glimpse of sense of all time. The sense of history in Anand's novels shrinks into a fixed space, providing a mere background, a scenario for the enactment of the human drama. Between the protagonists of the human drama and their possibilities of 'self-realization' stands the hostile social environment. They dare not confront and this lack of daring, Anand claims to be an achievement of his poetic realism. One does get a penetrating insight into the corruption of consciousness of natives through the domination of white-dream and also into the ambivalence of the novelist's response to it. The image of man and society which emerges from Anand's novels also has the unmistakable imprint of the Western outlook. The Indian social reality is seen through the Western blinkers. What makes Anand's perception of Indian social reality in his novels all the more biased is the preposterous dismissal of the sacred which still holds, as Anand would have it, the Indian social reality to ransom. The sacred is merely juxtaposed against the rational, scientific, historical perspective of the West, which alone for Anand holds the hope of regeneration. There is again no sense of struggle with
the constricting influence of the sacred because Anand would not even recognise it as an adversary in his exuberant revolutionary idealism regarding history.

In Narayan's novels one finds the spectacle of incursion of the West on sacred from a comic perspective. Narayan manoeuvres affirmation of the Hindu and rejection of the Western ethos and style of living through the comic mode. Both the affirmation and the rejection betray Narayan's sense of celebrating his homilistic wisdom regarding the superiority of the East over the West. On the other hand, Raja Rao provisionally admits of the matter-bound, reality-bound, time-bound West as an adversary; and Anand fastens his hope of redemption on it; Narayan dubs it as a share, an illusion, an evil, in fact, carrying within itself the seed of its destruction. One cannot object to the affirmation or rejection of the ethos of the sacred or of the western tradition, but the mode of affirmation and also of rejection is violative of the spirit of the novel. Why do these novelists not explore the area of confusion and conflict in the bi-cultural situation and why do they absolutize either the sacred or the west and why do they always fantasize this encounter? Is fantasizing merely a stylistic technique or an exercise in bad faith dictated by their anxiety to pander in different ways
to exotic predilections regarding Indian social reality of their audience which indubitably, is the West?
Perhaps, answers to these questions are to be found in reflection and refraction of the psyche of the colonial intellectual in Indo-Anglian novel, a psyche torn between the glamour of the master-culture and the glory of the irretrievable ancient tradition.