CHAPTER – III

MULK RAJ ANAND

Among many Indo-Anglian novelists who have committed themselves to social reform, Mulk Raj Anand stands out. He is a rational humanist who believes in the power of science to improve the material conditions in the progress of mankind in human dignity and in the quality of all men. Several of his novels take up the condition of the oppressed and social evils like untouchability, economic inequality and social injustice.

Mulk Raj Anand, whom we can justifiably describe as the grand old man of Indo English fiction, was born on 12th December 1905 in Peshawar, the capital city of North-West Frontier province of India before the country’s partition in 1947. His father, by birth a coppersmith, a Kshatriya sub-caste, had joined the British Army as a sepoy and risen to the position of an officer having the designation of a Subedar. Thus Anand belonged to an ordinary Hindu family which was financially not very well off.

His father was superficially modern and his mother was traditional who brought up Mulk Raj Anand on the ancient stories from the epics and the shastras. It is significant that his upbringing
and intellectual development have led him to protest against social injustice. Anand's father was a coppersmith who early in life joined the army. The craftsman's industry and meticulous attention to detail and the army man's feeling for adventure are among the major constituents of Anand's heritage from his father. From his peasant mother he doubtless derived his commonsense, his sense of the ache at the heart of the Indian humanity, and his understanding compassion for the waifs. His feeling for the suffering masses of India colours his novels at every step and it makes him a powerful champion of the underdog. The nineteen thirties were the most tumults years in Indian history. It was the period in which Indian struggle for Independence was at its peak. Anand like a true Indian could not remain uninfluenced by it. Though Mulk Raj Anand did not participate in the civil disobedience movement, he identified himself with it. Anand was a fifteen year old boy at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919, the fateful day when General Dyer ordered his men to shoot at the assembled crowd. Anand received eleven strips on his back. This incident definitely left a scar on his mind. As a young boy, Anand was extremely sensitive and physically fragile. This resulted in his aloofness. At a very early age, he received the first shock in his life. As he witnessed his pretty cousin and playmate Kaushalya die before his eyes. This young girl of nine years who was cheerful laughing and playing was consumed by
Tuberculosis. Anand could not overcome this shock; he refers to this incident as the first important crisis in his life, which left its mark on his mind and heart: 'I could not understand why an innocent girl should be singled out to die. And what was death? was there survival after the passing away of a person? If not, then life was the only time for happiness. And yet there was pain and suffering in life, why was all this? ... No answer came to my questionings, but I could see the contrast of life and death.'

Further the death of his uncle Pratap and later that of his good aunt, Devaki, added to his general mood of sadness and confusion. These incidents however, forced Anand to question further the meaning of life and death. Death seemed dark and inevitable and this strengthened his love of life. Here it appears, are the roots of his developing philosophical bent of mind and his leanings towards humanism, a fundamental tenet of which is the staunch belief in the here and now as against the unseen and unknown hereafter.

Another important fact Anand remembers as having left a strong impression on his boyhood were to the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by British officers at the time of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre; it was only innocently that he broke the curfew order, but the police gave him eleven stripes of the cane on the back: No
wonder Anand grew up into an uncompromising denouncer of imperialism. Further Anand was painfully shocked to notice the mendacity, ignorance, and superstition of his coppersmith brotherhood. Anand belonged to one of the many groping young men of the generation who had begun to question everything in our background to look away from the big houses and to feel the misery of the inert, disease ridden, underfed, and illiterate people about us'. He was aware that great many of our people suffered from poverty and squalor around us with a patience that was truly heroic. No one in India had yet written the epic of this suffering adequately, because the realities were too crude for a writer like Tagore, and it was not easy to write an epic in India while all the intricate problems of the individual in the new world had yet to be solved. It became Anand's aim as a novelist to focus attention on this suffering and thus to write what may fittingly be called 'epics of misery'.

Anand graduated with honors degree in 1925. He was afraid that if he stayed in India he would have to accept his father's strict code of success and mode of life and his search for truth would to be lost in the search for position. To Anand, India seemed to be a country where life was bound and constricted on every side, where growth and self-awareness were thwarted from the start. After a
tussle with his father he left for England in the autumn of 1925 in search of truth. After arriving in London with the help of a scholarship in 1925, he started researching in philosophy for a doctor’s degree, under Professor G.Dawes Hicks, an eminent Kantian scholar and a member on the editorial board of the famous Hibbert Journal. It was during this period that Anand fell in love with Irene, a Welsh Professor’s daughter.

By now, psychologically Anand was prepared to read Marx and by what he calls ‘one of those coincidences’ he came across Marx’s letters on India and a whole world was opened to him.

Marxism was acceptable to Anand because it was scientific and rational. In spite of his self-consciousness regarding religion, Anand popularised Marxian Leninism in his novels with a missionary zeal. To Anand, the British Raj was responsible for depriving his grandfather of his lands, for producing a man like his father, the sychophantic babus who lacked cultural integrity and self pride and for flogging a fifteen year old boy. Anand’s preference for the protesting working classes over the ruling classes, the upholders of British society at home and abroad was a natural outcome of his own negative feelings towards the British Raj.
Anand was 26 years old when he became fascinated by Marxian ideology. He had been in England for six years, pursuing studies for a doctorate in philosophy. Life ahead was rather black: the Indian Civil Service and university teaching were the two professions open to Anand. To escape from government employment he had come to England and university teaching did not offer attractive proposals. In the security of the Marxian ideology he attempted to lose his own insecurity. His goals were now determined by the demands of an ideology. He decided to write for the cause. Moreover ideological commitment gave Anand the figure of authority and direction he lost when he rejected his disciplinarian father and his Indian moorings, while satisfying the need and respect for faith he had acquired from his orthodox deeply religious mother. It also gave Anand a viable way of coping with the distasteful and appealing west: he could accept scientific and technological achievements, yet regret capitalist values.

Now, however, an incident happened which shocked him out of his complacency. He was man handled one day by some conservative English students for refusing to be a blackleg in the General strike of 1926 in Great Britian. The English police fired on the workers who after all were also English. This opened Anand’s eyes not only to the inequalities existing in Europe, but also to the
sufferings of his own countrymen in India under the British rule. During the next few years, Anand did some freelance writing. He also made several memorable acquaintances like - Laurence Binyon, D.H. Lawrence, F.R. Leavis, Middletone Murry, Herbert Read, Aldous Huxley, F.C. Bartlett, C.D.Broad, Bonami Dobree, Eric Gill, Anand Coomar Swamy and others. Anand received the Doctor's degree for his thesis on the philosophy of Berkeley, Hume and Russell in 1929. He returned to India in 1932 and visited several ancient Indian architectural monuments at places like Mahabalipuram and Konark. Next year Anand sailed back to Europe, where he again did some freelance writing and also revised his *Untouchable*. When he went for the publication of his novel, nineteen publishers rejected it. The twentieth publisher, Wishert Books Limited agreed to publish it. That too, after Anand managed to bring a protective preface from E.M. Forster.

In the year 1935, his second novel *Coolie* appeared. He became known in Russia as well as other countries of Europe.

In 1938, Anand was actively engaged in organising the progressive writer's movement which spread to almost all Indian languages. He edited Indian Literature for a short period. Again in 1939, he went to London, with the intention of staying for a very
short period, but his return was delayed because World War II broke out.

It is also necessary for us to know about some of the very important influences during his formative years. Anand was influenced by several ideologies, individuals, events and books. In the year 1930, Anand had met Gandhi in the Sabarmati Ashram. His commitment to his writing can be seen in the fact that he insisted on Gandhi to go through *Untouchable* and advise him. Anand’s generation was fully caught up in the national struggle for liberation and Gandhi who was the prominent national leader enjoyed tremendous popularity. Anand too was influenced by Gandhi. He was influenced by people like Gorky who believed that the work of a creative writer is always inspired by a mission, a powerful attack on the evils of life like hypocrisy, cruelty, insensitivity etc., and an advocacy of love and compassion which make human life nobler and happier. Anand says that the writer writes from the compulsions of one kind or the other, deeply related to himself. He illustrates it by giving the instance of his becoming a writer: 'I wrote from the compulsion of a morbid obsession with myself and the people who possessed me, deep in my conscience.'

Anand strikes a fundamentally humanitarian posture, poetises the human predicament and calls for a transformation of man to
usher in an era of spiritual regeneration. Mrs. Premila Paul comments: 'Anand has exposed social evil in its myriad manifestation and has evocatively presented different layers of human experience in his fiction. His wide reading and travel have enabled him to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. His close association with the underdogs and his passionate recordation of their woes have given his novels a rare cogency and an intimate quality of felt life.'

The Principal Works of Mulk Raj Anand

1. Novels

1. *Untouchable* [1935]
2. *Coolie* [1936]
3. *Two Leaves and a Bud* [1937]
4. *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* [1938]
5. *The Village* [1939]
6. *Across the Black Waters* [1941]
7. *The Sword and The Sickle* [1942]

[Numbers 5-7 constitute a trilogy, with the same protagonist in all the three novels.]
8. *The Big Heart* [1945]
9. *Seven Summers* [1951]

[Seven Summers was the first of series of seven novels which Mulk Raj Anand planned to write as a kind of autobiography in seven parts corresponding to the seven stages of a man's life as described by Shakespeare in his play, *As You Like It*.]

10. *Private Life of an Indian Prince* [1953]
11. *The old Woman and the Cow* [1960]
12. *The Road* [1963]
13. *The Death of a Hero* [1964]

[This was the second of the seven novels which Mulk Raj Anand had planned as his autobiography to be written in the form of fiction. This novel won the Sahitya Academy Award of the year.]

15. *Confession of a Lover* [1976]

[This was the third of the series of seven novels referred to above.]
II. Collections of Short Stories

1. *The Lost Child and Other Stories* [1934]
2. *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* [1942]
3. *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* [1947]
5. *Selected Stories* [1955]
6. *The power of Darkness and Other stories* [1959]
7. *Lajawanti and Other Stories* [1966]

III. Miscellaneous Writings

1. *Persian painting* [1931]
2. *Curries and other Indian Dishes* [1932]
3. *The Hindu View of Art* [1933]
4. *The Golden Breath; Studies in Five poets of the New India* [1933]
5. *The Bride's Book of Beauty* [in collaboration with Krishna Huthee Singh] [1947]
6. *The King Emperor's English* [1948]

Mulk Raj Anand is, indeed, a prolific writer and his books cover a wide range of subjects and topics, though it is as a novelist that he has really distinguished himself and made a mark on the Indian literary scene. Besides the books specified above, he has also written numerous articles including one entitled: 'How I Became a Writer' and another entitled 'What Shakespeare Means to Me'. 
Furthermore, Anand’s work has provoked a large body of literary criticism most of which is highly appreciative of his talents.

Anand’s two post-Independence social novels are: *The Old Woman and the Cow* [1960] and *The Road* [1961]. Even though the best of Anand’s novels appeared as early as in the 1930’s the canvas of the post-Independence period is also not barren. His *magnum opus’s* like *Untouchable* and *Coolie* appeared along with the majority of his novels in the pre-Independence period. For Anand there was something left even in the post-Independence India which made him to write about the continued saga of the oppressed. Anand has attempted a portrayal of the oppressed and different trends of society of the time, in an attempt to identify the various causes of unhappiness of the people.

Mrs. S.Lakshman Shastry the editor of Contemporary Indian Literature writes about Anand: ‘Dr. Mulk Raj Anand is a unique type of optimistic humanist who is capable of moving the most pessimistic man to action. He is a very sensitive lover of all that is good and lovable on earth – good books, fine pieces of art, good manners. He stands for lasting peace and friendly relations between nations. At the same time he is also a ruthless critic of all that is worn out and decaying, dehumanising and degrading customs, manners, outdated social and political institutions, reactionary
thoughts and ideologies. As a disciple of Tagore and Nehru, Anand has made painstaking efforts to understand the soul of this land which has been expressing itself through Indian thought and Indian culture. It appears to us that it is the profound knowledge of Indian mind on the one hand and critical assessment of the various outdated social systems and institutions that has made Anand an uncompromising agitator and organiser'.

Thus Anand is a staunch humanist, prolific writer, an unceasing champion of the cause of the poor and the lowly, a relentless crusader against inequality and injustice and a forerunner of the protest literature. Mulkraj Anand is perhaps the first to have written about the waifs, the disinherited, lowly and the lost'.

Anand himself states: 'My work broke new ground and represented a departure from the tradition of the previous Indian fiction, where the pariahs and bottom dogs had not been allowed to enter the sacred precincts of the ... In all their reality, it seemed to become significant and drew the attention of the critics, particularly in Europe which only knew Omar Khayam. Lipo and Tagore but very little or nothing about the sordid or colourful lives of the villains of Asia'.

Anand puts before the readers not only the great social evil of untouchability but also offers some probable solutions. Anand the
realist always believed in the role of a writer as a crusader in the cause of humanity. His novels were the outcome of his anger and indignation against the injustices of the caste system and his desire that such injustice should end. Therefore, Anand wrote about the orphans, the untouchables and labourers. To him goes the credit of furthering the humanistic tradition of Tagore, Premchand and Sharatchandra. As a serious artist he championed the metaphor of social change, bringing the form of the novel in line with the contemporary development in Britain and France. All his novels convey the same humanistic message, his strong grip on the subject consolidating his position forever in the Indian English literary world.

Indian writers in English had visualised a role for themselves as interpreters of the feelings of fellow Indians to the Indian as well as the foreign readers during India's struggle for freedom. To what extent were they able to fulfill this role needs to be evaluated in the light of their writings. Some writers did try to describe the prevalent ethos and the socio-political reality. The fiction writers in English had focused attention on some of the prevalent evils of industrialisation. The force of their attack was blunted when they mixed up officially sponsored policies and non-official planters. Some authors have portrayed characters who worked for the
upliftment of the untouchables. Thus even when other novelists too have handled the themes of the untouchables and the coolies, the downtrodden and destitute, they are mainly motivated by political and sociological problems. But Anand’s treatment of his characters and selection of his themes is unique. Anand treats them essentially as human beings and feels that they have also the right to live in society. His aim as a writer is to penetrate into the heart of the diseased society and to reform the evils of social life. But the tone of the reformer is not hushed and muffled. He never allows the artist in him to be hand cuffed by a mere propagandist. The reader himself finds out and the message comes through in such a way as to appeal to his sense of pity, truth and justice. The spirit of compassion combined with hot anger may be termed the most important of Mulk Raj Anand’s characteristics. Although it is obtrusive, he is a typical representative of modern humanitariansim, and therefore, he rightly deserves the title of ‘the laureate of the toiling and oppressed classes of humanity’.

An outstanding feature of the Indo-Anglian fiction is its variety of interest, its range is wider and concerns greater... This quality has been endorsed by C.D.Narasimhaiah: 'And the Indian novel in English has shown a capacity to accommodate a wide range
of concerns. In Mulk Raj Anand a humane concern for the underdog..."7

Anand had a rare ability to put the ideas across in the most lucid and forceful manner because of his rich knowledge of the oppressed. The stamp of his genius can be seen well in the novels. He argued that the depressed classes needed full political protection because of their backwardness in education. Their poverty and social slavery. Anand was a valiant fighter for human rights and a social visionary. Throughout his life he fought against inequality, injustice and oppression.

Anand's concern is to emphasise the need for reform in order to achieve a rare social amelioration. Thus his novels are socially optimistic. They expose the hard social reality. He was committed to Leninist Marxism when he began his literary career in 1935. As a Marxist, he consciously used his art to spread his knowledge to the people so that man can thereby learn to recognise the fundamental principles of human living and exercise vigilance in regard to the real enemies of freedom and socialism. Through his novels he hoped to link himself with the disinherited, the weak and the dispossessed as a human being and as an artist... to help transform society. However, writing in English, he was aware that his readers were not the mass of underprivileged people who were to help
transform society. Instead they were the small class of privileged, educated Indians. His appeal was to the elites. This becomes apparent in his consistent use of messiah figures who spread the Gospel of revolt, of love and of truth who remove the confusion from the minds of the main figures, the disinherited and who deliver the writer's message to the reader. His novels follow an identical pattern, each describes a principal figure who brings to focus the injustice of society, his abortive and misdirected attempts for a better life in the existing unjust state: and the appearance of the revolutionary hero who shows him that realisation of a great life is only possible after the destruction of the present order. The novels end on a note of hope in the anticipated revolution. Though the milieu of the novels differs, the character of the message and of the messenger remains remarkably consistent. In *Untouchable* Bhaka a sweeper sensitive to his humiliating position in Hindu society makes pathetic attempts to better his status. He has the desire for change, but his mental image of change is non-Marxian and therefore doomed to failure while rules are superior to the caste Hindus who abuse and oppress him. In spite of his feeble attempts to be a Sahib in the existing society of caste and class, he will remain an untouchable whose touch is polluting. His future is tied up with his caste and community.
Revolt against authority was the central theme of Mulk Raj Anand's novels. It was also the theme of his relationship with his father, the symbol of authority in the household. Mulk Raj Anand was fascinated by revolt and treated it sometimes as an end rather than as a means. Anand's heroes question the legitimacy of the authority exercised by a state, which they call 'the big thief behind the small thieves'.

The messiah who was to lead the people to consciousness and revolt, speaks for the poor and the downtrodden. The characterisation of the messiah figures in all the novels follows a similar pattern. Virtues of traditional Hindu heroes appear combined with those of a Leninist hero. The villainy of capitalism as portrayed in the Big Heart, however, is different from the 'heroes' of capitalism sketched by Marx. Nevertheless Anand's protagonist's way of taking the villain is in keeping with the Marxian tradition. The Kathairs [coppersmith] in the Big Heart are deprived of their age old caste right of artisans and thrown out of business by the competition of the cheaper and more efficiently produced machine goods. The correct response for them, as Anand points out, however, is not to destroy the machines as the desperate artisan Ralia or the Luddite rebellion in England had attempted to do, but to 'make revolution' and destroy the illegitimate owners of
the worker’s labour, the capitalists who use the machine and worker for profit. The demise of the capitalists, he promises, will lead to the end of greed and alienation... Then the machine will cease to be ‘a death trap’ and become a means of man’s fulfillment.

Mulk Raj Anand in his apology for heroism says: ‘I believe first and foremost in human beings in Man, in the whole Man’.8 Contradicting the high minded view of man is the high handed and contemptuous tone of Mulk Raj’s revolutionary heroes when they address the oppressed masses who will form the new society. Mulk Raj Anand believes that only a revolution can establish social justice and restore love and brotherhood.

The novelist is like a teacher, a preacher and prophet. His duty is that of an educator. It is not enough if the novelist paints out the defects or the drawbacks of society. He must also suggest a remedy to the social problems or evils. A novelist is not only influenced by society but influences it.

Walter Allen elaborates it like this: ‘But the novelist must deal with men in a specific place at a specific time, and the novelist, especially the greatest, have normally been ..... conscious of their time and the qualities in it that appear to distinguish it from other times’.9
Anand born in a period of Indian freedom struggle has seen the two World Wars, and after India's Independence the horrors of the partition riots. He in his novels exposes the dragons of oppression and deprivation. His novels are not mere showcase exhibits of caustic art, but literature dignified with genuine humanism. He is a vivid thinker and an ideal humanist with firm conviction. He was the first Indian writer to take as his heroes the Indian poor and to present a picture of Indian life and society free from romantic idealisation. Anand was a pioneer too in writing under the impulse of social protest. C.V. Venugopal opines like this in his book Indian short story in English: 'The era of Independence may also be classified as the era of an acute social awareness. In a way it may even be termed as the era of disillusionment. The dreams and objectives of the pre-Independence days remain yet to be fulfilled. The establishment of a welfare state does not seem to be a near possibility even after two decades of Independence. Ignorance, hypocrisy, corruption, red tape and opportunism continue to dig at its very foundation. This, however, is not to say that India has not seen progress at all. Achievements have been there, especially in the fields of science and technology as well as in the industrial sphere and in an overall improvement in the general health of the nation. But the man in the street is not impressed by them; and the intellectual only reacts with
contemptuous sneer whenever the glory of the country is sung aloud by the political high up. There is a grouse against the way the administrative machinery functions. An all too conspicuous prevalence of social injustice adds not a little to this diffused feeling of disappointment and discontent. It is the picture of this India that we generally see in the Indian short story in English'.

This is true of Anand's fiction also.

Anand's keen awareness of the human predicament propelled him into creative writing. His major themes are based on such problems as casteism and human suffering caused by a variety of factors. He wants to create in the readers an immediate awareness of the dehumanising social evils to stir the springs of tenderness in them to activate them for the removal of these evils in order that a desirable, just social order may come into being. The protagonists in Anand's novels belong either to the class of the suffering [Bakha in Untouchable, Munoo in Coolie, Ganga in Two Leaves and a Bud] or to the sensitive group of people who suffer seeing others suffering [Lalu, Anant in Big Heart]. Anand pays more attention to penetrating into the emotional problems of those who are perhaps non-entities in the eyes of the society. Anand knows their potentiality, which is not recognised by a callous society.
Anand's attack is very sharp. His aim is to project exploitation in all its facets wherein the practice of religion is also one. Religion has often proved detrimental to the progress of man as it has created either passivity or narrow orthodoxy and fanaticism in man. Anand's denunciation of religion has its origin in his very philosophy of life.

Anand confesses: 'To me there is only one vast universe, with man, woman and other living beings face to face with the elements and others alone but seeking human solidarity there are not two worlds, heaven above and the earth below. There is no 'spiritual' world separate from the 'material' world. The soul is body and the body is soul. The possible emergence of human beings as individuals, through the struggle for illumination, exercised through the will, and through continuous experience and through the search for every creative possibility. May lead to the making of the individual to 'Destination Man'.

Anand is not happy even with education, which was thought to be a powerful means in the process of social reconstruction. He is of the opinion that mere bookish knowledge will not help. This point he has highlighted in his novel Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts.
Anand also deals with the life of peasants, he gives a vivid picture of Indian rustic life, their problems, which are steeped in poverty and starvation, and ignorance and superstition are graphically presented in his novels. He was obsessed with the memory of the pangs of suffering and thus aware of the plight of the underdog. In fact it was this impelling force that ultimately made him a writer with humanist vision. Being a writer deeply committed to the ameliorative imagination and social vision, he waned to help and raise the untouchables, the peasants, the oppressed, the serfs, the coolies and other suppressed downtrodden members of the society to human dignity and self awareness in view of the abject apathy and despair in which they are sunk. He chose the novel form as he thought it to be more suitable than the old bardic recital for his creative effort, in keeping with his humanistic tenets. He felt that it is the society that determines the destiny of man, the milieu conditions and shapes the man's behaviour, the incessant confrontation between the individual will and the social forces, inevitably results in the tragedy of man.

Some critics have considered his fiction as propaganda. A close study of his novels would reveal that it is the characteristic product of the modern Indian ethos and he is a committed writer with a proletarian humanistic bias. P.P.Mehta does not consider him
propagandist and says: 'The novels of Anand strike a responsive chord in the heart of everyone. It especially strikes a chord in the heart of Indians. The kindly individualistic sentimental Indians set a value on homely satisfaction and simple village life. More than any other people they are ridden by the ruthless and impersonal tyranny of priesthood, class distinctions, religion or administration, their deepest feelings, their controlling conviction find expression in Anand. It is presumably no wonder that Anand they have given their hearts'. Mulk Raj Anand in as much as he puts as his heroes and heroines the outcastes and pariahs and underdogs of the society, has given the true surrealistic novel to Indo-Anglian fiction. His heroes are the downtrodden sweeper, coolies, the unemployed, coppersmiths, the debt-ridden farmers and poor simple soldier, poverty and sufferances are the badge of their class'.

Anand has selected for his theme modern Indian society, especially the crushed humanity. He exposes the external evil, man's cruelty to man with a candour which has provided him a unique place in the galaxy of Indian English novelists.

Referring to Anand's achievement K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes: 'As a novelist addressing himself to the task of exposing certain evils, Anand has been as effective as Dickens himself'.

K.R. Srinivas Iyengar also says that: "Anand, instead of a professorship in a Government college or university, chose 'the hazardous profession of letters'." It seems that the art of writing came to him more naturally as leaves to a tree, than contrivance, through experience in life. In the beginning of his life, his consciousness was disturbed by three shocks, the first was at the age of eleven, when he saw his lovely cousin Kaushalya aged nine die. The second shock followed two years later when he heard the news of the passing away of... his uncle Pratap. This shock was made more intensive by the rumour that he had been poisoned with arsenic by aunt Devaki. The third shock came when Devaki herself committed suicide because the caste brotherhood excommunicated her for all her crimes'.

About these incidents Anand has said like this: 'These three deaths confused me. I could not understand the meaning of death. The elders told me it was inevitable... But my heart was restless. And I was morbidly obsessed by the silent wall, which seemed to me to divide life from death. I was physically so much in love with life that I could not accept death at all. And the fear of death made me love life all the more, though I remained morbid and sad and dissatisfied with everything'.
Anand's realism is also seen in his themes. He has brought back the Indo-Anglian novel, from history and romance to the hard realities of the present, and made it from mere entertainment or escapist light reading into an instrument of social reform. Anand is a committed writer, a novelist with a purpose, his purpose being to focus attention on the suffering, misery and wretchedness of the poor which results either from the exploitation of the underdogs of society by the capitalists or the feudal landlords, or by the impact of industry on the traditional and agricultural way of life. Through his art he has rendered valuable service by highlighting the plight of the underdog of society, by enlisting our sympathy for them, and thereby paving the way for social reform. Both Untouchable and Coolie are remarkable in this respect. In these novels, Anand deals with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for a better life. Almost all his subsequent novels are a variation on the same theme and are intended to bring home to the reader the plight of the over-burdened peasant who is powerless to fight superstition and social convention and is balked at every step in his aspirations for a better life. Anand's realism is seen in his portrayal of all aspects of life, even the ugly and the seamy ones. Filth and dirt is as much a part of life as beauty, cleanliness and decency. It is not that he loves ugliness, but realism demands it if it is there in actual life. His novel Untouchable begins with a scene of public latrines, scenes
of dirty bazars, lanes, alleys of gutters in which the flow of dirty water is obstructed by solid filth and of children easing themselves in front of their houses. In another scene Anand describes Bakha's brother who has a perpetually running nose. 'He has a dirty face on which the flies congregated in abundance to taste of the sweet delights of the saliva on the corners of his lips.' All this is disgusting, no doubt, but it is a part of life, and so Anand does not hesitate to introduce it in his novels.

P.P. Mehta comments on Anand's characters: 'In each book of Mulk Raj Anand, the characters fall into two groups: those on the side of the right, humble, kindly, generous souls, controlled by no systematic principles excepting the principle of instinctive emotion, Lal Singh, Kirpu, Nihal Singh, Munoo, Bakha, Ananta and the rest of them; those on the side of the wrong, the hypocrites, misers, selfish parasites like Seth Gokulchand, Lallu Muralidhar [Big Heart, Jimmie Thoms, the head foreman [Coolie] and others. Most of these characters are drawn from the lower classes, because these low outcastes have obsess Anand in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist's soul, who seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of his life. Anand is aware of the weaknesses, folly, dissipation and ignorance of his pet characters but he wants to show us that these characters are good human beings in spite of their
defects. Ananta the turbulent giant 'Thathiar' remains a noble creature with a big heart in spite of his unconventional made of life and his mistress Janaki who was suffering from tuberculosis. Lal Singh, the village boy is more sinned against than sinning and is therefore, a lovable creature, the sepoys, Kirpu, Laxman Singh, the childish corporal Loknath with their abusive language and simple noble hearts secure a place in the hearts of the readers. In the case of Ananta, this sympathy for the underdog comes from conviction born in experience, not in abstract thought.16

The distinction of Anand as a writer lies in his themes - both in their choice and in their treatment. The themes which Anand has chosen are based on human suffering caused by a variety of factors, political, economic, social and cultural. As C.D.Narasimhaiah put it: 'His are novels of human centrality - crushed human is his hero, on whom his sympathies are lavished irrespective of his status or age. Anand covers all the layers of humanity from the lowest to the highest - from the hated untouchables to the revered princes, from the poor proletarians to the honoured national heroes. He dramataises the struggle of the crushed human. Through the inequities of the hell on earth, to come out clean at the other end'.17

The best of Anand's novels are all published in the pre-Independence period, to name a few, Untouchable, Coolie and Two
Leaves and a Bud. Anand’s pre-Independence fiction deals with several aspects of social reform. The continuation of the same could be seen in Anand’s two social post-Independence novels, namely, *Old Woman and the Cow* [1960] [perhaps the only novel wherein Anand has chosen a woman as the central character] and *The Road* [1961].

Mulk Raj Anand’s art is wrongly branded by some as propagandist literature. But Anand’s art is not propaganda at all. He asserts that art is for life’s sake, for the sake of man’s progress. Literature should be used as a means of alleviating the suffering of fellow human beings. The creative artist is a realist who allows his vision to be shaped by the time, the place and the circumstances of the period to which he belongs. Anand believes that, every writer is a committed artist, because the aim of art is to achieve integration that is ‘to effect connection’ between man and man and between the individual and the world. The artist should present his message in his creative work without distorting its artistic side. Creative writing is not merely a realistic depiction of life but it is a manifestation of an impressionistic vision, that is, ‘the desire-image’ of the writer, as Anand describes it. Such a work makes man aware of his destiny as a social being. It has a vision to convey, it propagates a certain view of life and it is propagandistic in the
sense in which all art is propaganda though it is not propaganda alone. Anand further says in this connection: 'All art is propaganda. The art of Ajanta is propaganda for Buddhism. The art of Ellora is propaganda for Hinduism. The art of the western novel is propaganda for humanity against the bourgeoisie, Gorky as a humanist dared to speak of a man, man’s condition not to say how awful it is, but he also suggested what man could be, and thus he did propaganda for man'.

Old Woman and the Cow

Most human societies are male dominated and so woman is grudgingly given a secondary status, that is, when she is not positively subjected to inhuman tyranny in spite of the fact that our Constitution provides equal rights to men and women. Time was when woman was a prey to such social evils as purdah, female infanticide, child marriage, dowry system, enforced widowhood and denial of education even when these evils have now been removed – totally or partially – by the constant efforts of several reformers. Woman continues to be treated by and large as an inferior creature, a pleasure-giving commodity or a child baring machine. She is made to act the part of an unpaid domestic servant with a marginally superior status. She is subjected to perpetual torture by
a demanding husband, a ruthless mother-in-law and a nagging sister-in-law.

Anand, the champion of the downtrodden, outcastes, waifs, and poor people, does not fail to picture in his novels the predicament of woman who is another pitiable prey to the rigid social order. 'He gives a realistic picture of the inevitable struggle of women against the degradation of the female by 99% of the male chauvinists in our country.'

The birth of a baby girl is 'a harbinger of curse' and however much she may serve her people. She is only a guest who is to be married off and so has absolutely no claims on her house. Her entire life is a monotonous cycle of cleaning, washing, cooking and cleaning again.

Though woman is suppressed in India, Anand is aware of her dormant capacities which are seen in some of his women characters and stresses the need for the emancipation of women. He also suggests that women themselves should break the ties that bind them to the hearth and boldly venture out into different activities. The familiar types of women characters like doting mothers, loving sisters, devoted wives, alluring courtesans, perverted women, he pictures in a fast-changing society. He brings out well how the
strains of the new situation modify, warp or transmute into yet finer forms the traditional responses of the women.20

The Old Woman and the Cow is the only novel in which Anand spins the plot around a woman character. Anand’s great concern for the oppressed sex finds emphatic expression in this novel. Gauri the heroine falls in line with Anand’s suppressed heroes. But when most of his heroes register their protest within the framework of the evil society, Gauri sheds her narrow domestic coils before they could strangle her to death, and escapes into the refreshing world of modernity, whereas most of the heroes face premature death. She emerges as an awakened woman, with a fresh lease of life before her. The novel opens with the elaborate description of Gauri’s marriage ceremony - the music band, the procession, the uncontrollable crowd of uninvited guests for the feast, the showering of copper coins, the quarrel over petty things, the ceremony of the ‘showing’ the female chorus of campaigns and limericks etc... This is obviously intended to emphasize the farcical element of Indian marriages. After all, the betrothal thrice broken and renewed and the marriage that somehow escapes the eleventh hour cancellation are not going to bind the pair eternally. They foreshadow the further possibilities of split in the long run.
Marriage has degenerated from the Miltonic conception as a holy sacrament into a thing of mere excitement, a social contract.

When Panchi, the robust young man of chota Piplan gallops to Piplan Kalan with all enthusiasm to 'own' Gauri, he muses over 'The prospect of the prize of a girl - a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day, who would adorn his house and help him with the work on the land'. He hopes that Gauri would be obedient and obedience, he thinks is the most essential quality of life.

In the case of Panchi, Gauri is shown to him only at the ceremony of the 'showing' and after marriage he is ever vigilant to find fault with her. It is said that faults are thick where love is thin. When Gauri's face is not revealed to Panchi soon, he thinks that she is denying him a glance. Later, when the whole village is affected by drought, he believes that Gauri, with her inauspicious stars, has brought it to his door alone. He blames her for helping Noor Banu to take the drunken chacha home and when he is caught red-handed for stealing mangoes for Gauri, she becomes an indirect cause. In short, Panchi feels that Gauri is responsible for all his misery and misfortune. The 'cave man' in Panchi comes to the forefront at the slightest instigation of his aunt Kesaro who plays the role of the traditional mother-in-law. Panchi justifies his
beathing thus: ‘...The husband has to chastise his wife if she goes wrong.’ He expects Gauri to be at his beck and call for his sexual gratification. He is incapable of ever giving her love sans carnality.

Gauri's mother, Laxmi had prepared her for the alternation of calms and storms in married life: 'He fights during the day and during the night, he is full of thick talk ...' Panchi torments her and feels tormented in turn and hence there is no emotional harmony between them. Though Gauri is pleased with the occasional conjugal warmth she enjoys at his hands, she recoils from his brutality. Genuine love lies in the annihilation of ego. Panchi is egoistic, temperamental and 'heedless'. Mutual trust and equality, the essential requisite of married life, are totally absent in their household. But Gauri's struggle is more fundamental. All that she aspires for is "to be accepted as an individual and not for the equal rights of man and women". In spite of her dogged devotion to him, he repudiates her at the revelation of her pregnancy and this drives her to despair.

Gauri's 'home-coming' offers no solace either "Home is the place where, when you have to be there. They have to take you in" says Robert Frost (Death of a Hired Man). But, here the home where she was born and brought up, where her goddess dwelt and there by where she thought she belonged fails to shelter her.
After a relentless struggle at the hands of the old Seth Jai Ram Das to whom she is sold, she comes under the benign spell of colonel Mahindra, the champion of modernity. He acts as an 'eye-opener' and she is awakened to her own intrinsic worth. From the monotonous routine of scrubbing, cleaning and pampering a grumpy husband to serving the sick, from the constant wearing of purdah to the occasional use of the hospital mask, is certainly an exaltation of her. Having led a service-minded life at the hospital, she finds her unilateral selfless devotion and suffering meaningless.

Kesaro and Mola Ram, Panchi's aunt and uncle, are an ill assorted pair. Mola Ram is Panchi senior in brutality and Kesaro having been alienated from him, seeks a husband substitute in Panchi. The possessive Kesaro tries to tighten her hold on Panchi, a hold which she fears she had relaxed since Panchi's marriage. Because of her nephew fixation, she claims him to be her protector and sets out on her late campaign. Kesaro stands for all the bad elements in tradition. 'D. Riemenschneider feels that Kesaro represents the society's claim on Panchi.' The conflict between this Kesaro (society) and Gauri, the individual goes on for long with Panchi as the object, when Gauri's efforts to disentangle him from the grip of the conventional society prove futile. She realises that
she cannot change the society or Panchi from within and so she comes out of the cocoon of orthodoxy.

Gauri's departure reminds us of Nora's similar act in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Unlike Nora, Gauri strives to save her womb and her hope lies in her child who will not inherit the cowardly father's qualities. Gauri would live for her promising, yet to be born child and for the ailing in the hospital as a mini Florence Nightingale. Gauri comes in contact with Mahindra comes back as a truly educated and awakened woman. Anand goes one step further and projects a picture of what an Indian woman could be.

The fundamental goodness of Gauri's character and conduct is the secret source of her strength. It is a strength that a good conscience offers. She stands for all that is good in tradition and Kesaro for its bad elements. They dispel each other and the good in tradition is eager to merge with the good in modernity. Gauri absorbs all that is good in tradition. She is a misfit in a world where the wearing of a dupatta decides the chastity of a woman. Gauri believes in the worship of her lord and master and wants to conquer him ultimately with her devotion. But as this becomes impossible, she shifts from 'purdah to modernity'. The impact of modernity...would have been lost upon a weak and supine nature' and as we see the salvation rests not in passive obedience to a
society corrupted through centuries, but in an active resistance to it. In the case of Panchi caught between the ignorance of the traditional world and the virtue of his wife, he has no standards to help him.\textsuperscript{25}

The novel, which opens with the description of the ritualistic marriage ends with its total break up. The dramatic opening with the bucking, kicking, neighing and snorting of the bridegroom’s pony is matched by the equally dramatic ending of Gauri’s slamming of the door. The novel has a close knit structure of seven chapters, except that the fifth one is rather light. The first chapter ends with Gauri leaving for her husband’s place in maiden meditation, fancy free. ‘... At the end of the second chapter, the rejected Gauri sets out to her mother’s house, in a helpless condition. At the end of the third chapter we find the defeated Gauri being taken on a horse to Seth Jai Ram Das’s house. The fourth chapter comes to a close with the breakup of the Hoshiarpur hospital: miss Clara young leaves the place and Gauri awaits her turn. The sixth chapter ends with Gauri’s travel with Laxmi and Adam Singh to be restored to her husband. The last chapter ends with Gauri’s bold walk out with renewed hope.

The husband turning the wife out due to suspicion is not uncommon in India. When Panchi questions Gauri’s chastity, which she has preserved intact against many odds, she refuses to be
hoodwinked by sanctimonious humbug about submission and self-effacement any longer. She wishes that the earth would open up and swallow her, a common feeling that occurs to Janki, the mistress and Gauri, the legal wife. But the difference is that Janki feels so when her lover dies whereas Gauri experiences similar despair when her husband is very much alive. As mother earth will not devour Gauri, the modern version of Sita', will remain a living example of fortitude. Anand's modification of the myth suggests that the original version of it has become outdated and irrelevant in the modern context. It also explodes the myth of woman's inferior position as the weaker sex. Woman is no longer an encumbrance on man and the prospects of her economic independence sets her totally free.

Anand explodes this myth also and expands Gauri's domain outside home to illustrate his ideal of womanhood. The technique of contrast, deftly used, enlivens the whole novel. The marriage between two persons of diametrically opposite natures - Panchi, the fiery bull and Gauri, the gentle cow prove to be dissonant before long. When Panchi reacts violently to the revelation of his fatherhood, his brutality is set against the sublime motherly tenderness of Gauri. When Panchi is in utter need, she voluntarily parts with the ear-rings, her only possession of jewellery and even
when shut in the house of Seth Jai Ram Das she prays for Panchi and his harvest. This deep affection is a contrast to the shallow love of Panchi who tries to woo her with Hamam-soap and stolen mangoes when he is in a passionate mood. The mature sobriety and religious faith of Rafique Chacha serve by contrast to highlight Panchi’s fatalism and impulsiveness. The naive enthusiastic reception given to Gauri by Chandri, the cow is a contrast to the put on affection of Laxmi, the mother, who greets her daughter with the customary sobbing Gauri, the would be mother, strives to live for her prospective child where as Laxmi sells away her only daughter at the bidding of the villainous Amru.

There is a constant use of irony also in the novel Panchi, keeps blaming Gauri as an inauspicious creature while he himself is no better than ‘an inauspicious orphan’, Kesaro claims Panchi to be her ‘protector’ when he is anything but that to anyone. It is ironic that Panchi who does not venerate tradition is inextricably trapped in the web of tradition. Laxmi, the namesake of the goddess of wealth is forced to sell her daughter to earn her livelihood. It is again an irony of fate that Gauri is away when the long awaited rain comes. As the educated Dr. Batra cuts Mahindra’s sermons short, ironically enough, the exhortations are lost on an unintelligent audience like Laxmi and Adam Singh. At the end of the novel we see that the
docile cow is changed into a self-willed individual whereas Panchi who had been posing to be 'lion' proves to be an utter coward.

It is worthwhile to discuss here the relevance of the title 'The old woman and the cow'. The cow is revered by the Hindus as 'gomatha' and the bounteous "Kamadhenu". No puja is performed without milk. Raja Rao’s Cow of the Barricades, Gauri by name is a vehicle of God among lowly men'. Even before Gauri is introduced to us in the novel, she is described as meek, mild and gentle like a cow. But the course of the novel reveals that Gauri is a cow only in a limited sense of the term. She is a cow only with Panchi, 'the holy bull'. Far from being bovine, she is assertive, extremely so, in her relation to Kesaro. She makes it clear to Kesaro that Panchi - gentle or rude, kind or brutal - is less alone and no soul could even dream of sharing him with her. When Panchi asks her to be patient, she retorts "patience-how long can I go on being patient against the ragging of that woman and your slow beatings on her behalf!". When Panchi sulks, she dares to call him by name, amuse him back to his normal mood. She is proud and confident of running a house of her own. She curtly discourages criticism of her husband by Amru.

Chandri, the cow has a close kinship with Gauri, with her 'moos' of affection and gratitude, she expresses her delight to be
with her long lost sister friend. Even at the time of Gauri’s marriage, Laxmi expresses her desire to wangle enough cash to buy a buffalo to increase her dairy business. Now at the time of dire want, the four footed variety obviously ranks far higher, than Gauri, in Laxmi’s scale of values. ‘Riemenschneider rightly comments that the comparison of Gauri and the cow cannot be extended further than the common gentleness, softness, endurance and obedience.’

At the end of the novel, Gauri proves that she, though a cow, cannot be cowed down to slavery. In spite of the cow’s domestic nature, she finally ‘belongs’ to the outside world. It is Gauri and the spark in her character that have impressed and haunted the author and not the old woman.

The Old Woman and the Cow, along with other novels of Anand represent ‘The high water mark of Anand’s fictional genius’. This is partly because of the successful women portraits in these novels. Anand reveals his clear insight into the diverse aspects of feminine psychology. Apart from his realistic presentation of women, the champion of liberty that he is, he makes an artistic appeal to society to free woman from the shackles in which she has been and is bound.
In *Old Woman and the Cow*, Anand turns to the problem of discrimination and subjection of women, especially in rural India. The novel is inspired partly by “the peasant woman”, an epic poem by the 19th century Russian poet, Nichalai - Nekrasove and partly by the Indian epic Ramayana. Despite the imagery of Sita's divinity, “Gouri”, the principal character in the novel, portrays the grim persistence of female repression. Gouri, in her innocence, is married to an idler, Panchi. Resigned to bare survival in penury and humiliation, Gouri's conscience is burdened with instructions usually handed out to girls’ unquestioned obedience and subservience. Gouri is in a quandary. The family tensions are aggravated by severe drought. Inevitably as it were, she is cursed and blamed for the natural calamity. Abuse, physical assault and humiliation become the order of the day, when she is branded an adulteress, it, crushes her spirits. She is sent back to her mother's place, where a worse fate awaits her. The mother, poor as she is, has to make a choice between the household cow and the daughter and decides to sell off the latter to a respectable old man. Gouri manages to escape from her tormentor and is given shelter by a humane physician colonel Mahindra. Gouri is employed as a nurse. Gouri’s penitent mother finally restores her to, her husband. The husband
is coerced by village gossip and barbed homilies into asking Gouri to prove her purity. Gouri’s outburst is painful. ‘Though courageous, Rama turned out Sita because every one doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana. I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall go out and be forgotten of him.’ Gouri chooses the dignity of self assertion, walks out of her husband’s place and returns to Mahindra’s clinic.

The pathos of protest is heightened by the poor forsaken woman’s dauntless defiance of social morality, self righteousness and hypocrisy. There is also in this story a concern for agrarian reforms, Panchi reflects “The white Sahibs were aliens. The Congress Sarkar could have dammed up the rivers or dug new wells and given the villages the gift of water. But the white caps were in the big, theif bazar. And then the big thief schemes for giving water and power were affording bribes. So that, by that time all the money was eaten away by the contractors, there would be many more mouths to feed. Planned development and land reforms have only marginally changed the face of post Independence, rural India. There is so much that requires to be solved with political will and social consciousness that Anand’s indictment of both continues to remain relevant.
Iqbal Narain is of the opinion that, “Mulk Raj Anand’s fiction is a graphic portrayal of Indian society, including its unpleasant aspects. Anand shows the courage of conviction in his categorical indictment of hypocritical values, mutilating India’s social harmony and dynamism. All the principal characters in his works defy injustice and repression. Fatalism and self-righteousness. They in fact live everyday existence by confronting it, rather than falling for metaphysical or idealistic solutions.”

Mulk Raj Anand’s many splendid achievements are a tribute to his personal magnetism and colourful personality. He has succeeded to a great extent in arousing the conscience of humanity against the barbarism that it perpetrates on its own helpless victims.

6. The Road

Perhaps, the persistence of untouchability explains Anand’s return to this theme. In his novel, The Road, [1963] twenty eight years later, there is a perceptive realisation of the continuing misery of the so called lowly born. The central character, Bhikhu is more confident and resolute than Bakha the sweeper boy in untouchable. And unlike Bakha [who had resigned himself to await the dawn of the future] Bhikhu chose to take the road to Delhi - the national capital, “where no one knew who he was and where there
would be no caste or outcaste and where according to Thakur Singh [the sarpanch] they do nothing else but discuss the constitution and how the Harijans must be protected against the higher castes. Anand is not inclined to favour 'sanskritization' as an instrument of inter-caste integration and evolution as Bhabhani Bhattacharya seems to suggest, though in a mild way, in 'He who Rides A Tiger' Anand on the contrary, seems to accept the centrality of politics in the process of social reorganisation. Anand's view emerges out of the restricted potential of self generated change in the social milieu, although he takes cognisance of the immediacy of synchronisation of political initiative and a consciousness for change.

*The Road* begins where *Untouchable* ends in that Bakha harbours a glimmering hope towards the end of the novel that the prospect of mechanisation would redeem him from the stigma of untouchability. In *The Road* the hope gets brightened when Bhiku alongwith the other outcastes, builds the road by pressing into service, the road engine. The suggestion that the machine is a potent instrument for the prosperity hinted at in *Untouchable* has found expression in *The Road*. *The Road* is a road to prosperity as it links with the cities which would facilitate transportation of milk to the nearby town and cities.
The new situation and atmosphere in the post-Independence period as depicted in *The Road* calls for a broader canvas than the one treated in *Untouchable*. The world of Bakha is a limited one with a few simple traditional forces at work, whereas the world of Bhikhu is a new one, coming out, as it does, of the old one which bristled with conflicting forces.

The central theme of *The Road* is again untouchability. If *Untouchable* marks Anand’s first fictional attempt to insist on the dignity of man irrespective of caste and class, *The Road* written nearly three decades later marks the second. The heroes of both the novels are untouchable boys whose vivacious spirits refuse to be dampened by the flagrant humiliations and tortures imposed on them by caste Hindus. Both pass through miseries, encounter all impediments boldly and emerge essentially unvanquished and hopeful.

Under the leadership of a sympathetic caste Hindu, a group of outcastes of the village Govardhan hew stones from a quarry and try to build an approach road. The road they believe, will help transport milk from the village to the nearby towns and thus change the very economic pattern of the village. But the men of the higher castes who are very strongly attached to caste feelings refuse to touch these polluted stones. The landlord of the village, living in
the cozy cocoon of orthodoxy and respectability, is rudely shocked
because he views the whole situation quite differently. He is
jealous of the untouchables who have now started earning wages.
He even thinks that these low-born ones are defying him. He tries
to prevent them from proceeding with the construction of the road,
by plotting with the village priest to excommunicate the lambardar,
the head of the group untouchables and also a caste Hindu. This,
of course, proves to be of very little avail. But meanwhile, the sons
of the landlord and the lambardar go and burn down the hutments
of the untouchables. The incident instead of cowing down the
outcasts spurs them on to quicker action, and they successfully
complete the building of the road with the help of the Government.
But tired of the caste-hatred rampant in the village the hero moves
away along the new road leading to Delhi, a place where people are
too busy to bother about caste distinctions.

Most of Anand's humanist convictions, which inform
untouchables, are present in The Road also. The selection again of
an untouchable a member of those that are looked down upon
almost all as the scum of the earth, as the hero of The Road re-
affirms Anand's inalienable faith in the essential dignity of man,
whatever his caste and position in society.
Another humanist doctrine, the gospel of work as worship and a creative activity aimed at liberating men from the inferno of poverty and degradation, hinted at in Untouchable finds further amplification in The Road. Both Dhoolisingh and Bhiku strongly believe in this precept and they also put it unto practice; unmindful of all threats and obstacles, they successfully build the road. Understandably, Bhiku loves to sing that song of Kabir, the weaver saint: 'Work, work, devoted ones, for through work, all sins are washed away, by the earth and sweat'.

Caste is, of course, the chief target of Anand's criticism in The Road also. In this novel we find that caste-consciousness on the part of the orthodox Hindus results in a number of obstacles in the path of the progress of the poor outcastes of the village. Stubbornly orthodox, Thakur Singh, the landlord, sees to it that the caste Hindus do not help build the road the untouchables are trying to build, though they need it as much as the others do. His ego, nurtured on the false sense of superiority of his caste and high social position, is too adamant to yield straightway. He tries to excommunicate his chief rival, Dhooli Singh. But this ruse to bring round the chamars takes a drastic turn when he goes with Lachman and sets fire to the hutment of the outcastes. Caste-hatred takes yet another form when Dhooli Singh refuses to dis-associate himself
from the company of untouchables: the contemplated exchange of marriages between the children of the landlord and the lambardar is gravely threatened with cancellation. In the case of Surajmini, the village priest, who is indeed more cunning and no less treacherous than his counterpart, pandit Kalinath in _Untouchable_, caste is a mere mask used to hide his greed, or a tool to establish his superiority over others. In fact, he coolly forgets all his scruples of caste and religion, when he is offered mangoes touched by untouchables.

Almost all the characters in the novel - excepting, of course, Bikhu and Dhooli Singh - are fatalists. Laxmi is an incorrigible believer in karma. So is Sapti. Thakur Singh also is a strong believer in karma. Surajmani, of course, cannot do without this doctrine. But this should not persuade us to think that Anand too believes in this doctrine. On the contrary, we should see why these people believe in fatalism. Women like Laxmi and Sapti believe in it, or are made to believe in it, for they are still under the yoke of age-old Hindu beliefs. They are socially too weak to shed this idea and become rebels. Thakur Singh believes in karma for it helps him keep his exalted position secure. We see this when he has fever and is troubled by the possible threat to his position as the head of the village implied in the coming up of the untouchables. We also know
that Surajmani's repeated talk of karma is only designed to achieve his own end: he wants to keep the untouchables as well as caste Hindus under the strict rules of karma so that he can keep them all humble and devoted to God and God's men, Brahmins. In short, it is a way of earning livelihood for him. The belief in karma is so deep-rotted in the consciousness of Indians that even enlightened people refuse to see that it is an impediment, not a help, on the road to man's progress.

Anand's repeated assertion that society's progress depends solely on man's own efforts and not on blind reliance on God or gods is amply vindicated in this novel. Bhiku and Dooli Singh prove to this by building the road with the help of their brethren rather than relying on God. Further, Anand's dig at those who believe in a non-existent God is easily discernible in the behaviour of Laxmi, an inveterate believer in goddess Kali. She is ignorant enough to interpret the incendiaryism of the caste-Hindus as a punishment for her lapse in worshipping or appeasing the goddess. She cries pitiably, and desperately prays to her goddess to save the huts from fire, but the goddess does not intervene simply because she does not exist. Anand's prediction for the machine which, he believes, is a potent instrument in paving the road for man's prosperity, is an idea just hinted at in Untouchable, and it finds
clearer expression in The Road wherein the outcastes take the help of a road engine to complete the construction of the road.

Apart from their thematic similarity, Untouchable and The Road contain characters which present strong similarities. The parallels are not difficult to seek. Bhikhu is obviously cousin to Bakha. Both are tender hearted, strongly built boys with a poet's sensibility ingrained in them. Pandit Surajmani easily reminds us of Pundit Kalinath. Bhiku's mother resembles Bakha's father, since both are reactionaries and incurable fatalists. Rukmani and Mala are grown up sisters of Sohini. Not only characters, but even some incidents in the two novels bear close resemblance. For instance, the kick that Bhikhu gets from Sajnu for soiling the brass cup is no less humiliating than the slap dealt on Bakha' face by a passerby for polluting him by an accidental touch. In spite of all these similarities - even 'duplications' if one desires to call them so - it needs to be recognised that The Road is in a way sequel to Untouchable. It is easy to comprehend this point when we see that Bhikhu has travelled much farther than Bakha along the road of struggle. Whereas Bakha has gained an awareness of his miserable social position and only a vague idea of some possible way out, Bhikhu, in addition to all this, is already treading towards his goal. In fact, he achieves it in a sense: the road is built at last. In this,
perhaps, lies the significance of *The Road*. It depicts how changing times have effected a change even though very small in the position of untouchables. Even the stubbornly orthodox Thakur Singh eventually relents when he finds that Dhooli Singh has succeeded in building the road in spite of him, and his pride. Though *The Road* illustrates all the tenets of humanism which inform untouchables also, it needs to be admitted that it is not much of an artistic success. The main reason for this seems to be that the character of the hero in *The Road* is not as fully realised as his counterpart untouchables. Bakha in *Untouchable* remains, throughout he novel, the central figure and he claims our sympathy all through. But Bhikhu supposed to be the central character in *The Road* fails to emerge as the hero, because all the zeal he has is derived from another character Dhooli Singh, who actually appears to usurp the central position in the novel. Whereas all of Bakha’s actions are motivated by his own experiences, Bhikhu’s actions are mostly prompted by Dhooli Singh. Therefore, Anand does not fully succeed in touching the chords of our sympathy for this unfortunate boy. Obviously, he looks more like a contrivance than like a full-blooded character. As a result, the impression that one gets of the novel is that it is fabricated by Anand just to prove a thesis very near to his heart. In fact, the book is perhaps a typical
example of a novel wherein the novelists philosophy and art do at best co-exist.

Bhiku in the very beginning of the novel asks his mother:

'Ma, they have never allowed us to enter the temple, the boy said and they will not yet you do so today? As a reply to this question, Bhiku's mother says "leave them even if they hate you, Love them as Lord Krishna loved the whole world. Love the old and the young. Love the cattle as Shyam, the God of Brindavan loved the cows, love everyone and everything ... then through our good dees shall we rise from our low caste and be born into a higher caste ...."29

Sanju, son of the landlord Thakur Singh, and Dayaram, Mahesh, Ram Nivas, friends of Bhiku, objected to Bhiku and his mother Laxmi going to the temple. At this time Bhiku protests by saying: 'Don't bar my way! Bhiku said firmly, his face reddening. They had played together and often touched each other. And he had touched the temple walls in their games 'son we are at fault' she said, 'join hands to them all and obey them. Don't fight' ... and she turned to the superior ones, saying; 'Have pity on Bhiku. He is a hot headed boy! ... and we will not go to the temple if you think we will pollute it ...!'
'Ma what are you saying', Bhiku protested 'son, we are chamars', she tried to persuade him. 'And they are twice born!'  

Landlord Thakur Singh started scolding them saying: 'Wait both of you, thieves of daylight! This village was a trust reposed in my family by the Gods. And you have defiled it by robbing the stone from the quarry...'

Mulk Raj Anand makes it clear in the novel: 'The caste - Hindus objected to the handling and breaking of stones for road-making; not only because they did not want to touch the stones quarried by the untouchables, but because they resented the untouchables, getting money by working on Government jobs like installation of pylons for electric wires. The superior one did not want to pool their labour with the low caste the low caste ones. They had always allowed the untouchables to work on the land in return for grain; and the earth had kept them together; but the togetherness had now been lost because money wages had come in.'

Landlord Thakur Singh says: 'Today they are taking the bread out of all mouths. By breaking the stones with the help of Dhooli Singh, they hope to ingratiate themselves with the Sarkar and earn money so that they can buy the status of the twice born. Already
they have more money than is good for them. And we have less and less ...'

Landlord Dhooli Singh said: 'How these chamar boys are earning wages and walking on the heart of our whole caste brotherhood. Do you realise that you will have to marry your daughter to a chamar and your son to a sweeper woman - if you persist in this course ... chamar boys had no land and work for only four months of the year. Landlord Thakur Singh is planning with the priest, Pandit Surajmani says; "Panditaji that the Dhooli Singh's hookah and water can be cut! And as for those chamars, they are living in huts built on a plot which our family has given to them in this village. They can be asked to go. Let Dhooli Singh and the Sarkar find them houses elsewhere, out of the village!..."'

Priest Surajmani says: "These people are condemned by their karma to work out their doom among the flies and the dust of their huts. The reck of their thatched roofs, and the stifling heat, is punishment enough for them ... And our people were wrong in openly refusing to break the stones touched by the Harijans. It is easier for you to flee out of fire than for them to escape from their bad deeds. Always they will remain tainted by their past deeds, but you are twice born, now a purificatory ceremony is necessary. And
the shadow of the evil stars that is on your family can only be cured by a special puja."

The callous priest wants to prevent the low caste people from entering the temple: 'And people suffer enough for the guilts of the past. To be sure, they ought to suffer before they can rise to a higher caste in the next life or recognise the divine. The temple teaches them Dharma. They cannot enter the house of God. I will never allow them there. But they can make dry offerings for the preservation of the Dharma, which may emancipate them ... Their women are devoted and give what little they can ... the calm of this village, and the progress of all the souls depends on us. Any foolish act on our part will bring the end of Kali Yuga nearer - which will recoil on those whose stars are in collision.'

Superstitious belief among the villagers seems very foolish. Mother of Bhikhu is praying to Goddess Kalimai to protect her son and the people of her brotherhood. Goddess seemed to have been transformed, into the body of a person, so it was said and believed that the Goddess was answering back: 'I will burn you all up as I have singed those birds. You must suffer for defying the twice born! And I will consume you until your souls descend from the ashes to the bowels of the earth, these to undergo the just punishment for the misdeeds of your son and the other boys. And when you have
suffered enough, been bitten by scorpions and snakes, tortured with red hot irons by the demons and crushed in oil mills. I will come like a dark angel and beckon your souls to rise like ghosts, who will become jinns to wander around the village, bereft and hungry and accursed for ever ...'37

Dhooli Singh's son along with friends had burnt the huts of untouchables, Dhooli realising the mistake committed by his son, he invites the untouchables to come and take the things from his house: 'Come, come my sons and daughters, come, all is yours. I will not need to go to the Ganga to wash my sins ... Here, come and take what you have lost ! ... For the boys there is nothing - but for the woman there is enough .'38

Thakur Singh is not happy with the laws, which aim at the upliftment of downtrodden people says: 'Son, this Sarkar is for the low ones, not for us landlords ... All over Delhi town, they do nothing else but discuss the constitution and how the Harijans must be protected against the higher castes. In former days conversation in the trains and cook shops turned on the rains and drought and work ... But, today, the low ones sit bloated and yawn, because in this evil Kali Yug, men do not believe in God, or their betters ... Good! - their houses were burnt down by the wrath of the humans !
And now one day, lightening will strike the whole race of chamars and outcastes ..."\(^{39}\)

Bhiku was thirsty, so he went to Thakur Singh's house to ask for water. 'Who is there?' a heavy voice came from the inner barn. 'I am Bhiku - Harijan!' he answered, 'I would like a drink of water'.\(^{40}\)

Rukmani gave water to Bhiku in a brass cup, Sanju, the son of Thakur Singh objected to it, rushed up and kicked the brass cup out of Bhiku's hand, sending it flying into the hall, the water covering the face of the untouchable like the sweat of hard labour. 'How can you accept the brass cup and soil it forever! Have you no thought of your status? 'I forgot' mumbled Bhiku, 'could you not have poured the water onto his palms fool!' Sanju shouted at his sister. 'Hai we are undone!' Said Sanju's mother, emerging from her barn. 'Our whole house will have to be purified' mourned Sanju ... 'He will be hounded out of the village like a mad dog - soiling the cup!' Bhikhu's hands went up. He measured up to Sanju and felt himself superior to the landlord's son: 'As you have never worked in your life, you don't know what it is to be thirsty?'\(^{41}\)

Bhiku, with a ray of hope for the better future for his fellow beings takes the road, which is newly built, to Delhi. He wiped the
smear of blood from his torn lip, turned round deliberately, swallowed his spittle and walked out of the hall. He did not go towards home. Instinctively he went in the direction of the road he had helped to build. And in his soul he took the direction, out of the village, towards Gurgaon, which was the way to Delhi town, capital of Hindustan, where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste..." \(^{42}\)

However, both *Untouchable* and *The Road* are significant novels in so far as they reveal some of the most significant tenets of Anand's humanism. They are social documents, no doubt. But they are much more than these. They reveal the optimistic humanism of Anand; he suggests that the untouchables kept slavish and condemned for centuries deserve a better deal, and this is possible only if men give up the age-old beliefs in caste and karma and spread the message of love and tenderness - and, of course, practise these values conscientiously.

Anand's characters are not defeatists. They fulfill their roles fully cognizant of the numerous constraints, without camouflage or idealism. The struggle for survival keeps them so hopelessly engaged that ideological or conceptual sophistication seems an unreal expectation from them. They nevertheless remain sensitive to their surroundings and highlight the questionable. It is in their
awareness of their fundamental rights as human beings and their refusal to acquiesce in injustice and repression that the foundations of radical culture are laid.

Anand has chosen to move beyond the middle class milieu and strike hard at the roots of the prevalent structure in Indian society. He is conscious of his commitment to resurrect human dignity, a prelude to genuine democracy in India democracy in all its aspects - social, political and economic. Anand's aesthetic political criticism is thus a constant reminder of the need of ensuring freedom and dignity to those who have long been denied it.

Of Anand's novel *Old Woman and the Cow* [1960] Premila Paul says: 'The woman in Anand's work is in an important sense at the heart of its thematic concern, since she becomes the focus of his predominant concerns such as deprivation, dispossession, debasement, discrimination and exploitation which have dehumanised if not depersonalised man himself. In several novels of his, whether woman occupies the centre of the stage or not her abject condition serves as a metaphor for suppression, sacrifice, enslavement and servility which inform the dramatic action. Anand's ideal of womanhood, traditionalist in character centres on her being emancipated from restraints imposed on her by the
prevalent socio-political institutions in order that she may seek self-actualisation if not self-fulfillment'.

The theme of *Old Woman and the Cow* is the exploitation of woman in the society. How she is suppressed, considered a mere commodity, an inferior chattel of her husband, her lord and master, who must silently suffer every possible humiliation, misery and heart-break, comes out vividly in this novel. The novel is a brilliant satire on mores and morals. The heroine Gouri, though suffers the humiliation, finds her own way out and wins in the battle of life.

It is true that Anand presents fewer women than men in his novels. Yet his novels do not suffer from a dearth of a variety of women characters. In many novels, Anand shows how motherhood bestows a peculiar dignity on woman and he pays a glorious tribute to the motherly love. The remarkable success of *Old Woman and the Cow* is mainly due to Gouri, its central characters. Anand delineates here the process of the emergence of modern Indian women - a meek, docile, cow like rustic woman suffers, strives and emerges an awakened woman. The negation of the Sita myth is a highly effective device that sets her high above the traditional cadre of women. Anand is aware of the dormant potential of woman.
While stressing the need for the emancipation of women, he also suggests that the women themselves should break the ties that bind them to the hearth, and boldly venture out into different activities. The familiar types of women characters like doting mothers, loving sisters, devoted wives, nagging shrews, alluring courtesans, perverted women, etc., are relegated to the background as contributory characters whereas the non-conformist women are given full realisation in his novels: 'He brings out well how the strains of the new situation modify, warp or transmute into yet finer forms the traditional responses of the women.'

*Untouchable* was Anand’s first attempt at novel-writing and it proved to be a great success. This novel shows how Anand sympathises with the underdog in India and his humanitarian and reformist zeal because evidently it was written by him to awaken the conscience of the upper castes in the country.

K.R. Srinivas Iyengar speaks of the novel’s photographic fidelity that convinces us at once through it also overwhelms us by its cumulative ferocity of detail. 'Mulk Raj Anand occupies one of the topmost positions in Indo-Anglian literature; and his rank among the novelists is very high indeed. His novels have won acclaim not only from critics in India but also from foreign critics. In his own country, he is a household name as a novelist. Anybody
who knows anything about Indo-Anglian fiction will at once mention *Untouchable* and 'Coolie' when M.R. Anand's name is mentioned even casually. He is undoubtedly one of the brightest stars in the literary firmament in India.  

Anand is famous chiefly as a writer of sociological novels. His novels deal with some of the most glaring social evils which include untouchability and the exploitation of labour. Anand's pictures of poverty and of the wretchedness and misery caused by poverty are most vivid and most poignant. By vividly and forcefully describing the sufferings of the people, Anand appears before us as an uncompromising critic of the whole class of the perpetrators of injustice and cruelty. Every novel of his seems to have been designed by him to arouse the social conscience. There is hardly any ugly or depressing aspect of Indian social life, which has not been attacked by Anand in his novels. He is the leading practitioner in India of the novel of protest. His novels aim at denouncing social evils of all kinds and it is this aspect of his fiction which has won him the esteem and admiration of the novel-reading public in India. In this connection, G.S. Balram Gupta says that Anand has always firmly believed in the role of the writer as a crusader in the cause of humanity, and that Anand is no spinner of fairy tales for mere amusement or fabricator of escapist literature.
In the same connection Gillan Packham says that Anand’s early work is primarily a literature of protest and that he shows a deep sympathy for the working classes in his descriptions of the daily life of the oppressed. The Marxist creed, says the same critic, appealed to Anand because it offered an explanation of and a solution to the sufferings of his fellowmen. Pointing out this aspect of Anand’s fiction, Suresh Nath says that Anand’s creative writings are doubtless soft worded with the element of protest, which is inseparably connected, with his view of life. The novels Untouchable and the Coolie are emphatically novels of protest as are Anand’s subsequent novels too.

Mulk Raj Anand is a great creator and delineator of characters. He is able to infuse life into all the characters who figure in his novels; and the number and variety of characters in his novels is multitudinous, reminding us of Charles Dickens. One reason for this realistic portrayal of characters is that most of the persons in his novels were modelled on individuals whom he had actually known in his life. Some of the characters such as Bakha in Untouchable were modelled on individuals whom he had known intimately. As Anand himself says: ‘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 writings. They were not mere phantoms though my imagination did a great deal to transform them. As Anand specializes in exposing social evils in Indian life of the past and the present, it is logical for him to portray his heroes and rebels who become alienated from their environment because of their radical and revolutionary views. Panchi in the Old Woman and the Cow is for instance, depicted as a completely alienated individual. The German critic, Dieter Riemenschneider, points out that Panchi is the only example of a member of the dispossessed classes in whom Anand shows the full effects of alienation on a man’s mind.

Commenting on Anand’s qualities as a novelist, K.R. Srinivas Iyengar writes: ‘As a writer of fiction, Anand’s notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actuality. He is a veritable Dickens for describing the inequities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy of Anand’s early novels at least it can be said that they come fresh from contact with and blood of everyday existence. He has no labourious psychological or ideological preoccupations, and he is content to let his characters
live and speak and act. In his work there are not merely sentimental portraits, and he generally presents his characters with a lively curiosity and also a deep compassion.\textsuperscript{47}

Harish Raizada writes, 'What gives Mulk Raj Anand a distinctive place in the Indo-Anglian fiction is the high value he attaches to his vocation as a writer. He considers the writer a prophet of his age and the true conscience of society and believes in the high ideological content and social significance of his works. The novel for him is not a mere a fantasy or a fairly tale, wholly and solely a means of relaxation, a harmless opiate for vacant hours and valiant minds. It is a vehicle for conveying the considered opinions of a writer with the deliberate object of educating people and converting them to his opinions.'\textsuperscript{48}

Mulk Raj Anand is a humanist in literature if ever there was one. Briefly and simply stated, a humanist is a lover of humanity, a champion of the rights of human beings, a castigator of tyrants, exploiters and evil-doers and a supporter of all movements and all campaigns which aim at the amelioration of conditions of life for human beings and at the eradication of all evils which destroy human happiness and retard the progress of individuals and of mankind at large. However, being a cultured person, a humanist does not become rabid or fanatical or unbalanced in his opposition
to evil and injustice. A true humanist may become angry or
indignant or even furious but he does not lose the equilibrium of his
mind and he does not lose his composure. Nor does he, if he is a
literary artist, allow himself to become a mere propagandist because
propaganda comes into conflict with the aesthetic quality of
literature and thereby undermines it. Now Anand is not a write of
the ivory tower category or of the escapist kind. He has a mission
in the writing of his novels and a purpose beyond mere-self-
expression and beyond merely holding a mirror to life; and this is
the most conspicuous feature of his fiction and also the most lofty
aspect of it.

Humanism may be regarded as Anand’s very religion. He
appears in his fiction as the champion of the suffering humanity. In
novel after novel, he has given expression to his compassion for
mankind through his sympathetic portrayals of the victims of
injustice and persecution. His commitment to humanism constitutes
the very foundation on which his novels were built. In his very first
novel namely, Untouchable Anand appears as a censor of Hindu
society which regards a particular class of human beings as
untouchables. Bakha, the sweeper-boy in his noel has been
portrayed with great sympathy so as to arouse in the readers a
strong resentment against untouchability. Bakha despite his foolish
desire to become a kind of Sahib, represents the entire class of untouchables who had for ages been treated as worse than animals. It is through the humanism of men like Gandhi and Anand, a kind of awareness and a ray of hope emerged among the downtrodden people.

Anand’s central preoccupation, says K.K. Sharma, is humanism. Anand regards art and literature, ‘as the instruments of humanism’. The creative artist should have ardent love for human beings, especially the downtrodden and should after them his own exuberant passion by sharing with them, ‘the burning and melting’ which is an intrinsic aspect of life at its intensest. Anand’s humanism was the outcome of the synthesis of the best in Asia and Europe and an amalgam of the best of Asiatic and European knowledge and traditions.

Mulk Raj Anand is definitely a novelist in the Dickensian tradition, although Anand has had the benefit of certain progressive movements which had not been dreamed of in Dickens’s day. Anand’s passion and compassion for humanity are boundless; and it is not really necessary for us to assign any doctrinal labels to it, though we must acknowledge his debt to such writers and thinkers as Lowes Dickenson, E.M. Forster, Eric Gill and M.N. Roy.
Mulk Raj Anand described his philosophy as humanism meaning that he was an upholder and champion of the rights of human beings and a campaigner for the welfare of mankind. His novels clearly show his passionate love for his fellow human beings though it has to be admitted that in these novels his attention is confined to the people of his own country. The limited scope of his novels did not allow Anand to take cognizance of the world as a whole or of mankind at large. His humanism shows itself in his deep involvement with the people of his own country and with the fervent sympathy, which he feels for the downtrodden and oppressed sections of Indian society. In novel after novel he had given a fictional expression to his philosophy of humanism or his love for, and sympathy with, the suffering millions of India. In this context the first three novels of Anand stand in a class by themselves. These three novels give us a comprehensive picture of the miserable life led by the humble, unfortunate and disinherited classes of people in this country.

There can be, no doubt, then, that Anand has a definite social and moral aim in the writing of his novels. Anand does not believe that an artist should live in an ivory tower and should indulge in fanciful dreams about the joys and delights of human existence. Anand is no believer in art for art's sake. He is a believer in using
art as a vehicle for the advancement and progress of human society. This being the case, it is quite possible for an author of his kind to become a preacher or at least a propagandist in his work. There can be no doubt that Anand's intentions as an author is didactic. He certainly wishes to raise the moral tone of society, to make the upper classes conscious of their responsibilities, and to enlighten the ill-treated and oppressed sections of society with regard to their rights. Social awakening and social reform are certainly among Anand's leading aims in writing his novels. But the question with which we are concerned is whether Anand's didactic intentions obtrude upon his art in such a way as to lower the quality of his art they do not.

Anand deserves to be compared with Charles Dickens whose novels also aimed at bringing about social reforms in his country and are yet enjoyable because of their plot-interest, their characterization, and their humour. Anand does not, of course, possess the same genius for comedy but he is by no means a preacher or a propagandist. He maintains a certain detachment from the pictures of contemporary life which he gives us in his novels; and he wants us to draw our own lessons from those pictures. As we go through his novels which have been we feel strongly drawn towards their protagonists, and we begin to feel the
urgent need of an improvement in the conditions of the life of sweepers, coolies, workers on tea-estates, and of the labouring classes in general.

Anand does not stop merely with the portrayal of human problems. As a responsible artist he suggests various solutions to the different problems carefully refraining from imposition of any kind. Anand is certain that the cause of all human misery is 'Man's inhumanity to man'. A careful study of Anand's novels reveals to us his vision of life, his masterly treatment of social evils and the solutions that he suggests for all the problems. His approach is always positive.
References


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