CHAPTER V

HUMANISM IN CHARLES DICKENS' AND MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVELS
Humanism is a way of life which relies on human capacities and natural and social sources. It is an attitude which requires the acceptance and responsibility for human life in this world, emphasizing mutual respect and recognizing human interdependence. It acknowledges that which is unique in man. Man with all his faculties is a part of one all-embracing natural order. He is the highest product of creative forces of the universe, with nothing above or beyond him but his own hopes, aspirations and dreams.

Humanists believe in the humanist way of life. The values of life they hold precious and essential are genuine values of life—love, compassion, respect for one another, generosity, justice, sympathy and freedom. They feel that these values are the product of human relationships. Their religion is human religion. It is the social setup which emphasizes on loyalty to the noble values of life and cooperative human quest for a better, meaningful existence. Their religion or spirituality is not something alien to man or imposed from without, it is a quality of man’s life that is grounded in his own human activity. The spiritual in man is man at his best, fighting loyally and courageously for the values of life, cooperating for human welfare, projecting ideals and struggling to attain them, and making room for sympathy and love.

Humanists feel that each human being should cooperate with one another in building a more satisfactory life on earth. The humanists have a strong faith in the possibility of improving human life and in the essential dignity and glory of mankind. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines Humanism “as any system of thought which assigns a prominent interest to the affairs of men as compared with the supernatural or abstract” (P.876). This definition of humanism is further supplemented in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* as “that which is characteristically human, not supernatural, that which belongs to man and not to external nature that which raises man to its greatest heights or gives him, as man his greatest satisfaction is apt to be called humanism”. (P.54).

Corliss Lamont in his *Humanism as Philosophy*, states that “the chief end of human life is to work for the happiness of man upon this earth and within the confines of the Nature that is his home. This man-centered theory of life has remained relatively unheeded during long periods of history; while it has gone under a long variety of names, it is the philosophy that one can believe is most accurately designated as Humanism” (P.27).
These definitions emphasize that humanism is a system of thought or action in which human interests, values and dignity are held to be dominant. The definitions further imply the humanist’s concern for mankind. In general sense, according to this concept, humanism means an attitude of mind that concentrates upon the activities of man rather than upon the supernatural world.

The meaning of the word ‘humanist’ has varied through the ages, and in each age it has covered a wide range of attitudes and opinions. The label ‘humanist’ is sometimes applied to Greek philosophers such as Democritus whose point of view was in some ways remarkably similar to that of modern science. It is used to refer certain twelfth century admirers of classical antiquity and to Roger Bacon of the following century. It is commonly used for Renaissance figures like Leonardo and Boccaccio and especially for the great Erasmus and his fellow opponents of arid scholasticism. And of course, one can now apply it to a whole cluster of liberal thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Humanism is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as “the intellectual and cultural movement that stemmed from the study of classical Greek and Latin literature and culture during the Middle ages and was one of the factors giving rise to Renaissance: it was characterized by an emphasis on human interests rather than on the world or religion” (P.614).

Humanism can best be illustrated only when man came in contact with society. There is a close connection between man and society as his all-round development is made feasible only when he lives as a social being. He can develop human morality only when he lives in society. The best expression of humanism can be stated in man’s doing his duty and even going beyond it, i.e., when he develops the qualities for human welfare. “The germ of the broadly human virtues is to be found in the virtues of individual and social life; for the individual and society is factors of different orders which cooperate in the moral development of humanity. This is especially true of higher manifestations of fidelity to duty and of public spirit, which always transcend the immediate sphere of duty to which they belong, and become humanitarian virtues” (Wilhem Wundt, P.156).
Fiction, of all literary forms, is mostly vitally concerned with the social conditions and values of the society. A major novel is often the result of the inter-relationship set up between the subjective artist and the objective reality of society around him. Thus a novel gives a sincere, well observed and enlightened picture of the times in which it is conceived and created. Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are also no exceptions and they too provide deeply felt reflections on the relationship between individual and his surroundings and the complex problems arising out of them. In fact, the visions of Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are so broad and liberal, their themes so dynamic and growing almost always centering around humanism, their insight so fresh and invigorating that their novels mirror the changing and complex phenomena not only of their native places but also of human society as a whole.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was decidedly the most popular novelist of the Victorian times. He can be termed as a social chronicler of lower class London life. His novels reflect a vivid picture of the life of the poor people of his day. Dickens' purpose in his novels is directed at social reform. He pointedly focuses and emphasizes on the harsher and coarser features of his age. The age did take rapid strides in the field of science and industry, eventually resulting in large scale uprooting of the rural population. There was a rush to cities in search of higher wages and better conditions of living. Dickens looked with distrust and detestation at the new capitalist class, the product of the new industrial system. These industrialists lacked the element of sympathy and were devoid of humanity. They cared little for human values and hardly understood the significance of charity for the poor.

The nineteenth century, the century of Dickens' times had its beginning under the shadow of failed French Revolution. It was a hard and cruel world dominated by inhuman institutions. The industrial revolution popularized the use of machinery, devalued the dignity of labour, alienated the worker from the master, robbed section of people of their customary jobs and created widespread problems of unemployment pressing hard on the working poor. Women and children were the first to feel the strains of the mechanization. It was largely through the industrial novels of the period that the reading public of England came to know what their working children had to suffer because of the industrial boom in the country. In the first half of the century when the zeal for reform was
at its peak, the reforms conscious novelists saw the miserable condition of children in the society and their exploitation in mills, mines and factories. In fact, the factor governing the treatment of children in fiction had been the actual condition of children in the society.

The tradition of humanism was brilliantly delineated in the novels of Charles Dickens whose social novel treated the lower middle classes with great compassion. He studied them not as detached observer, but as one on their own level. This 'made Charles Dickens an apostle and turned his work into a gospel of humanitarianism'.

Dickens can best be treated as the social chronicler of lower class London life. He is one of those writers who introduced to the reading public the life of the poor and the oppressed. He rouses in the readers pity for the lot of the poor whose sufferings he describes, and resentment against those who ill-treated and exploited them. He has a special love for orphan children as he had been left an orphan himself despite having parents and had suffered much cruelty in his early years:

Charles Dickens is always great on the subject of the childhood that sunny time, as it is conventionally called, but which, as Dickens represents it, is somewhat showery withal. Dickens Oliver Twist is a powerful indictment of the education of poor children of his day. It gives a complete idea of the workhouse and consequent sufferings of the poor. Dickens is in agony over the sufferings, humiliation and exploitation of the poor. (Philip Collins, P.246).

All his novels show how selfishness of the propertied classes brings about untold sufferings in the lives of the poor. But the way he brings the recurrent figure of the good rich man in his novels, coming up time and again, patting the shoulders of young children, increasing the wages of his employees, helping debtors out of their debt and doing such fair acts of kindness, he only sums to suggest, as George Orwell puts it, "If men would behave decently the world would be decent". (Charles Dickens, P.35).

Charles Dickens was always sympathetic towards the little children who worked in English factories and mines. These little children were made to work for as many as thirteen hours a day. The economic law of Laissez-faire, free supply and demand held the day and interference with the individual freedom of contract was regarded immoral and unjust. The labourers were free to send their children to work, and the factory owners were
equally free to employ them. The entire story of children’s employment is a story of cruelty and avarice. Often mere babies of five or six years were employed and their lives were spent in the black depths of coal pits and amid the hot roar of machinery. Even religion did not speak for these little suffering creatures and these accounts for Dickens’ distrust of all religion.

Dickens, in his novels, has tried to awaken the conscience of an age remarkable for stupidity and heartlessness. He criticizes the workhouses, the entire system of poor relief; in fact, he paints the entire lower class of London life. He shows men behaving like animals and says that the cause is “neither fate nor the chance”, but rather “the nature that has been taken out of them”. (James E. Marlowe, P.656). The general harshness of the age is also seen in the cruel treatment meted out to children at school. Education was mainly in private hands. There were private academics which also provided boarding and lodging to young students. The food given to them was meager and unwholesome as the academics were run for profit. The boys were mercilessly thrashed for their least offence.

Dickens describes the sorry plight of the poor, who die of want and starvation. He also illustrates how people, “guided by selfish interests step forward to enforce distortions upon the face of nature”. Not only does Dickens portray the dehumanistic qualities of a rotten society, he also puts forward their causes. To Dickens, suffering and evil are not nature’s admonition; they are created by man’s inhuman attitude towards life.

Dickens knew well the miseries and sufferings of childhood. He was himself a precocious child, precocious not merely by his genius, but because, “he, unhappily become acquainted with the seamy sad side of existence of an age when most children of his class have been playing with their toys, in happy ignorance of the world and its ways” (Beresford Chancellor, P.18). This explains why he becomes nearly always autobiographically petulant and self-pitying. And he has every reason for “remembering his sad and miserable childhood, and the opportunities which had been denied him socially and educationally the use he makes of these experiences in his books is characteristic”. (Beresford Chancellor, P.26).

Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are well-known for their sociological imagination, critical realism and historical humanism vis-à-vis the fate of the poor.
Although the artistic merits of Anand’s fictional output may seem dwarfed by the vastness of the world of Dickens’ novels, a comparative study of their novels reveals the affinities and the differences in their perception of reality and their idealization of the art of being human. The artistic flint and flame of Dickens, the hidden springs of his imagination, the variety and the measure of his characterization, the rhetoric of laughter, the burlesque and the grotesque warped within an ambience of social context and critical realism enhance to the stature of Dickens as a writer comparable to that of Shakespeare. Anand has a philosophical bent of mind and therefore tends to use art more as a means of critical realism than of manifestation of genres and literary excellence, and thus commits himself to the promotion of humanistic perspectives in his writings. The rhetoric of his language vis-a-vis his caricatures and his narrative techniques has certain limitations because of this overwhelming philosophical thrust and humanistic orientation. Yet, a comparison of the two artists of two different eras, nations, milieus and moments is tenable and possible on the ground that art, at all times, has sought, by way of a common pursuit, the art of being human by juxtaposing ‘the ugliness and brutality of life with the glory of existence’, to paraphrase Eliot’s vision and purpose of poetic art. And Dickens and Anand belong to this tradition.

To Charles Dickens, fiction was a way of organizing experience in the world so that he and the reader could comprehend it. He was a plain and conscious writer in the sense that he believed in doing something about actuality - something against life-suffocating realities. Purpose and writer’s personal responsibility seemed to him a major and indispensable component of his fictional art. Anand, in his essay, "Why I Write", states that the novelist, as a creative artist, interprets the truth of life from "felt experience, and not from books" (P.5). The novel, for him, is an artistic exploration into critical social realism, and critical realism in a work of art is poetic in nature. In Apology for Heroism, his non-fictional and philosophical treatise on the rationale of art, he explains how "the desire - image or the romantic will" (P.127) ultimately asserts itself in fiction. It has a cathartic effect in the form of karuna ushering in a compassionate understanding of life.

Both Dickens and Anand focus and insist upon man as the measure of reality. The fate of the poor and the oppressed is their yardstick to measure the stature of man and society. By placing the odyssey of the poor and the oppressed as the leitmotif of their
fictional imagination, they repudiate a value-system based on human pursuit of money and status. They convey by artistic implications that the dignity of a so-called civilized society built upon the profiteering exploitation of the poor or upon the destitution and misery of the poor cannot be stable. In their view, a society that imposes a life of poverty and perennial struggle upon a vast majority of its population, is deformed and tainted in its very nature and essence. They indicate that the very established social order is bound to be chaos when greed beyond one's need rules the roost. Such a social system becomes an ogre - figure blighting the prospects of the poor to live with dignity. And by sharp contrast and juxtaposition, they romanticize the heroic dimensions of the existential angst of the poor caused by the cupidity of the rich, and they portray the sufferings of the poor as heroic and creative praxis so as to envisage a life of empathy and understanding.

*Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* may be taken up here for a brief discussion in terms of Dickens's insight into life - his "sharpened sense of the larger movement of life within which particular problems arise" (Arnold Kettle, P.125). As Arnold Kettle observes, though we feel sorry for the plight of Oliver, it is not Oliver's feelings in his 'asking for more' gruel that strike or grip us in the long run. The "issues at stake" are the ones "which make the whole world of Jane Austen tremble" (P.124). In Oliver's emblematic and heroic action, "every starved orphan in the world, and indeed everyone who is poor and oppressed and hungry is involved" (P.125). Dickens's outrage against the inhumanity of the Workhouse system and the Poor Law could be re-read and re-interpreted as anyone's and everyone's conscientious protest against any oppressive system anywhere and everywhere in the world. The menacing and frightening inflow of the knowledge of evil's power is romantically juxtaposed in *Oliver Twist* in order to convey that ultimately the triumph of human spirit is more valuable and precious than the meanness and brutality of human existence.

As a modern humanist and moral idealist, Dickens celebrates the triumph of human spirit against the demonstration of evil - evil that is institutionalized in the world of Bumbledom and that is clandestinely incriminated in the world of Fagin. Oliver's journey is every man's journey - a perilous passage through the shadows of a nightmare. In and through Oliver, Dickens evokes in us a sense of bewilderment, or as Cox remarks, "a feeling that all is chaos...[and that] life exists, perhaps, in the midst of a thousand forms of
evil, which man only partly understands and of which he is very much afraid" (P.46). The world of Bumble is a world of affectation, and it is affectation that is the source of all tribulations of Oliver. Dickens affirms the reign of love and empathy against the world of affectation. What is apparently real in the Bumbledom is discarded as something bogus and what is incriminatingly real in the underground world is condemned as something savage.

*Nicholas Nickleby* may also be considered as a study of false self-identity, erroneous sense of freedom and human aggression. In this novel, Charles Dickens deals with the problem of man's constitutional aggressiveness - a dangerous trend that could devastate civilization itself if not controlled and tamed on time. His vision of human aggression, as Myron Magnet elucidates, is "analogous to Freud's superego" born out of a Hobbesian view of life - where "every man is Enemy to every man", to use Thomas Hobbes's own words (Myron Magnet, P.40) as though man lives under lawless times and primitive barbarism. Dickens's view of reality in the novel is related to orgies of violence - violence of different types - physical, sexual and intoxicated. Aggression is at the very core of the plot-structure. Mr. Wackford Squeers, as proprietor of a Yorkshire school - rather a warehouse for unwanted children - derives sadistic pleasures by physically thrashing the unfortunate runaways of the school. His self-assertive presence in the Dotheboys Hall is a sign of blasted hopes of all the excellences these helpless children are capable of. Squeers's sadism and cruelty go hand in hand making the school look like a "concentration camp" (P.17). As Dickens shows, in the view of Squeers, these children are "proper and natural enemies" (P.8).

Charles Dickens is not a novelist of ideas. He is not carried away by epistemological or metaphysical thoughts. He never argues ideas or uses them as a superstructure. But, almost all his novels reflect and point to his attitudes and reactions to certain prevailing ideas and systems. His ire against the iron-handedness of the Poor Law is directly related to his attitude towards Malthusianism governing the world of Bumbledom in *Oliver Twist*. His protests against Pauperism as enunciated by the utilitarians typified in *The Chimes* or Utilitarianism precariously practiced within Coketown in *Hard Times* or Puritanism and Dandyism fanatically pursued by some characters in *Bleak House* or Calvinism devotedly upheld by the Murdstones in *David
Copperfield or the crooked and distorted theology dissolved into the character of Mrs. Clennam in Little Dorrit are all telling illustrations of Dickens's attitudes to ideas and systems.

In all his major works of fiction, particularly in his later novels, Charles Dickens argues his case of idealization of human nature with affirmation of positives of life. Humane education is earnestly urged as a value of paramount importance. As P.J.M. Robertson points out, "the close link between the moral sense and the artistic sense in Dickens's novels, as also found in the novels of D.H. Lawrence, makes the Leavises consider the two novelists not only as ones who "practiced the novel as a serious art" (P.6) but also as "natural successors of Shakespeare" (P.5) communicating "insights into human nature and human experience" (P.6). Dickens seems to insist upon the human necessity of art for the affirmation of positives of life as long as society is an ogre.

On the other hand, Indian novelists writing in English such as Mulk Raj Anand and a good number of those writing in Indian languages such as Prem Chand (Hindi), Nanak Singh (Punjabi) emerged as great humanists in their fictional writings. This was primarily so because they found this philosophy quite a suitable catalyst to inspire them and to write with an anti-colonial stance against the social ills from which the people of pre-independent India suffered. In every novel Mulk Raj Anand has dramatically given a fictional expression to his philosophy. He states the main impulse that motivated his creative effort when he says,

"I have indicated that the compulsion to write was in my case the choice between life and death, the quality of love, the values which make man human...for consciously and unconsciously in oscillating between Asia and Europe. I have evolved for myself the philosophy of synthesis in what I call my comprehensive historical humanism". (How I Became a Writer, P.34).

Humanism implies devotion to the concerns of mankind; it is an attitude of mind that concentrates upon the activities of man. Anand is a humanist. His novels bring out human predicament in a very vivid and lively manner. For the works of Mulk Raj Anand, M.K. Naik rightly says:
R.K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual, just like as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man. (Ironic Vision, P.1).

This glorious end that he fervently pleads for emergence amongst men of “a new conception of the role of man, an emphasis on the importance of a human being as such, a profound respect for man, love for him, and faith in his capacity to straighten his back and look at the stars” (Apology for Heroism : A Brief Autobiography of Ideas, P.78).

“He is a pure flame, so sincere and human”, remarked an English girl who had the occasion to meet Mulk Raj Anand during the calamitous days of war in London. “His humanism, mellowed year by year, has blossomed into a kind of blessedness in the final phase of his career, Mulk Raj Anand has moved, if he has moved at all, to a spiritual centre, the starting point of which has been his love for suffering humanity. He combines in himself the virtues of a humanist, rebel, leader of men, patriot, social worker, and an active organizer” (Krishna Nandan Sinha, P.17).

Mulk Raj Anand is not just a novelist but a versatile genius playing various roles of thinker, critic, reformer, and educationist and above all he is a humanist. These different roles have helped him in the discovery of his holistic vision of life which converts his philosophy of humanism. K R Srinivasa Iyengar in his Foreword to G S Balarama Gupta’s Mulk Raj Anand asserts that Anand is a “humanist” who “has been trying to awaken man’s slumbering conscience” so that he will engage in the tasks of reconstructing humanity in India and the world (P.vi).

Mulk Raj Anand was aware of the need for a literature of protest, protest against the sufferings of the poor. During his stay in England, Anand got an opportunity to read Marx’s letters on India. He was so impressed by these letters that within eighteen months he edified them, along with other materials on colonialism from Marx and English for the Indian public. Anand believes that ‘the novel states the problem of man’s destiny’, and the ‘fundamental challenge to man has always been the quest of his own identity’.

Mulk Raj Anand as a committed humanist launches a revolt, a creative struggle, in order to bring about a new society. Realizing the importance of his role and his responsibility as a writer at a turning point in India’s history, he was determined to become, “the fiery voice of the people, who through his own torments, urges an exaltation
by realizing the pains, frustration and aspiration of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expansion transmutes in all feelings, all thought, all experience”. (E M Forster, P.70).

Anand was very much aware of the malaise and backwardness of his Indian society. It is against this misery that he wanted to pronounce his revolutionary ideas. His close connections with the movement of thirties in the west only sharpened his own humanist vision. Anand was now ready to write for the under-dogs and sufferers of Indian society. But tradition of Indian literature was not ready for this expression. “He had to evolve his own aesthetics of the novel for the artistic expression of his new faith”. (M K Naik, P.31). It is Muluk Raj Anand “who extends the frontiers of the Indian novel by adding his revolutionary and humanistic outlook on life to the social consciousness and realistic treatment of life in novels of Premchand and artistic perspective in those of Rabindranath Tagore. Anand’s ‘poetic realism’ is based on the synthesis thus attained”. (M K Naik, P.81).

Anand’s chief concern for suffering humanity makes him a humanist writer and his commitment to the philosophy of humanism forms the very basis of his creative enterprise. He does not merely echo the concept of the European Hellenism or Renaissance humanism, but offers a kind of blueprint for solution of the present day ills. In the light of modern experiment, he favours the removal of poverty, caste and racial barriers, the introduction of a new educational system and freedom in the social, economic and political spheres. Man, as the measure of all things, can thus become “the maker of even new worlds, the dreamer of ever new dreams, so that he can pour the sweat of his sinews and the grease of his brains into the slow fire and make its burgeon like a flance the beacon light of a new civilization”. (Lines Written to an Indian Air: Essays, P.11).

Anand is Dickensian in his ultra-sensitivity to the existence of social evils in protean forms. In fact, it is the keen awareness of the human predicament that propelled him into creative writing. Therefore the themes which Anand has chose for his novels are based on such problems as casteism and human suffering caused by a variety of factors - political, economic, social and cultural. He refuses to accept ‘this tenancy on the earth as a death on the installment plan’ and says categorically : “I would no longer live by the dead ideas of traditional philosophies, the ritual of the old religions or by the tame words of the
classics”. (Crossroads in Life, P.34). He tries to create in the readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils, to stir the springs of tenderness in them and to activise them for the removal of those evils in order that a desirable, just social order may come into being.

It is a common place to call Anand a champion of the downtrodden. But what is striking is that in his novels he reveals a trine intuition of the inhumanity of man, his exploitative nature and his possible redemption. Anand rejects all institutions in favour of man as the convincing solution could be found in the man ‘the maker and breaker of worlds’. That is why with great religious zeal Anand repeats in his novels: “I believe in Man!” (Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, P.1).

Mulk Raj Anand’s humanistic vision has its own distinct qualities. It gives importance the "Man" i.e. the highest reality in the world is man, "the whole man", and not God and the supernatural. Institutionalized religion is a matter which should be left to the preference of the individual. Anand has a strong belief in man whose highest duty is to realize his full potential for a complete life. This can be achieved by the acceptance of the principles of perfect equality between man and woman, the brotherhood of all men, and the right of every person to enjoy social, economic, political, intellectual and economic freedom. There are some forces that come in the way of achieving this ideal, are the various kinds of barriers that separate men - differences in nationality, culture, religion, creed and caste; the numerous forms of exploitation of man by man, such as capitalism, colonialism, fascism, feudalism, communalism etc. and these forces must be effectively destroyed.

Mulk Raj Anand’s ardent advocacy for the poor, oppressed, downtrodden and undergoes is quite patent on the very surface. Mulk Raj Anand is the ‘angry youngman’ who cannot tolerate exploitation of any type. He is a sworn enemy of all kinds of exploitation, be that economic, social or political.

Anand has often expressed himself in favour of humanism. It is not, however, easy to define the term with any degree of precision in view of the fact that various attempts have been made to understand and interpret Anand’s humanism in terms of dialectical thought, social realism, etc. the nature of Anand’s humanism, it must be
admitted, derives its strength from both Eastern and Western thought. As a student of philosophy, and more significantly as a perceptive critic of life and reality, Anand gives an individual stance to his vision of man trapped in a milieu which is burdened with a past full of stratifications and contradictions. In his vindication of man's essential humanity in a closed context, one discerns an element of existential concern with the predicament of man in society, sensitively exploring the possibilities of personal salvation in a world which is nightmarish. He is appalled by the seemingly inexorable march of social juggernaut stamping out the possibilities of love, compassion and nobility. He asserts with courage that the world devoid of tenderness is a grim wasteland. He celebrates life with the understanding born of his “Journey through hell in various novels”.


Anand fought persistently and uncompromisingly for equality, liberty and justice, and for the basic human needs in the newly emerging civil structures of colonial India and post-independence India. In fact, Anand maintains that the new humanism must include the fundamental human values of “the Buddhist karuna or compassion,” bhakti and truth and a deep commitment to the ideal of human dignity The stringent irony in Bakha's examination of the various sociopolitical and philosophical models as possible options is that none of these will guarantee true freedom and identity to marginalized groups of people within a civil society. It is somewhat ironic that both the metaphors of untouchable and coolie do not allow Hegelian reversal from a slave to a master. One's consciousness, Anand seems to affirm, derives its residual strength and transparency from a conflation of the ideological materialistic base and the moral base. “The necessity for the recognition of the world human values," remarks Anand, "[is] the cornerstone of humanism" (Apology for Heroism, P.190).

Anand firmly believes that the main object of art is to help man realize himself in the framework of earthly existence. at one finds in his fiction, therefore, is not merely a realistic portrayal of life; it is an expressionistic vision. Anand's humanism believes in the
equality of all men. So it upholds the dignity of man, and denounces the system of caste, which underlines human dignity. Anand's humanism believes in the happiness of man in the context of his earthly existence. So it decries such social evils as poverty and cruelty, pain and misery, and pleads for tenderness and compassion in human relations.

Anand's humanism believes that liberty - social, economic and political - is the birthright of all men. So, it denounces capitalism and imperialism as evils which snake for the misery of a certain section of society. Anand's humanism does not approve of superstition and obsolete tradition, orthodoxy and religiosity, since these blind beliefs impede man's progress. Anand's humanism is an inveterate adversary of war, since it believes in international harmony and world peace. His humanism believes in the machine as a powerful tool to bring about prosperity for mankind as a whole. His humanism disapproves of feudal values and condemns nawabs and maharajas, since they make for so much misery in the world. His humanism decries the system of modern education, since it generally fails to make man happy. His humanism pleads that woman in India needs to be treated on an equal footing with man.

Anand, while responding to the controversy whether he is a Marxist-thinker or a propagandist with proletarian sympathies, vigorously asserts and affirms his position as a "social realist" with a committed vocation for a social mission, namely the promotion and conservation of integral humanism. Focusing on the novels of Anand as novels of "human centrality". Thanks to Gandhian influence upon his thinking, Anand exposes in and through his novels India's degrading social practices no less than our abject submission to imperialism, all of which to one like Gandhi was tantamount to spiritual weakness, immortality and irreligion.

In Anand's scattered vision of humanism, tenderness [Karuna] and education of the oppressed, if not of the oppressors, are its essences. Ideas are a means to an end and they should be followed by action. By bringing in the character of Mohan at the end of the novel before the death of Munoo, Anand uses a "didactic device" to convey the need for social revolution. But, the question is whether a social revolution can occur without the education of the marginalized and the oppressed. Mohan fails to evoke any positive response from his audience because he fails to see that the people to whom he preaches the need for social revolution are not yet ready, and that the people fail to discern anything
concrete in his speech. Thus Anand becomes a humanist, a lover of mankind and a champion of the underdog. It can be said that Anand comes to the conclusion that virtue alone can save the mankind.

Anand's abiding preoccupation with the visual and plastic arts stemmed from his humanist commitment to the development of the "whole being of man". As an heir to the tradition of William Morris and John Ruskin, which regards the development of political consciousness and aesthetic sensibility as conjoined rather than opposed projects, he regarded the arts as a necessity rather than a luxury. Similarly, Anand emphasized the role of the erotic sensibility in the development of the individuated self. In this, he was at odds with many of his Gandhian and Marxist contemporaries in India, who exhibited a curiously buttoned-up attitude to the erotic in which Brahminical piety and Victorian prudery were mixed in equal measure.

Like Dickens, Anand is undoubtedly a champion of the poor, the lowly, and the down-trodden. It is simply because he thinks that poverty is no matter for complacent pride. Food, clothing, and shelter are the basic needs of any human society. He says that all people must have freedom. He recognizes the importance of education as a vital social institution. He wants free primary education to be given to all children. The very fact that Anand has chosen an untouchable as the hero, in Untouchable, a boy from the lowest stratum of Indian society - ignored by his predecessors as an unsuitable theme for fiction-establishes Anand's fun faith in the dignity of man irrespective of caste and social position, a doctrine central to Anand's humanism.

The most important doctrine of Anand's humanism that finds clear amplification in Untouchable is, however, rejection of casteism as a cruel evil, the practice of which results in suppression of untouchables, who are denied their fundamental right to grow into respectable citizens of society.

Mulk Raj Anand, in his Apology for Heroism, bemoans;

If this is humanism, this humanism does not rest on a Divine Sanction, as does the mystical humanism of Gandhi and Tagore. But puts its faith in the creative imagination of man in his capacity, to transform himself [...] and raise himself to tremendous heights of dignity. (P.96).
Anand satirizes the misuse of eastern humanism right from the childhood to adulthood. While Dickens' presentation of children occurs with lawful support, Anand exhibits them with realistic presentation. Both the novelists are critical of the society in which they also lived and experienced the various ways of non-humanistic tendencies of the humans towards their components.

Anand strongly believed that literature is the best vehicle for his journey towards the removal of the social evils. In Untouchable, Anand declares, "I meant to recreate the lives of the millions of untouchables through a single person" (qtd. in Rajan, P.102). Bakha as a universal representative of all untouchables has been slapped on his face by an upper-caste Hindu for polluting him by his touch. This slap on Bakha's face, continues Anand, is symbolic of the insult "as in Dostoevsky's Insulted and Injured [...]". Like other untouchables, Bakha has been persistently abused, humiliated and rebuked. One must not forget the abusive name-calling at the temple and also the pernicious charge of defilement of the temple by the priest who had molested Sohini. But it is the slap on Bakha's face that immediately awakens in him the truth of the wretchedness of his humiliating and repelling existence as a sweeper: "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper - Untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!" (Untouchable, P.52). The words "sweeper" and "untouchable" are conjoined linguistically and metaphorically to give rise to feelings of shame and disgust. Does Bakha's - and for that matter Munoo's - work have any dignity and pleasure of fulfilment? Does Bakha's work have any real value, social or economic? According to Riemenschneider, 'Bakha's work of cleaning latrines falls under the category of estranged or "alienated labour" that is forced upon him, but most certainly it is devoid of any true pride, happiness or gratification. His work has no genuine economic productivity, nor can its economic value ever become negotiable'. (The Function of Labour in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels, P.13).

Bakha, as a child of modern India, could only burn within himself and experience a symbolic communion with fire because what he has inherited as the culture of servility and mute submission from his ancestors is also deeply ingrained in his psyche more by reinforcement by the caste-minded society and by the elders of his own community rather than by himself. The organic evolution of the hero's soul-drama and the
aesthetic experience of the reader count more in terms of the fictional content and form of the novel than the suggestion of solutions. Anand's artistic triumph lies in his successful transformation of the novel into one of revolutionary romanticism and his revolutionary romanticism carries with it often an element of prophecy towards the fulfillment of a desire-image.

The character of Bakha also illustrates Anand's concept of work as worship, his belief in dignity of labour, and the importance of developing man's personality as a whole. He does his work willingly and neatly. He has unconsciously assimilated the idea of devotion to his duty. Cleaning human excreta is regarded by many as a low and dirty work. But Bakha has no inhibitions and he looks clean and sensitive in spite of his work. In fact, the hard job has made him strong and well-built.

In *Untouchable*, Bakha's devotion to the unknown god is a telling example:

Bakha was profoundly moved. He was affected by the rhythm of the song. His blood had coursed along the balanced melodic line to the final strength with with such sheer vigour that his hands joined unconsciously, and his head hung in the worship of the unknown god (P.68).

Bakha's spontaneous sense of religiosity and his adoration to the unknown are in sharp contrast to the superficiality of devotion with which the high-caste Hindus worship in the temple. As C.D. Narasimhaiah observes, the novelist uses this fine and devotional gesture of Bakha “to shame the deaf and dumb at heart into recognition of their inhumanity to one who while socially very much their inferior is in matters of the spirit infinitely better than they” (*The Swan And The Eagle*, P.114). The bond of love - the family feeling of being together eating from the same basket and the same bowl - in vogue in the house of Bakha is a moment of relief of the gloom of the house. Bakha's sense of true delight, his joy in natural surroundings and his commitment to work-ethics are all great human qualities which make Bakha's character a memorable one.

Mulk Raj Anand presents the Indian downtrodden and laborers with their problems - social rejection, poverty, starvation, poor health, misery, death and humiliation. Anand’s immortal creation of the protagonist Bakha represents Indian society. One finds
that in Bakha’s life at each stage, tragedy deepens and intensifies, without any respite. Bakha is a poor untouchable, tradition follower who is an idealist and cannot think of going against society, religion, beliefs and the ‘agents’ of religious institutions. Anand has taken the theme of his novels from real life and so his novel is nothing but an ideal example of social realism. The novel presents reality with photographic fidelity and arouses our sympathy for the strays and outcastes of society. Anand’s hero is not of the race, not of the time and the place, but exemplifies all humanity caught in contingencies of an antiquated social order that impedes his evaluation into a self consistent social life.

Mulk Raj Anand’s depiction of the practice of untouchability is essentially a matter of pretentious religiosity and exploitation. By a very well worked out technique of dramatic irony and by juxtaposing the plight of Sohini with that of Bakha, the novelist has reinforced the representative character of the figure of the untouchable. Mulk Raj Anand in *Untouchable* exposed the social realism in contemporary Hindu society. The depiction of social injustice to the untouchables in Hindu society made the work most popular. Here Anand can be considered a true realist and reformist.

Anand’s efforts to sensitize the reader to the horror of poverty and human depravity evoke pathos, initiate compunctious visitation of human nature within the reader's conscience, purify his human sensibility and motivate him to empathize with the poor. That a novelist can play the role of a seer or prophet in awakening of the social conscience of the people is evident in Anand’s philosophy of art. Almost all his adult-heroes and Gauri, the only heroine in his fiction, symbolize and represent the awakened consciousness from among the poor and the oppressed. They possess the liberty of heart and feel intensely for the suffering humanity. In their struggle against societal oppression or economic exploitation, they display their sensitivity to love and sympathy as well as to hatred and suffering. Through character-situation-interaction, Anand presents them as heroes symbolizing what ought to be in terms of social justice, interpersonal relationship and human solidarity. Characters like Bakha, Lal Singh, De la Havre, Ananta, Bikhu, Colonel Mahindra and Gauri are Anand’s romantic heroes and heroine who emerge as "the vanguard of the democracy of the future" (*Apology for Heroism*, P.119). They are the precursors or prophets of Anand’s socialistic vision of life.
In a country where traditions and prejudices are so deeply ingrained and where tall promises are made but pretty little is done to eradicate the ills and evils within social systems, no reader or critic can expect the novelist to offer a straight-jacket solution which will bring about any sudden or perceptible social change. Anand knows that as long as uncritical assumptions dominate the way of life of a nation, no radical change could occur. The first two of the three solutions Bakha is given to ruminate offer no real way out, and the last one seems to be more a wishful thinking than an immediate possibility. The slap on the face of Bakha, which is the focal point of the novel, makes him only realize his social position in the given social order. No doubt, he is Anand's enlightened child of modern India but the hostile situation is so overpowering that he could only emerge as a romantic visionary who cannot immediately act. Anand uses the fire image as a symbolic device to bring out, as G.S. Amur interprets, "Bakha's unconscious identification with fire" (Untouchable, P.47). In fact, the fire image has been derived by Anand from the day to day duties of Bakha as a scavenger who has to burn the straw collected from the latrines. The fire image "illuminates the dark and unrealized areas of Bakha's half-formed consciousness" (Untouchable, P.47). Fire is an archetypal symbol of destruction and purification. The images of destruction fascinate Bakha but the raging fire within him would not goad him to act because the physical and the moral barriers are too powerful.

To be fair to Anand, Anand's range of critical realism, his artistic aspiration towards a humanistic revolution and his literary sensibility towards karuna, a primeval and universal feeling in man, are all memorable parts of his artistic excellence. As Lindsay states, his humanistic focus is "an attempt to combine all that is best in East and West" and "the Indian material" is shaped "in terms of a new universal humanism" (The Elephant and the Lotus: A Study of the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, P.14). His rage against oppression, tyranny and injustice is objective and reasonable. Anand's rejection of caste-system is not directed wholesale against high-caste Hindus. What he attacks is the ghetto-mentality in the name of caste. His presentation of Havildar Charat Singh, a high-caste Hindu, in Untouchable as an "embodiment of catholicity and kindness" (Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, P.17) may be cited here to show that Anand's fight is not against high-caste Hindus as a class. He attacks religion as long as it promotes fundamentalism or serves as an opiate of the people or supports priests who lead lavish and expensive life and who, as Kaushik adds, "are ignorant men whose knowledge is confined to a set of dead
formalities, with no access to any machinery for the elevation of humanity" (Red, Brown and Grey-Ideological Commitment in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels, P.21). Any one or any system or anything that constricts human life, nullifies human dignity and prevents the triumph of the human spirit is seen as the enemy of the people by Anand. There are also status-quoits who even criticise Anand's slanting tilt in favour of the poor in his fiction. Anand's vision of the future through a humanistic revolution should not be lost sight of in the name of branding him as a committed-propagandist writer.

For Anand art is a tool of service to humanity. The work reveals his being impressed by the deep sense of involvement with society. Coolie describes the tragic existence of the Indian masses with a view to bringing about a change of heart. Coolie is written with a purpose. It is a picture of the very tragedy of common man. Anand does so, so that the wicked conscience of man in real life may be aroused to thinking. If Raja Rao is the novelist of metaphysical poetry and Narayan the novelist of moral analysis, Anand is the novelist of social reformation. Anand's humanity is the utmost precious part of his writing. Anand's idea of 'Karuna' clearly means 'expiation through art'. Anand is of the view that man does not suffer from tragic flaw but his destiny is controlled or shaped by society. Man strives hard to bring about a change in his destiny and consequently suffers a lot. But his suffering, if presented by the novelist artistically and sincerely, arouses undoubtedly Karuna - 'aesthetic sympathy' in the reader. Anand believes 'the catharsis of a book lies ultimately in the pity, the compassion and understanding of an artist and not in his partiality'. Any work of art without the independent vitality the most accomplished portrait remains a photograph, the most intimate history a record. The material of a novelist is a world of human beings and their relations to each other. These he moulds in such a way as to create a new world, founded on the real world.

Coolie like Untouchable expresses some basic trends of Anand's humanism. The novel expresses a belief in the essential dignity of man whether he belongs to the rich or the poor class, to low or high class. Thousands of people like Munoo still suffer in India. Had Bibi Amrit Kaur treated Munoo with a little compassion and kindness his tragedy might have been averted. In his journey of life, Munoo meets not only cruel and bad people but kind and good people too. Chota Babu in Sham Nagar, Prabha Dayal and his wife in Daulatpur, the elephant driver of the circus, and Ratan in Bombay show
kindness to him. Had Munoo met more persons like these, his lot would have been better definitely.

In Coolie, Munoo was born in the hills, and it was in the fitness of things that he should come back to die in the hills. It is an epic of misery; Munoo is an archetypal figure, a true representative of toiling, suffering, starving millions of Indians. Through him Mulk Raj Anand has focused attention on the wretched plight of the teeming millions of India, who are exploited at all hands, are made to work hard, was hardly get two square meals a day, grow sick and exhausted and die prematurely. A panorama of Indian life, from the north to the south, from rich and influential capitalists and sahibs down to the wretched starving Coolies, Munoo, Han and others, have been presented injustice, exploitation and cruelty have been exposed and our sympathies have been enlisted on behalf of the under-dogs of society. Thus, Anand dramatized in Coolie the evils of poverty, exploitation and cruelty that crush a bud of youth before it can bloom. Munoo’s tragedy seems to be Anand’s plea for reform.

In Coolie, Anand strikes at the penury of the hearts of those who believe in economic prosperity with human depravity. Once again, it is the poor who sustain human qualities despite odds and adverse circumstances. Munoo retains his state of innocence and his zest for life throughout his brief sojourn on earth - cut short by human cruelties. The coolies and the pavement dwellers in Bombay are the poor and the ordinary folk endowed with feelings of compassion and human touch. Hari’s remark about life and death when a half-naked woman informs him of her husband’s death the previous night speaks volumes about human cruelty and about how the poor look at life and death. It is not a resigned assent to fate or fatalism. As Cowasjee appraises us, the poor’s "stoical acceptance of fate is not fatalism, but wisdom acquired through long experience"(Coolie: An Appraisal, P.74).

Humanism could be the only answer to his problem in the present political set up. The novel highlights the need for restoration of compassion to the world lost in industrialism, capitalism and communalism. Anand universalizes the individual tragedy of Munoo. He presents Munoo as victim of irrational systems and inhuman cruelties of society. What happens to this obscure hill boy is by no means an isolated example of human suffering and exploitation. Munoo’s destiny symbolizes the tragic situation of the
poor and under-privileged who in themselves are not responsible for their suffering, but who are victims of ruthless exploitation. It is a real picture of the society which is beautifully presented by Anand without adding any flavors of literature so it is realistic.

Anand has been blamed for his crude pieces of propaganda particularly in *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *The Sword and the Sickle*. For instance, in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, he makes Gangu brood as though he were an intellectual; he makes a comment about the earth being "bought and sold and confiscated" and God "does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and the others to suffer from dire poverty" (PP.247-48). John de la Havre, the sympathetic doctor, has been presented, as H.M. Williams states, as a "walking capsule of humanism, socialism, progressivism and left-wing idealism" (*Studies In Modern Indian Fiction In English*, P.34). Dr Mahindra, in *Gauri*, is said to have been presented almost like a modern deity announcing the dawn of liberation for the oppressed. It is said that Anand's affinity with Communist-Marxism and Russian Communist-ideology has marred his artistic vision. The leftist idealism goads some of his fictional characters to defy caste, religion, state, authority and tradition. Anand's genius as a novelist is said to have suffered by this kind of propagandist-commitment. Does it mean that he has an axe to grind? It is part of Anand's life that he was associated with Communist-ideology and had appreciation for the Communists. That there was a stage when he was disillusioned with the development of Marxism in India cannot also be ignored. The contemporary context in which he began his writing career needs to be kept in mind before one accuses him of Communist-propaganda.

In the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Anand has narrated the social condition of labourers in pre-independent India. Here too, Anand's main stream is social realism only. The title of the novel is most suggestive and appropriate as it deals with the suffering and miseries of the workers on the tea plantations of Assam. Here the protagonist Gangu suffers and sacrifices his life in the betterment of "two leaves". Anand has presented a realistic picture of the suffering labourers with their social and economical conditions in Tea Plantations of Assam. Anand has also dared to focus on the exploitation of Indian workers by Britishers without mercy on them.
K R Srinivasa Iyengar aptly quotes the words of Anand from his Preface to the 2nd edition of *Two Leaves and a Bud* in which Anand acknowledges the impact of his playmates' experiences which have moulded him to express in an extraordinary way.

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 beings 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. (P.334).

Anand's humanism, his concern for the under-dogs, is reflected in all his novels, but *Untouchable, Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* are particularly significant in this regard. These novels deal with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their unsuccessful struggle for a better life. According to Paul Verghese:

*Untouchable* is a 'socially-conscious' novel, where as *Coolie* is a "politically-conscious novel". These two novels, it cannot be denied, have served the useful purpose of arousing the conscience of the educated Indians to the problems of untouchability and economic and social injustice in India. (*Problems of Indian Creative Writing in English*, P.27).

Anand has projected heart rendering reality of such humiliation. The labourers are exploited socially, economically and physically. What is left in their lives is suffering only. Anand has presented realistic pictures of physical molestation of coolie women in the novel. The novel itself is the realistic portrayal of the suffering saga of coolies in Tea plantation in Assam. Anand himself has visited the places and interviewed so many coolies and found their real life problems. He not only found their problems but also tried to expose it to the world with the intension to remove all the social, political, economical and religious ills and evils.
In the novel *The Big Heart*, Anand has presented social condition of a particular caste and class with that he has also focused on the impact of industrial revolution on Indian society. Like *Untouchable*, the novel *The Big Heart* is also a record of events of a single day in the life of the protagonist - Ananta, the coppersmith, the man with big heart like Ratan in *Coolie*. Ananta signifies the omnipresence of exploitation and the incessant struggle for liberation. The introduction of the machine has thrown the artisans out of work. Ananta also suffers from the introduction of the machine. He is a crusader for the utilization of the machine for the general well-being of man. He has no doubt in the capacity of his fellowmen to master the machine and thereby revolutionize the social life.

In *The Big Heart*, Ananta, the protagonist, is placed as a supreme example of transcending the world of facts by the world of love and understanding in the context of the conflict between tradition and modernity. Ananta welcomes modern technology even though he is fully aware of the destruction of the traditional handicrafts. He is not a revivalist like Ralia, another character in the novel. He sees modern technology as a potential means of solving India's socio-economic problems. Yet, like Anand, Ananta does not blindly support technology. He is one with others of his community in protesting against "the alienating role of the machine under capitalism", but he believes that machines do not think. It is men who think. He says: "When we thathiars begin to handle machine...we shall soon show them!...we need not become slaves to the profiteers or the machine. We are men. We will make a Revolution" (*Untouchable*, P.75). Through Ananta's middle path, Anand shows that the Western civilization, that has come to stay in India, cannot be shooed away, and artistically implies that it should be tempered with India's spiritual culture - the ideals of Bhakti and self-sacrifice. Anand's heroes, like Ananta, are graduated in love and Sarva dharma which is the essence of India's Bhakti Movement. They are influenced and moved by "the tides of love" rather than "the waves of hatred" (P.226). As Suresh Chandra observes, "the graduation of Krishan from *Seven Summers* to *The Bubble* through *Morning Face* and *Confession of a Lover*" in adopting "an outlook of Sarve Sukhina Bhavantu; Sarve Santu Nirmayah" (*A Sawardee Saint: Mulk Raj Anand*, P.26), which connotes the emancipation of all without distinctions of high or low, and rich or poor, is another illustration of Anand's poetic vision of life.
By the novel, Anand focuses that industrialization has played almost a revolutionary role in the life of Indian People. But industrialization gave birth to modern cities which became the centers of modern culture and increasing domestic social life and from which all progressive movements social, political and cultural emanated. Here, Ananta fights against the age old notions of his own fraternity and against the owner of machines. The novelist efficiently knits together the theme of casteism with the main theme of the novel. The criticism of casteism in The Big Heart is mainly concerned with its evil effect on human relationship. The novel is perhaps, the most argumentative of Anand’s novels. Large portions of it have the tone of debate as different spokesmen among the coppersmith brotherhood suggest alternatives for modern India. It is also not free from exaggeration. Anand’s ‘moving’ exposition of poor men’s plight in this novels to a great extent makes dismal reading. The poverty of the people makes them frustrated - which leads to family scuffles too.

Mulk Raj Anand firmly believes that human civilization does not always indulge in wars, creating conflicts - one after another. He hopes that the spurious elements of contemporary civilization such as fratricidal conflicts and crude barbarism associated with money and exploitation would be wiped out by a new civilization ushered in by the revolutionary spirit of man who could build a more egalitarian society based on justice, humanity and a civilized morality.

The realistic and naturalistic techniques Anand has adopted for the presentation of his themes imply that his world-view remains "anti-traditional and Marxist-humanist, tinged with a crucial element of romanticism strengthened by the presence of an indigenous Indian response to life which he refers to as body-soul drama" (Studies in Indian Fiction in English, P.133). Anand's poetic vision of life affirms the dictum that pity is poetry and poetry is pity. In terms of artistic discipline, he could have avoided superfluity and made his novels artistically more satisfying lest the social reformer should have taken precedence over the artist.

Almost all of Anand’s subsequent novels are a variation on the same theme and are intended to bring home the plight of the powerless but socially and economically over burdened peasant who fights social conventions and is baulked at every step in his aspirations for a better life. With regard to Anand’s novels, K. R. Rao rightly remarks:
The human situation in each one comes in for sharp criticism, but the irony is diluted to some extent by a tender moving pathos. There are, indeed, rich, human documents, having varying degrees of excellence. (Anand in Untouchable, P.2).

Anand’s commitment to the philosophy of humanism forms the very basis of his creative enterprises. He takes full responsibility both as a man and as an artist to for the fulfillment of humanistic ideals in Untouchable. In this way, he discovers his real identity in the process. In his own words: “I was not only a member of a family risen into the well-to-do middle class, but that I was one of the millions of human beings, a member of the human race who had inherited this terrible and beautiful world of the 20th century where had to paid for”. (Apology for Heroism, P.20).

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar comments on Anand’s deep concern for the poor:

It was Anand’s aim to stray lower still than even Sarat Chandra or Premchand, to show to the west that there was more in the Orient than could be inferred from Omar Khayyam, Li Po, Tagore or Kipling; and so he described a waif like Munoo in Coolie, an untouchable like Bakha, an indentured labourer like Gangu, and set them right at the centre of the scheme of cruelty and exploitation that held India in its vicious grip. (Indian Writing in English, P.334).

However, Anand’s humanistic zeal often carries him off his feet and exposes him to the charge of partiality and propaganda. In this context, Meenakshi Mukherjee is of the view:

Anand is a rational humanist, in the western tradition, believing in the power of sciences to improve material conditions, in progress and in the equality of all men, and his manifest intention is to propagate his beliefs through his novel. (The Twice Born Fiction, P.27).

It is apparent that Mulk Raj Anand attacked not only the existing systems, but also the forces working behind them. He has his own vision to eradicate these social evils in the national interest. Therefore, art for Mulk Raj Anand was not for art’s sake only. He loved those flowers, which bring fruits; he loved those clouds, which shower water he could love beauty not only for its own sake but also for the sake of life. No doubt,
idealism, humanism and realism existed in the works of the novelist, though in different proportions. Mulk Raj Anand wished to convey a profound meaning to his people. He wrote for society itself. Being social reformer, he always wished to uproot the failings and frailties of the society.

Thus, in all major works of Anand, he has presented social themes which are expressed realistically. Anand’s realistic depiction is in his theme of exploitation which has widened from its social aspects to economic and political ones. The exploiters are big landlords, moneylenders, industrialists, capitalists, tea planters, temple-priests, tradesmen and other high class people. On the other hand the exploited are the untouchables, landless peasants, labourers, coolies, widows and innocent people.

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand as realist and with a deep sense of humanism and compassion for the poor, the backward and the downtrodden and as a stylist with command over a language which can be truly called the people’s language and mastery over the language for Mulk Raj Anand, narrated his works with the sympathy and full of love for victims. His works reflect the extreme level of suffering of their downtrodden protagonists without any crime and fault of their own. Mulk Raj Anand has a close concern for the miserable people and the underdog of the society.

Anand firmly believes that the main object of art is to help man realize himself in the framework of earthly existence. What we find in his novel is not only a realistic portrayal of life, but an expressionistic vision. For Mulk Raj Anand, the novel was only a literary means through which he could draw the attention of masses towards the social problems. His purpose of writing novels was to elevate humanity at large and to ameliorate the condition of distressed people.

Anand finds the stratification of society on the basis of caste and class abominable. The intention behind it is noble, it should never be tolerated as it causes untold suffering to the underprivileged. Anand chooses a juvenile character Bakha as his hero in the novel Untouchable so that the young boy’s innocence, zest for life and essential goodness may highlight his undeserving despair and thereby underline the cruelty of the society. This protect against all the human cruelty is at work not only in his novels alone, but in his short stories too.
Anand's philosophy of humanism permeates the whole corpus of his fiction. The basis of his humanism rests upon his faith in the creative imagination of man rather than on a Divine Supreme Being. It has a reverent attitude towards the last members of society - towards the weak and the under-privileged wherever they may be. It calls for the liberation of man from the morass of superstition and poverty and urges man to promote humanness and humane values. It points and leads to the affirmation of beauty, truth and a higher moral order. It presupposes the initiative and leadership to be taken by individuals unconditionally devoted to the cause of man's dignity and filled with the revolutionary spirit. Swan-like capacity for discernment and Gandhian capacity for moral strength form the basis of the radical and revolutionary action by the exemplary leaders. Their revolution is not a Utopian proclamation of certain absolute values but it is an earnest aspiration towards the implementation of the new vision of life -- the desire image of man. It is not an easy path and it calls for sacrifice and vicarious feelings. Vicariousness ought to be the hallmark of all those willing to be involved in realizing the vision of the poetic and romantic image of man and a new humanity.

What makes Anand's novels landmarks in Indian English fiction is his social realism that goes with a poetic view of life. His sensitive and humanistic grasp of the inner processes of human life and his empathetic receptiveness to the longing and groaning and the wisdom and beauty in the lives of the poor people of his country add richness and depth to the content and the form of his fiction. The strands of his humanism emanate from his intense awareness of the bearings of India's traditional and modern civilization. His understanding of man's being and becoming a human person in a social context impels him to say that literature cannot afford to be a literature of decoration or conformist-affirmation. By integrating the nineteenth century Western mode of realism in fiction with the fabulist tradition of India, he makes use of his imaginative genius to be critically engaged with the forces of unreason and to give vent to his feelings about human deprivation. The ogress nature of society becomes the target of Anand's ire and critical realism. Vindication of the dignity of man is at the top of his fictional agenda. Dr. G.S. Balarama Gupta rightly observes,

"Mulk Raj Anand, one of our internationally renowned writers has over the years evolved an eclectic philosophy which he calls 'Comprehensive historical humanism'...While he does not fail to
take cognizance of man's greed, lust, selfishness, cruelty and insensitivity, he refuses to be begged down by despair and believes that man is potentially capable of rising from lower passions to magnificent heights of love, compassion and sacrifice”.

(Humanism: An Overview, P.30).

In Anand's scheme of ethical and aesthetic values, human dignity occupies an important place. All human conduct should ensure and enhance human dignity. Brotherhood of man through affirmation of love is a primary goal. It calls for a critique of all assumptions and traditions and demands that they be put into the testing fire lighted by human and moral values. It embraces a comprehensive universalistic outlook and endears itself to the dignity of all - wherever man is. The dignity of the poor of any class or caste is his preferential option within this scheme. His heroes long for liberation from humiliation and oppression. Human dignity is the opposite of humiliation and oppression. Therefore affirming human dignity implies negating all that is humiliating. Anand insists upon the liberation of "the weak and the fallen and the under-privileged everywhere" (Apology for Heroism, PP.96-97) and gives a glimpse of the presence of "Daridranarayan, or the God incarnate" (Ayyappa Paniker, P.24) in the sufferings of the mute millions among the poor and the lowly.

Like Maxim Gorky, Anand has the ability to see human qualities in the poor and the underprivileged of Indian society. As the reader is given to understand that the world is full of cruelty, exploitation and oppression against the poor and the innocent, he is also made to witness the world of love, natural affection, human comradeship, brotherhood, togetherness and solidarity experienced by the poor among themselves. This world of love is juxtaposed and contrasted with that of inhuman oppression. Anand shows that what the world of inhumanity denies, negates and repudiates is affirmed, strengthened and idealized as a life-sustaining value. In terms of human values, the essence of which is humanness and tenderness, Anand shows that the poor have what the rich do not, and they have them in spite of the innumerable hardships and humiliating experiences they endure thanks to the wicked and crooked ways of the rich and the powerful.

Anand's humanism, to put it in a nutshell, does not imitate Gandhian mystical humanism which pins its faith on a Divine Supreme Being but follows humanistic Mark who is deeply concerned with the lowliest of the low. It gives a clarion call for the total
abolition of superstition, dead rituals and poverty for the emergence of new society. Though Anand does not approve of Gandhian mystical humanism he has high regard for and deep faith in Gandhi’s unquestionable leadership which is strengthened by his moral vigour, an essential and indispensable requirement for any leader to spear-head the revolution.

Both Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are inclined towards direct exhortations in varied degrees. Although they do not offer practical solutions to the problems they deal with or abuses and cruelties they attack, they interpret and imply the possibilities for effecting necessary social changes. Dickens opts for reformism and interventionism tinged with a touch of radicalism which would not go to the extent of socialist-revolution while Anand appreciates and approximates the possibility of revolutionary humanitarianism as a poetic view of life. His revolutionary praxis is born out of his relentless critical realism. His idea of humanism is linked with the exemplary role to be played by enlightened individuals who could change the world instead of merely interpreting it and thus would serve as the vanguard of democracy and liberation.

Both Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are novelists of great passions. When they keep the reality of man as the matrix and enable us to understand human nature, its positives and negatives, and realize that it is possible to change the world by negating the negatives and affirming the positives, the significance of their imaginative and creative output in their novels becomes all the more great. Their novels stir our consciousness and inspire us to experience rasa or the flavour of beauty is a sign of the fusion between form and matter - art and morality - that marks and enhances their greatness. Both of them are critical-realist-romantic novelists who just perform this task in all sincerity manifesting their own artistic strengths and weaknesses. As socially conscious novelists, they live through the experiences of other human beings and enable us to do the same.

What allies Mulk Raj Anand closely with the genius of Charles Dickens is his critical realism. Like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Anand and Dickens meet together in the region of their social and moral consciousness. To both of them, exploitation of man by man is immoral and impermissible. If Dickens dethrones the myths created by capitalistic utilitarian principles, Anand imaginatively decimates the illusions behind all constricting traditions and blind beliefs which throttle the freedom of man, particularly the poor and
the illiterate, and shows that human relationships based purely on money cause oppression and dehumanization. In their social consciousness, both of them see that the poor do not exist in an organized system and they exist only when they ask for more. Both of them see that the poor, in spite of their plight, hold on to certain noble values negated by the rich and the powerful.

The romantic and the poetic elements in their imagination have an appeal to all men and women on earth to affirm the positives of life. Both affirm the concept of the mobility of human nature - man's ability to change. Both hope for the leavening and the fermentation of the human spirit. Fermentation is a must for ushering in a new society. Tenderness is a supreme value. In promoting the value of karuna, Anand surpasses Dickens and moves beyond the realm of pity, charity and interventionism. His sympathies are much wider. His plea for understanding and empathy becomes all the more significant and meaningful in the context the poverty and the varied forms of oppression of the poor in the Third World, particularly the Asiatic, the African and the Latin American poor.

One can say that Mulk Raj Anand comes closer to Charles Dickens - so close that critics like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and G.S. Balarama Gupta see Anand as a veritable Dickens - in his effort to stir the public consciousness and in his role of a diagnostician of society. However, they achieve different degrees of success in this task. Their ends are not exactly the same because the corresponding socio-politico-economic pressures are different. Their techniques and narrative powers vary. Their cultures differ and so their revolutionary perspectives of life are divergent. Each one's art is unique. Therefore, comparison cannot be pursued to an untenable level. The common feature is their "moral engagement which imparts the necessary substance to their rhetoric" (G.S. Balarama Gupta, P.15). The ways they examine the constricting realities between the rich and the poor, the themes they dwell upon with reference to changing equations between the oppressor and the oppressed, and the impact of the oases of deprivation the poor are constrained to endure, resonate far beyond the particular contexts of the two novelists. They tell us what it means to be human. The more and more one can come to know of Dickens and Anand, the more one can tend to appreciate their approaches to the art of being human. The poor who have read their novels would certainly love them, and they are often, if not always, right in such matters - matters of life, love, suffering and death.

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