1.1. **The Term- Childhood**

The term childhood is non-specific and can imply a varying range of years in human development. It is the age span ranging from birth to adolescence. Biologically it refers to the period between infancy and adulthood. Some consider that it ends at adolescence. Developmental stages of childhood can be divided into three stages: The first is early childhood which follows the infancy stage and begins with toddlerhood when the child begins speaking or taking steps independently. The toddlerhood ends around age three when the child becomes less dependent on parental assistance for basic needs. This phase continues approximately through years seven or eight. According to *the National Association for the Education of Young Children* early childhood spans the human life from birth to age eight. At this stage child is learning through observing, experimenting and communicating with others. Adults supervise and support the development process of the child which then will lead to the child’s autonomy and during this stage; a strong emotional bond is created between the child and the care providers. The middle childhood begins at around age seven or eight, approximating primary school age and ends around puberty, which typically marks the beginning of adolescence. In this period children are attending school, thus developing socially and mentally, they are at a stage where they make a new friends and gain new schools which will enable them to become more independent and enhance their individuality. The third phase is adolescence which is usually determined by the onset of puberty. However, puberty may also begin in pre-adolescence. The onset of adolescent brings various physical, psychological and behavioral changes in the child. (Headly).

It has been argued that childhood is not a natural phenomenon but a creation of society. Philippe Aries, an important French medievalist and historian, pointed this out in his book *Centuries of Childhood*. This theme was taken up by Cunningham in his book *Invention of Childhood* (2006) which looks at the historical aspects of childhood from the Middle Ages to what he refers to as the post war period of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. During the 1600s the concept of childhood began to emerge in Europe. Adults saw children as separate beings,
innocent and in need of protection and training by the adults around them. The English philosopher John Lock was particularly influential in defining this new attitude towards children especially with regard to his theory of tabula rasa, which considered the mind at birth to be ‘a blank slate’. A corollary of this doctrine was that the mind of the child was born blank and that was the duty of the parents to imbue the child with correct notions. The modern notion of childhood with its own autonomy and goals began to emerge during the Enlightenment and the Romantic period that followed it. Jean Jacques Rousseau formulated the romantic attitude towards children in his famous 1762 novel Emile: Or, On Education. Building on the ideas of John Lock and other 17th century thinkers, Rousseau described childhood as a brief period of sanctuary before people encounter the perils and hardships of adulthood. Sir Joshua Reynolds’s extensive children portrait clearly demonstrates the new enlightened attitude toward young children. His 1788 painting The Age of Innocence emphasizes the innocence and natural grace of the posing child and soon become a public favorite.

The entire childhood images are clearly presented in the form of words usually known as children’s literature. The various images of children are visible in children’s literature. Children’s literature or juvenile literature includes stories, books and poems that are enjoyed by children. Comments on children’s literature are given in The New Encyclopedia Britannica as: Children’s literature is the body of the written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or to instruct young people. The genre encompasses a wide range of works, from acknowledged classics of world literature to picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children to fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folksongs, and other orally transmitted materials. It is emerged as distinct and independent form only in second half of the 18th century. Its late development may be traced to both economic and social factors. Before modern times children were widely regarded as simply diminutive or miniature adults, and literature shaped to their unique needs and level of understanding was not thought to be necessary. Before the invention of the printing, the making of books was simply too expensive and
time-consuming to be used for purpose involving any children other than instructing them. Finally it was only with attainment of literacy by large numbers of people and the spread of mass education that there formed a market large enough to economically justify the creation and distribution of original works written especially for young people.

One of the first printed works of children’s literature was the Moravian educator Comenius’ *Orbis Sensualism Pictus* (1658) ‘The World of Pictures’). A teaching device that was also the first picture book for children. It embodied a novel insight; children’s reading should be of special order because children are not scaled-down adults. A work considered to be the first novel written especially for children, *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* appeared in 1765. One of the earliest and most enduring classics of children’s literature is the collection of nursery rhymes known as *mother*, the first English edition of which appeared in 1791. From these humble beginnings children’s literature blossomed in the 19th century, particularly in England and The United States, into a rich and complex genre serving children of all ages, from toddlers to adolescents. Children’s literature now embraces the whole context of the child’s imaginative world and that of his daily environment as well as certain ideas and sentiments characteristic of it. (Children’s literature 211). One can trace children’s literature back to stories and songs, part of a wider oral tradition that adult shared with children before publishing existed. The development of early children’s literature, before printing was invented, is difficult to trace. Even after printing became widespread, many classical children’s tales were originally created for adults and later adopted for a young audience. Since 1400s, a large quantity of literature, often with a moral or religious message has been aimed specifically at children. The late 19th and 20th centuries became known as ‘the Golden Age of Children’s Literature’; as this period included the publication of many books acknowledged today as classics. (Wikipedia. *Children’s literature*).

Here in this research an attempt is made how both Charles Dickens and Anand gave their contribution in the creation of children’s literature. Though both belong to the different countries, different surroundings but their literature has the
common touch in terms of delineating the images of childhood. With the onset of the industrialization in England, a growing divergence between high-minded romantic ideals of childhood and the reality of the growing magnitude of child exploitation in the workplace became increasingly apparent.

Before exploring the images of children, it is very crucial to get acquainted with social and literary milieu of both the novelists. As C. P. Verghese states in his book that:

> Literature is a social product and always reflects the spirit of the age. The works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries unmistakably breathe the spirit of the age, and that spirit with which the literature of the Victorian era is imbued. A study of Victorian literature convinces us that it can only be the product of humanitarianism, democracy, progress of science and the consequent conflicts in beliefs and the struggle between materialism and idealism. Taine, the French critic, has said that literature is the product of the race (i.e. the traditional and hereditary characteristics of a people), the milieu (i.e. the physical environment, the climate, the political and social conditions of a people), and the moment (i.e. the spirit of the age). (Verghese 09).

Any writer gets influenced by his/her family, social, political or internal-external issues. Charles Dickens belongs to the Victorian period. He is a true representative of the period. While studying his novels from child’s point of view, the readers can get the clear cut idea of the period and its impact on the lives of children.

### 1.1.1 The Victorian Age temper and Children

In the late 1700s and early 1800s; power driven machines replaced hand labor for the making of most manufactured items. Factories began to spring up everywhere, first in England and then in the United States. The owners of these factories found a new source of labor to run their machines - children. Operating the power driven machines did not require adult strength and children could be hired more cheaply than adults. By the mid-1800s, child labor was a major
problem. It came into light only because of Industrial revolution. Children had always worked, especially in farming. But factory work was hard. A child with a factory job might work 12 to 18 hours a day, six days a week to earn a dollar. Many children began working before the age of 7. The atmosphere where they worked was damp, dark and dirty. Such atmosphere is clearly shown by Charles Dickens in almost all his novels.

The Victorian age is essentially a period of peace and prosperity for England. Peace brought material advancement and industrial progress in the country. The industrial revolution during this age transformed the agrarian economy of England into an industrial economy. Mills and factories were established at important places, and the whole of England hummed with the rattle of looms and booms of weaving machines. Industrial advancement created social unrest and economic distress among the masses. Great Britain made tremendous progress in cotton goods production, iron and steel implements and, agricultural equipment. London, Lancaster, Lancashire and Manchester became important centers of production and much of the rural population migrated to the cities. New means of communication such as the railways and the ocean steamers enabled England to export of finished goods to countries like India, France, Australia, USA and Canada. Australia, Canada and India were her colonies and England consumed their raw produce and supplied them with the finished product. She thus found an outlet for her manufactured articles. England became the focal point of the world and she proudly displayed her wealth before the nations. But England‘s prosperity was achieved at the cost of great human suffering. Men, women and children employed in the factories worked under inhuman conditions for nearly fifteen hours a day. They were exposed to machinery which was a constant threat to their lives. Earlier in feudalism production was purely for subsistence, catering to the demands of the local people. But it was not so in capitalism where new avenues were explored and colonies were established. The sudden decay of cottage industries owing to the invention of new machines was of profound consequence to the life of the poor.
In the closing years of the eighteenth century and from nineteenth century onwards the theory of laissez-faire was widely advocated in England. Hence any interference by Government in commerce and industry was met with stiff opposition by the industrialists. The economics disparity between the have-nots existed in England even earlier, but what made the situation more glaring was the fact that industrialization had benefited the upper and middle class in the cities only.

The rising middle class who owned the means of production were in favor of free trade. The need for employment compelled the workers to leave their villages and come to towns to work in factories. This created sense of cultural and economic restlessness among the workers. Added to this was the fact that a worker was a free man in name only-for all practical purposes; he was a wage slave. The owner of the means of production had the freedom to determine wages, but the laborer, who owned the instrument of production-his hands, was not allowed to sell his labor at the price he wished. The workers had no one to turn to have their grievances readdressed because the anti-combination of laws of 1799 prevented the workers from forming unions.

The demand for manufactured goods increased resulting in a rise in the number of factories. Unscrupulous manufactures began to employ even minors in order to meet the rising demand. Parents of these children in order to gain more money to meet their necessities, allowed their children to be exploited. There were no fixed working hours for them. E. L. Woodword gives information about the various acts passed during the Victorian period that helped the working children:

In 1802 the factory Act limited the daily working hours to a maximum of twelve. In 1819 Parliament passed another Factory Act which forbade the employment of the children under nine, but this act applied only to the textile mills. (Woodword 148-55).
Meanwhile, production went on increasing as new machines came into existence. The common worker was unable to keep pace with the demands for increased industrialization. The workers not only lost their individuality and became mere ‘hands’ turning the machines, but they also had to fight against starvation and the insanitary conditions of their surroundings. Moreover, the worker did not have the purchasing power to buy the goods that he produced. Over-production led to economic depression, the worker found that he was starving amidst plenty.

To bring amelioration in the lives of the common men many writers came forward. Many writers were conscious especially about the exploitation of children. Writers like Charles Dickens, Disraeli and Mrs. Gaskell appealed for reforms which would improve the social and economic condition of the working class and their children. Commissions of inquiry focused attention on the miserable conditions of the children, women and men employed in the mines, mills and factories and their reports aroused public indignation. Initially parliament was unable to pass a series of reforms because of stiff opposition from industrialists. But when public opinion was roused after the inquiry commission reports, parliament was able to pass a series of reforms aimed at alleviate the conditions of the poor. In 1824 the workers were allowed to form unions by the combination laws but the effectiveness of the act was lost because strikes were banned. (Woodword 608-09). This act launched the labor movement in Britain. Henceforth unions focused on the plight of the workers and made them more aware of their rights.

1.1.2 Call for Social Reforms

Philanthropists, religious leaders, doctors, journalists and artists all campaigned to improve the lives of the poor children. In 1840, Lord Ashley helped set up the Children’s Employment Commission which published parliamentary reports on conditions in mines and collieries. These reports inspired poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The result is that she composed the protest poem, *The Cry of the Children* (1844). Famous child savors like Mary Carpentar and Dr. Thomas Bernardo taught in ragged schools before opening their own
institutions for destitute youths. Children’s authors often mind their belief in the perfect purity of the young. Artists like Charles West Cope and John Everett Millais produced dozens of domestic genre paintings with titles like “The First Music lesson” (1863) and “My First Sermon” which portray the child as a bastion of simplicity, innocence and playfulness. (<http://www.representingchildhood). All these are god-gifted images of children reflected in their art.

To bring about positive social change among the working class; the first Reform Bill was passed in 1832 amidst great excitement. It extended the franchise to towns such as Birmingham and Manchester and disenfranchised some of the pocket and rotten boroughs. In 1833 Parliament passed another Factory Act which forbade the employment of children under nine in factories. Factory Inspectors would inspect factories and enforce regulations. Simultaneously, Parliament passed a bill in 1833 which allocated £20,000 for school building purposes. This was done with a view to promoting education among the masses. In 1834 Robert Owen (1771-1858) the Labor Movement leader, formed ‘The Grand National Consolidated Trade Union’ to fight on behalf of the workers. In 1836 William Lovett (1800-1877) founded the ‘London Working Men’s Association’. It was an effort to forge unity amongst the workers. A six-point demand called the ‘Peoples Charter’ was published in 1838–thus Chartism came into being. Having taken steps towards enforcement of factory regulations, the government in 1842 passed the Mines Acts which prohibited the employment of the women and girls underground and, set an age limit of ten to the employment of boys. The Factory Act of 1844 stipulated that all exposed machinery should be fenced. It gave a twelve-hour day to women and secured a day of six and half hours for children between eight and thirteen years. When the factory Act of 1847 was passed, the workers were much relieved because it gave them a ten-hour schedule and secured Saturday as a half holiday for them. (Woodword 80-87).

Meanwhile Karl Marx and Frederick Engels published the Communist Manifesto in 1848 which called for revolutionary changes in society. They predicted the rise of the working class who would then begin to own and control
the means of production which were until then centered in the hands of a privileged few. Marx aimed at collective control and wanted the creation of a classless society. On the other hand, the ‘Utilitarians’ (the name was given by John Stuart Mill) called for individual freedom and liberty. Their leader Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) applied scientific principles to nearly every branch of human activity—legislation, philosophy, human behavior, education and law. Utility was the yardstick of measurement for every action. In 1789 Bentham published his ‘Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation’ wherein he stated that the action of a person should provide ‘maximum pleasure’ and ‘minimum pain’. (Jeremy 33-34). The interests of the state and individual should be compatible and both should work to promote pleasure and reduce pain. Bentham was aware that money was the pivot around which society rotated and it was the most powerful motive behind all human action. Individualism or laissez-faire enabled a person to indentify his area of interest in society.

As against the Utilitarian, there were the Humanitarians upholding passions, feeling and affection. Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin were among the two most to articulate humanitarians of the Victorian age and Charles Dickens was indeed influenced by them. Carlyle was extremely religious and felt that industrialization had created a spiritual vacuum in the lives of people. In his essay ‘Signs of the Times’ (1829) he denounced Bentham’s theory of the ‘greatest of the greatest number’. In another essay ‘Chartism’ (1830) Carlyle suggested that parliament should discuss the condition of the working class. He disapproved of statistical reports because he believed that they could not analyze the delicate relationship between employer and employee. He was also of the opinion that individualism or laissez-faire was not ‘applicable’ to England. The reason was that the common man in England was not sufficiently educated to identify his area of interest. Both Carlyle and Ruskin valued human qualities and did not favor utilitarian doctrines much because they felt that these made man selfish and materialistic. Apart from the utilitarian and the humanitarians there were a group of people who were engaged in improving the living condition of the workers. Edwin Chadwisck, the social reformer, fought for the social and economic
improvement of the working class. In 1842 he published the report on health of Towns and the facts published therein sent shock waves throughout England. Initially it seems that the factory owners did not realize that the development of workers would be in their own interests. It was only when diseases kept recurring and endangered the lives of the manufactures and their families that health and sanitary problems were looked into. The manufactures realized that if the workers were allowed to sink into the morass of economic stagnation, they would ultimately and inevitably drag the developing industrial economy down with them. In 1848 the first Public Health Act was passed and the General Board of Health was set up. Public health was now a national concern and even Prince Albert began to take personal interest in improving the conditions of the poor.

The British government began to take keen interest in the welfare of the people. In 1838 a committee of the Privy Council was set up to inspect schools which had received grants and to suggest measures for improvement with Dr. Kay Shuttleworth as its secretary who did much to improve the educational system. In 1846 the pupil-teacher system was established by the committee of the Privy Council. The pupil-teachers after being apprenticed to a school for five years proceeded to a training college from where they emerged as teachers crammed with useful and practical knowledge. In 1856 Prince Albert suggested that the students should be instructed in science and arts. In 1851 when Mathew Arnold was appointed Inspectors of Schools, he stressed the importance of classical learning and did much to revive the study of classics in England. His classical upbringing influenced the education system of England. Education was a sensitive issue in nineteenth-century England and the government handled the educational problems with great care. In 1856 a Department of Education was set up and a minister was appointed to head it. Important measures were being taken and these culminated in the Educational Act of 1870. Thence free compulsory education to all children below the age of fourteen years became mandatory.

The Government was ceaselessly trying to bring improvement in the life of people and hence the period from 1832 onwards saw a series of acts passed for
their welfare. Foundling hospitals had been established, and societies for taking distressed boys out of the street and educating them. Laws were passed restricting the labor of women and children. The slave trade, and afterward slavery was abolished. Prisons were becoming penitentiaries, and the penal code was reformed. The elective franchise was enlarged. Corn Laws were repealed. Parliament appropriated money for public education, and standard literature was published in cheap form. (Cross 181).

1.1.3 Children in Victorian literature and Role of Charles Dickens

The nineteenth century saw many momentous changes in English society and life which in turn had a tremendous impact on literature. The period was a golden age of children’s literature in which some of the key texts were written which established the conventions of several important genres. (For eg. the Adventure story). A wave of social unrest swept over England, and the ulcers of this apparently brought to the notice by writers like Dickens, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Arnold. (Mundra 02). As the social reformers were interested in the protection of the children from exploitation; The Victorian writers are credited with inventing childhood, partly via their efforts to stop child labor and the introduction of the compulsory education. As children began to read, literature for young people became a growth industry. They did not only establish writers producing works for children but also a new group of dedicated children’s authors. Writers like Lewis Carroll, R. M. Ballantyne and Anna Sewell wrote mainly for children; although they had an adult following. Other authors such as Anthony Hope and Robert Louis Stevenson wrote mainly for adults, but their adventure novels are now generally classified as for children. School stories flourished: Thomas Hughes’ Tom Brown’s Schooldays and Kipling’s Stalky and Co. are considered as classics.(Singh, Bhupal 25-26)Sara Coleridge’s Phantasmion (1837), Catharine Sinclair’s The Holiday House(1839), Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass. Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre (1847) presents a compelling first person narrative of Victorian female childhood and romantic subjectivity, not written for children, but has become a children’s
classic. George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is a profound account of childhood for adult readers. (Furniss). There are many writers who have contributed for children’s literature.

Besides the above writers there are few writers who painted the dark images of children. There are pages in Godwin’s ‘*Fleetwood*’ which a reader cannot fail to remember the account of the dreary and despairing life of young children in the silk factories of Lyons. Charles Kingsley wrote two social sermons ‘*Yeast*’ and ‘*Alton Lock*’ which are red-hot ingots, hissing with passion and indignation. He believed that labor had great grievances. He also pointed out the moral mistakes of workmen, dwelling particularly on their atheism and unbelief. He stated what seemed to him to be the real attitude of the upper classes toward the downtrodden, and finally announced his programme for bringing about harmony and contentment. While Kingsley was preaching his impassioned sermons to the chartists, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell was depicting scenes in the manufacturing towns. She wrote *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) from personal observation. As the wife of a dissenting minister at Manchester, her visits of charity gave her easy access to the homes of workmen, to neat suburban cottages, and to the cellars of the city, where women and children in darkness and fetid air were dying of typhus and consumption. Another Victorian novelist Francis Milton Trollope showed the picture of industrial conditions and the exploitation of children in *The life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1840). In the novel Mrs. Trollope vents her scorn upon the pity which keeps children at work until midnight on Saturday and summons them to Sunday School at seven in the morning. This novel belongs among the sensational novels which claimed a basis of fact for their extraordinary episodes. It carried on the theme of persecuted children which Dickens had initiated in *Oliver Twist*; it provided a circumstantial background for Mrs. Browning’s *Cry of the Children* and it anticipated the exposures of industrial conditions by Disraeli, Kingsley, and Mrs. Gaskell. (Goodman 367). William Blake’s poem *The Chimney Sweeper*, included in the collection entitled ‘*Songs of Innocence*’ (1798), is a poignant depiction of the wretchedness and abject misery of young and innocent children.
forced to lead lives of extreme suffering and hardship as chimney sweepers. The first stanza of the poem runs like:

When my mother died I was very young
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry “Weep! Weep! Weep! Weep!”

So your chimney I sweep, and in soot I sleep. (Blake 71).

In this poem the poet does not overtly express his anger but points out “the psychological conditioning, heartless repression and exploitation of children in his times.” (Blake 71-72). In England the very young boys were employed to clean narrow chimneys. The children, who faced grave danger every day, were made to live in shockingly deplorable conditions that seriously impaired their health and development. Thus the above writers registered their protest against all kinds of child exploitation of the Victorian period. It will be noteworthy to see Dickens’ contribution in presenting children’s suffering through the medium of literature. It is with Dickens that childhood is established as an important theme in English fiction. Purnima Mehata says regarding the origin of the Victorian fiction on which the concept of childhood is based:

The concept of the child on which the Victorian fiction of pre-adolescence is generally based is essentially derived from Rousseau on the one hand and the romantic poets, Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge on the other. Rousseau is the first serious thinker to give considerable thought to the study of childhood and education. He emphasized that the original nature of the child was innocent, and that childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking and feeling. The romantic concept of the child has corollary that the child’s remarkable qualities are lost as the child grows. (Mehata 67).

Charles Dickens appeared at the scene when England under Queen Victoria (accession 1837) had embarked on an era of external peace and internal prosperity. The selected novels of Charles Dickens belong to the great age of
English expansion in industry and generally in material competence. The life-span of Dickens parallels the growth of industrialization in England. His views and opinions expressed in his novels and letters point to the world he saw and the life he experienced. He lived in a time and an environment in which a full-scale demolition of traditional values was going on, correlativelv with the uprooting and dehumanization of men, women and children by the millions—a process brought about by industrialization, colonial imperialism and the exploitation of the human being as a ‘thing’ an engine or a part of an engine capable of being used for profit. Dickens was not only a writer; he was a critic and social reformer too, and throughout his life he tried to improve the conditions of the poor by writing on social problems like child exploitation, child labor, unemployment, squalid areas and so on. But he was fascinated by the evils he hated, and continued to find in lives and environment of vice and squalor subjects for his pen. By the 1850s he was undisputedly the doyen of English novelists. Through his pen he has put forward the entire picture of Victorian society. Still today his novels appeal to all generation to come only because of the subjects he had taken in his hand. During the suffering period of the lower class Dickens appeared on the literary screen with his many novels carrying the message of treating humans as a human being. His main contribution to the English novel is that he was the first great writer to write the humanitarian novel. Referring to this Cross has observed that:

The humanitarian novel, with which the name of Dickens is preeminently associated after the publication of ‘Pickwick’, is the popular section of an extensive humanitarian literature, and it is the most available record of a deep and far-reaching philanthropic movement, which had its beginning in the eighteenth century and rose to its sentimental culmination some fifty years ago.(Cross181).

Dickens has written almost fourteen novels to his credit. Almost all of his novels are closely associated with the impact of industrialization on the common lives especially children. Such novels will be focused here in brief.
While *Pickwick Papers* was still in progress, Dickens became editor of Bentley’s *Miscellany*, a magazine, for which he began *Oliver Twist* in serial form. In *Oliver Twist* he presented the pathos of innocent childhood and the protest against the abuses of power, especially on the part of governmental institutions in particular the wretched conditions in the workhouse. He showed how poor children like Oliver were condemned to a miserable life while laws framed by the government brought prosperity to the selfish and petty officials like Mr. Bumble. Oliver became an eternal symbol for the innocent but helpless victims. Dickens began the publication of *Nicholas Nickleby* in twenty numbers. This novel exposes the weaknesses of Yorkshire schools and horrible teaching and teachers who were in charge of the young boys. The themes of suffering childhood and oppressive institutions are united in Dotheboys Hall, a composite picture of the Yorkshire schools which Dickens had personally visited. In 1840 Dickens started a miscellany to be called Master Humphrey Clock, which was to be a frame for his next serial *Old Curiosity Shop*. The story of the novel centers round Little Nell and her grandfather who borrows money from Daniel Quilp, a hideous dwarf and a monster of iniquity, in order to retrieve his Old Curiosity Shop. But before anything is done, Nell dies, worn out with her troubles and the grandfather soon follows her. The novel ends on a note of deep pathos. The death scene of Nell is pathetic. Thus Nell is a saintly child whose devotion to her selfish grandfather appeals emotionally to the Victorian mind. This novel is best remembered for the overstrained emotionalism of the death of Little Nell. In his autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* (1849-50), he shows David who is the favorite child of Dickens is shown working in a factory. One of the concerns that Charles Dickens really highlights in his novels is child labor. After working in the boot-blackening factory at the age of twelve, he became aware of the horrific, nonexistent child labor laws of the time. He himself was a child labor; that’s why he could delineate the children’s suffering by making them as central characters. It is already stated how children had long hours of working in unsafe conditions. The novel provides a scathing criticism of the system of teaching in schools run by masters like Creakle and his companions. Mell is ill-treated as he belongs to poor family.
During Dickens’s times the poor were not treated equally. *Hard Times* was published in 1854. It is a satirical exposure of the evils of industrialization and the great misery that follows in the wake of rapid industrialization. The novelist attacks the squalor and misery of the textile town and brings to view the wretched conditions of workers crushed by the iron heels of greedy capitalists. In *Little Dorrit*, published in 1857, exposes the delay in government institutions particularly the circumlocution office and Marshalsea prison. The rigors of prison life are attacked by Dickens in this novel. *Great Expectation* deals with the adventures of a young boy Pip and is one of the gripping novels of Dickens.

In this way, in his novels Dickens illuminates the social problems of Victorian Era in England. With a growing urban and Industrial English Population, Dickens points out the problems inherent with a factory driven economy. The primary victims of this economy are children. His life experiences, especially those during his childhood, compel him to reveal the problems associated with child labor. B. Prasad says in this regard that:

He (Dickens) often incorporates the painful experiences of his youth in London, particularly in *David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations*. In depicting the life of London in the early 19th century, with its swarm of odd characters, he was supreme, and a painter of individual portraits, he is second only to Shakespeare. (Prasad 202).

In a number of his novels, through the images of children he could question the injustices of the social customs. He looks at contemporary life from a child’s point of view. This fact will get clear after studying his three selected novels namely *Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*.

**1.2. Background of Anand**

Before exploring the images of childhood in the selected novels of Anand; one needs to study the background of the writer. His family, education, his participation in freedom struggle and his contact with the well-known social thinkers when he was in London contributed him much directly or indirectly in
writing the novels on the lives of children. When he started writing it was a period of social turmoil. Writers were expected to write on social problems. Mulk Raj Anand is one of them to point out the social evils of his time. To achieve this purpose he chose the children as a means to show the poignancy of social evils. While reading his novels many aspects of his personality come out. Such as: his socialism, humanism, naturalism, art for life’s sake and economic backwardness of the Indian society. Main thing is that all these aspects are closely associated with the lives of children.

1920 is the year of the real beginning of the Indo-Anglian fiction. The novelists were serious about their art. From flirtation with history and romance they turned towards contemporary problems of politics and society. Mulk Raj Anand is the first Indo-Anglian novelist to depict the tragic plight of the underdogs of Indian society writes realistically in his fiction about the doomed lives of the down-trodden and oppressed such as a sweeper, coolie, a peasant, a tea-plantation laborer, a village chamar etc. who are all agonized victims of caste system, capitalistic exploitation, poverty, class- hatred, race-hatred and inhuman cruelty. In novel after novel he has ripped open the ugly sores of Indian society with a view to bring amelioration in their life. Thus his novels are deeply rooted in his real life observations, which in turn, make his novels autobiographical in essence. Moreover, his novels express, in a committed manner, his philosophy of life which is one of naturalism and humanism. They seem to convey the message that the poor is a matter of economic determinism but it can be reformed by humanism, love, sympathy and a human consideration of man as man. The sufferers are not the victims of Fate and God but of society which is man-made. Social forces play the role of villain. (Abidi 33). Anand resented to the current problem of India particularly caste system and eventually discovered his true potential in the art of fiction.

Some preliminary stages in the process of discovery can be traced. From his mother he learnt the songs and the folktales of the Punjab. As a keen observer, he developed close acquaintance with rural life and culture. Besides, even as a
boy; he has glimpsed enough of life’s cruelties: he had seen the untimely death of his cousin, Kaushalya, a girl of nine, his favorite aunt, Devaki, had committed suicide. He took to writing on untouchability only because of a family tragedy instigated by the rigidity of the caste system. Anand’s first prose essay was a response to the suicide of an aunt, who had been excommunicated by his family for sharing a meal with a Muslim. His first novel, Untouchable (1935) was a stark reflection of the day to day life of a member of India’s untouchable caste. The book was widely acclaimed and Mulk Raj Anand was hailed as India’s Charles Dickens. (<http://www.ilooveindia.com/>). The death and the suicide he had witnessed and the physical violence, when he had been arrested and caned for breaking the curfew during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, which was perpetrated on him by the colonial regime, were experiences which made the sensitive boy reflect on the nature of life and society. This might be the reason why he delineates the images of childhood in his fictions.

1.2.1. Political Background

Anand’s life and career span practically the entire gamut of the 20th century. This very long period comprises pre-independence and post-independence, characterized by the spirit of the freedom movement and attainment of the freedom. Foreign rule, exploitation and oppression on the one hand and a multitude of social evils, vices, and outdated customs, on the other, combined to present a dismal socio-political landscape. (Singh, Raj 03). It is customary to divide Anand’s literary career into three periods in terms of his upbringing, education at home and abroad, social outlook and influences on him. The first period is spread over some 20 years from 1905 to 1925 and is characterized by his perception of the small world around him. The second period covers another 20 years from 1925 to 1945, when he was in England for higher education in philosophy under the guidance of G. Dowes Hicks. The last period spans several decades of the 20th century. (Singh, Raj 22). During that time India’s freedom from the yoke of slavery was the most dominant consideration.
Politically conscious people were conscious about the freedom of the country. As a result social and political consciousness, marked by disaffection and spirit of revolt, was rampant across the country. In brief, during the early decades of the 20th century patriotic fervor and hate for foreign rule was on high scale. Intellectual and ideological support was coming from all sides. In the 19th century, Anglo-Indian writers came forward with patriotic feeling which reflected in their writing. Indo-Anglian writers like Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and a host of others wrote with the feeling of patriotism. In the 20th century Anand appeared on the literary horizon as a bright star. He came forward as a thinker, writer and activist. He was quite alive and responsive to the prevailing socio-political scenario. On the active political front, the Indian National Congress was leading the struggle against the British rule. This struggle appealed educated people from all walks of life to participate in the freedom movement led by the congress.

Mahatma Gandhi was in the vanguard of the movement. He emphasized the main principle of non-violence and *Satyagraha* for winning of freedom. Anand took active participation into politics with his association with Gandhiji’s *Satyagraha* movement in 1919. As a result he is attracted towards Gandhi’s philosophy of politics, religious and cultural heritage of India. He became highly appreciative of the doctrines of *Ahinsa* and *satyagraha*. The novel, *Untouchable* bears the deep imprint of Gandhiji philosophy. Through the images of children, the novelist has presented his Gandhian philosophy. Like Gandhi, both Bakha and Munoo prefer hard work. Throughout the novel they do not avoid their duty. For them, like Gandhi, work is worship. They even follow the principal of *Ahinsa* whenever there is an encroachment on their rights. Their anger is presented by the novelist only in the form of words but practically they are submissive. Spreading the Gandhian philosophy is the real aim of Anand, for this purpose Bakha and Munoo are used as the medium. Through the exploitation of these two children, the novelist has clearly brought forward their images.
Mahatma Gandhi is a predominant character in Indo-Anglian fiction. Sometimes he appears as a person and in some of novels as an unseen hidden presence. He appears in person also in R. K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Abbas’ *Inquilab* and Nagrajan’s *The Chronicles of Kedaram*. Raja Rao introduces him in *The Cow of the Barricades* and *Kanthapura*. Mulk Raj Anand introduces him in *Untouchable* and *the Sword and the Sickle*. Anand brings him in as a central character. In *Untouchable* Bakha is much influenced by his speech on untouchability. There lies the contribution of Gandhi in the genesis of *Untouchable* and his selection of Bakha as a child hero in the novel. Taking about the genesis of the novel *Untouchable*, Anand says that he came across a poignant story about a sweeper boy, Uka, by Mahatma Gandhi in *Young India*. He wrote to Gandhi if he could see him. The Mahatma sent him a postcard suggesting that he could do so in about three months. On Gandhi’s approval, the writer went to see Gandhiji in the Sabarmati Ashram (Gujarat) in the spring of 1929. He read his novel to Gandhiji. The Mahatma opposed to the novel as it was about the boy and girl affair. But Anand explained to him by saying that it is about a sweeper boy called Bakha, an untouchable. The Mahatma allowed Anand to read portions of his novel and as Anand reveals:

I read my novel to Gandhiji and he suggested I should cut down more than a hundred pages especially those passages in which Bakha seemed to be thinking and dreaming and brooding like a Bloomsbury intellectual. (Rao165).

After that the novels become a kind of neo-narrative where each pleasurable or painful experience became significant. There is a myth about the creative process in our tradition, according to which the Supreme God, Brahma, created the world to enjoy Himself in the ‘lila’, or sport of creation. The novelist presumes to become God Almighty and indulges in the sport of creating a world of his own in his novel. (Rao166). Anand through his novels fights for the children’s rights who are humiliated and tortured by the Society.
1.2.2. Anand’s Socialism

Anand’s compassion for the poor cannot be understood unless studied in relation to the movement of the nineteen thirties in Western Europe. As a writer he was shaped in the thirties when several problems were more important than the individual. As it was, he found it difficult to maintain aloofness from politics in the post-World War Europe. When he was in London from 1924 to 1945; he was deeply influenced by the Progressive Movement in literature that flourished in the thirties. After the destruction wrought by the First World War, European society had plunged into the shadow of economic depression and cynical mood. Economic depression gave rise to unemployment that brought distress and appalling misery. Such a disintegrating world disillusioned the intellectual of the day. They came forward for a commitment that would restore order and save their world from the existing chaos. Alarmed at the situation, the intellectuals of the west prominently led by Maxim Gorky of Russia, Romain Roland of France, Thomas Mann of Germany and E.M .Forster of England assembled in Paris in 1935. They raised the voice of liberty as Shelley and Dickens had done in their own times. The conference was dominated by the writers possessing socialist background or having some affiliations with communism. The psychology working in the background was the moving force that impelled the writers to use their talents against fascism and write for the working class. This ideology inspired Anand to write about ground realities of his society that reflect s in his writing about the exploitation of the poor class especially children.

Inspired by these ideas some of the Indian students studying in England assembled in London a few months after the Paris conference and formed Progressive Writers Association. Their meetings were attended and occasionally addressed by Ralf Fox, Karnford and Caudwell. They framed a manifesto of the Association which was finalized, amongst others, by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. The Progressive writers believed that the principal function of literature was to reflect and express the aspirations and fundamental problems of the toiling masses and ultimately help in the formation of the socialist society. The
Progressive Movement was then a reaction against the esoteric and inward looking art of the nineteen-twenties. The particular conditions of the thirties account for close resemblances between Anand and George Orwell; both had much in common: a passionate sense of social injustice. Both men hated the social prejudices that helped to maintain the oppressive status quo; the class system in England, the caste system in India. One of the notable consequences of this movement was a growing rejection of the aesthetic theory of ‘art for art’s sake’. Anand has felt, from the initial stages of his awareness of the human predicament, that the writer cannot shut himself in an ivory tower.

1.2.3 Art for Life’s Sake

They have shown through their writing that a work of art communicates a profound vision of life and is really a revolutionary. It aims at integrating man and society, and not at providing a formula for escape. Anand lived in London from 1924 to 1945 and was greatly influenced by the Thirties Movement which saw political, social and human causes as genuine impulses for the novel and poetry. The Thirties Movement held that art serves life. Anand discards the dictum of ‘Art for Art’s sake, he asserts that ‘Art is for Life’s sake’, for the sake of man’s progress. “For him, his life is his art and art, his life” (George 07). Literature should be used as means of alleviating the suffering of fellow human beings. K. K. Sharma says in this regard that:

The creative artist is a realist who allows his vision to be shaped by the time, the place and the circumstance of the period to which he belongs. Thus Anand is opposed to the formalists or aesthetes who hold that art, though influenced by life, is essentially governed by its own inner logic, and not by outside forces. (Sharma17).

Anand’s writing is rooted in presenting the true picture of Indian society. For this social realism in Indian fiction in English the Great Economic Depression of 1930 and the Indian National Movement helped to a large extent. The Great Depression of the 1930’s brought enormous social and economic changes in society.
The creative artists in English in India felt that there was need to portray the problems of Indian society. Some of the basic economic and social changes formed the background to their fictional works. In their novels they portrayed the lives of the downtrodden, middle class people and their joys and sorrows. Their themes sprang from objective situations based on experience and observation and not from deeply contemplated ideas. They described the real Indian life in a foreign language. Anand is a committed writer. He believes that literature is for the sake of man, for refining and ennobling him, for stirring up the feelings of tenderness in him. For him literature should be an interpretation of the truth of people’s lives. It should be written from the felt experience and not books. (Singh79). Keeping children at the center, he presented his literature for the children’s sake.

1.2.4. Humanism of Anand

As an artist, Anand is naturally most concerned with the novel. He considers the novels as a powerful literary form to serve as a vehicle of humanism. Humanism is the philosophy of man. It advocates that man should be treated as a human. Man is the basic and central concern of humanism. In humanism the dignity of man, his happiness and his individuality is cared of. Anand’s humanism is comprehensive. His humanistic approach reveals through his care shown to the suffering children. Some of the basic tenets of his humanism reflect in his writing. Such as: the rejection of casteism, dignity of labor, work as worship, belief in the dignity of man and the rejection of fatalism. All these tenets are exposed through the innocent behavior of children. Mulk Raj Anand talking about the concept of humanism says that:

….the novelist is a new kind of god, who loves people, who overcomes his own isolation, puts his own knots alongside theirs, grows with them, manifests himself in the multiplicity of their beings and releases them into their own unique life, and co-exists with them in the joys and sorrows of their very human life. (Ramakrishna 07).
Thus he is a staunch defender of the dignity of man as man. The Indian novelists before Anand did not select the underdogs of society as central characters in fiction. Anand has carried the message of humanism by projecting the downtrodden in his novels. A. S. Dasan says in this regard in his article:

Like Maxim Gorky, Anand has the ability to see human qualities in the poor and the underprivileged of Indian society. As the reader is given to understand that the world is full of cruelty, exploitation and oppression against the poor and the innocent. (Dasan 13).

It is Anand who was the first and foremost in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction to articulate the suffering, misery, agony and overwhelming masses of men, women and children who were at the lowest rung of the social order.

His humanism and universal brotherhood as also his love for freedom and individual dignity led him to fight in the Spanish Civil War on the Republic side against the forces of France. His philosophy of life is influenced by Premchand, Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Tolstoy and John Ruskin. He believed in the development of the entire human personality. He did not believe in the disjoining political consciousness from aesthetic sensibility. He regarded arts as a necessity rather than luxury. He emphasized the role of the erotic sensibility in the development of the individual. He poured his philosophy of the development of the individual through the character of Bakha in the novel Untouchable. He is no writer of tales. He attempts to engender compassion in the hearts of men for the oppressed. He gives rise to compassion through his characters which are especially children.

His characters belong to a variety of social stratum. His child heroes belong to low class. Bakha in Untouchable is a sweeper, Munoo is a coolie in Coolie, and Gangu is a peasant in Two Leaves and a Bud, Chandu is a Barbour in Barbers’ Trade Union (Short story). His child characters represent a particular class. They are individuals. They reveal the novelist’s belief in human dignity. It has now become a common place of Indo-Anglican criticism to say that Anand
believes in the intrinsic merit of each individual quite apart from his caste and profession. And here lays the greatness of the novelist. His characters, especially his child heroes, are the mouth pieces of his philosophy. His social philosophy is primarily concerned with ‘man’ free from all strings. He clinches the issue by proclaiming that to him the central fact of the universe is ‘man’. (Singh, Raj 19).

He is a staunch defender of the dignity of man as a man. He is a novelist of the underdogs, a champion of the poor almost as great as Dickens. Only the bottom-dogs of Indian society are heroes of his novels-A sweeper, a coolie, a laborer, Barbour or a chamer. It is through these heroes he is widely known as the novelist of the lower class, a lyricist of their sorrows and joys. Of course, his characters cover the entire stratum of Indian society. He is a social interpreter of India. His novels show Indian social problems to invite European attention. Even after independence Indian government has failed to solve many basic problems such as women exploitation, child marriage, child labor, infanticide, caste conflict, untouchability etc. It is Anand who raised basic issues through his writing. In the selected novels such as Untouchable and Coolie; he has primarily focused his attention on the problems like caste system and child exploitation through the images of children.

1.2.5. **Realistic fiction**

Anand’s novels refrain from romanticizing poverty, illiteracy and related disabilities. Anand generally prefers sequences of action and chooses his heroes i.e. characters whose freedom of action is limited by the realities of the hierarchical society. These are characteristics of what is usually referred to as realistic fiction. Realistic fiction is quite opposed to romantic fiction. M. H. Abraham comments on this difference:

> Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction: The *romance* is said to present as we would have it to be, more picturesque, adventurous, and more heroic than the actual realism to present an accurate imitation of life as it is. (Abrams174).
Realism is a general term but social realism refers to the events in contemporary society. The novels of social realism present a mirror reflection of the actual life. Social realism means the accurate depiction of social reality in literature as it is. There should be resemblance between societies depicted in literature and of actual society. The emergence of the social realistic novel in Indian fiction in English is due to the rise of Nationalist Movement. The novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan who have been influenced by this movement roused the feelings of nationalism in common man through their works. They made the common man politically and socially conscious about their rights and problems. Among them it is Anand who writes about the poorest of the poor people, whom he had known. His first three novels, Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud portray the poorest of India’s poor. He makes a genuine effort to find out the problems of the poor. He even made pilgrimages to villages and to towns on this cause. In his own words:

I had to soak myself in the lives of men and women from within their tormented senses; I immersed myself in the sub-world of the poor, the insulted and the injured through continuous pilgrimages to the villages, the small towns and big town bastis of our country. (Anand 09).

Both Dickens and Anand have succeeded in carrying this pattern in their writing. The local color is evoked with photographic realism and accuracy. For writing the opening pages of the novel, Anand is influenced by Dickens’s description of London slums. As Saros Cowasjee rightly says:

The opening pages, influenced by Dickens’s description of London slums, were toned down considerably and much of the repetition was deleted. (Saros 43).

Their realism comes into light only after going through the images of children. A work of art becomes more realistic if it dwells on the real world of children. In their writing, contemporary society reflects through the treatment given to the children by the then society.
1.2.6. Caste in India and its reflection in Anand’s Novels

As an Indian writer, Anand points out one of the basic problems of Indian society i.e. caste system in his well-known novel Untouchable. The matter of caste is always discussed and argumented on the dais and off the dais. The role of caste system is very vital in Hindu society. The disastrous effect of the caste has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindu. The monster of caste has clutched the Hindu society and fogged the future of the nation. It is said that ‘Four Varnavyavastha’ was prevalent in the Indian society on the basis of the division of the profession. These four ‘Varn’ were; the Brahmin (the priest), the Kshatriya (warrior), the Vaishya (tradesmen) the Shudra (bondsman and menial). There was, later on, segregation between the first three classes and the fourth one. The last class was rejected by the caste-Hindu terming them as outcastes. The theme of casteism runs in some of the novels of Anand. He is truly the novelist of the lowly, the lost and the underdog. Besides Anand, there are other novelist who have given voice to the poor and the downtrodden. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra and Munshi Premchand had also done it in their novels. The trauma of the untouchables has been artistically delineated in Tagor’s Chandalika. But the demon of Untouchability that Anand writes surpasses other Indo-Anglian novelists. Through his novels he documented the abuses of the exploited classes. He is certainly the fiery voice of the people belonging to the poor class and the untouchables.

These themes are particularly shown through the images of children. Here are some of the novels in which children are kept at the center in his novels. In Untouchable Anand not only presents artistically the problem of untouchability through Bakha and other children but also exposes ruthlessly the injustice, the inhuman treatment, the degrading humiliation and cruelty which stem from it. Even in the class of the social outcastes there is a gradation. Ram Charan is considered to be of higher caste among them because he is a washer man. Chota, the leather worker’s son, comes next in the hierarchy, and Bakha is of the third and lowest category. The novel is written with the motive of articulating the
suppressed agony in the heart of the sweeper who receives inhuman treatment at the hands of the upper-class Hindus. It is basically a tragic drama of the individual caught in the net of the age-old caste system. His created cosmos in the novel bears a direct resemblance to the actual one. It is through Bakha, the novelist exposes the evil effects of caste system both on the child like Bakha in particular and on the downtrodden in general. The same curse of the untouchability is again the theme of the novel *The Road*. In this novel it is pointed out that other caste Hindus refuse to touch the stones which are quarried by cobbler, (chamar) boys. Not only are these, but also the huts of these untouchables set on fire by caste Hindus when the untouchables did not stop working on the construction of the road. Setting the houses of the untouchables on fire is a common picture in India. Bhiku, the hero of the novel in the end goes out of the village to the capital where he will be lost in the crowd and no one will know that he is a cobbler by caste. He runs to Delhi to escape untouchability. The road is a symbol of progress and prosperity. The novel can be called a mini-masterpiece so far as it details the miseries of Harijans. Thus exploitation of the lower-caste by the caste Hindus and the hypocrisy and the dissoluteness of the religious priest have been exposed by the novelist.

**1.2.7. The Economic Background**

Besides casteism, the most glaring problem that Anand points out is the problem of economic exploitation of the poor by all those who get a chance to exploit them. These poor are particularly children whose exploitation is presented by the novelist. A poor man in India is called coolie. Anand has entitled a novel ‘*Coolie*’ which deals with the exploitation of a young hill boy by all those who give him employment for some time. The novelist makes the readers see through the eyes of the suffering hero Munoo, in order to make him realize the wrongs and injustice done to him. Both the selected novels have the economic background. The downtrodden i.e. the untouchables are economically very poor. For meager earning they have to depend on the mercy of the rich. The novel *Untouchable* has an economic background against which the tragedy and pathos in the lives of the
children stands out. Without economic prosperity sweepers cannot dare to go against the upper-caste. For food Bakha, Sohini and Rakha have to depend upon the piety of others. They are not allowed to pollute the caste-Hindu. Economic poverty gives rise to dirtiness. Unlike Bakha, Rakha is dirty. Throughout the novel he is shown as dirty and filthy with no love for cleanliness. In Coolie Munoo is exploited at every stage and is made him to work hard. In Two Leaves and A Bud is a tragic novel deals with the miserable life of the tea-plantation coolies. The hero of the novel is Gangu. He is a Punjabi boy who belongs to a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab and is taken to the Macpherson tea Estate in distant Assam. This novel is a scathing condemnation of the white man’s atrocities on the poor Indian plantation workers. Seven Summers and Morning Face are the two autobiographical novels by Anand. Naturally the life of the author and his companions during their boyhood and adolescence in the background of the social and political in the various cities and towns of the Punjab is painted in details as Dickens did in case of London.

1.2.8. Conclusion

In the concluding part of the introductory chapter it is clear that both the novelist have much in common in their writing. While comparing these two great personalities the salient features are clearly noticed in their novels. Those features are Realism in terms of their social as well as literary milieu, Humanism towards the suppressed class through the eyes of the children; they utilized literature as a medium of Art for life’s sake and both are widely known as socialists. Here in this research total five works of both the novelists have been selected. Charles Dickens’s Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield have been selected while Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable and Coolie have been selected for the research. In these selected novels an attempt is made to point out the various kinds of images of childhood. Usually all children share common features irrespective of their social surroundings. Generally the common features of children are: They are innocent, they are curious to know what happens with and around them, they can be cheated easily, they are more sensitive and emotional
than the adults, they prefers to live in the present; it means they cannot visualize
the upcoming danger in the future, they are stoical in nature. The selected novels
have been interpreted keeping in mind the images of childhood.
Works Cited


