CHAPTER I

THE ARTIST AND HIS CRAFT

Ever since the first Indo-Anglian novel, *Rajmohan’s Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was published in 1864, seven years after the Sepoy Mutiny, many other men of vision and imagination could follow his footsteps and succeed remarkably by their creative writing in English, thereby discrediting the sceptical view that Indians cannot write English creatively. Indians, in fact, are blessed with the gift of the tongue and George Orwell in his review on Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Sword and the Sickle*, acknowledged it by saying that on an average, Indians write and even pronounce English far better than any European race.

The Indian Writers in English not only interpreted India to the West but also made known to the British masters the natives’ displeasure with the colonial rule. Among the Indian writers in English, Mulk Raj Anand certainly, occupies an enviable position as he modernized the Indian novel. His love for novelty and originality enabled him to carry the tradition of Tagore and Premchand, Bankim and Sarat Chandra to new heights. With his first novel, *Untouchable*, he, in fact, inaugurated the literature of the underdog. He not only interpreted the soul of India, the real India of the villages to the West, but also convincingly made known to the colonial rulers the debilitating aspects of their presence in India. After
the departure of the British, he shifted his concerns towards the social predicaments and upheavals faced by the emerging republic.

In all his novels Anand stresses the need for a humanistic approach to life. He is an artist with a mission and a poet of the aspiring spirit. Like most Indo-Anglian novelists, he is inevitably concerned with man in society, “man in his circumambient universe”. He is an artist saturated with a moral understanding of Indian masses. He understands their mute anguishes and always succeeds in bringing out their insulted humanity. His novels expose the silent passions that burst in the hearts of the people who are forbidden to rise up and express themselves. His aim is to evoke generosity and compassion in the minds of the privileged sections of society, to which the bulk of his readers belong.

Mulk Raj Anand is known primarily for his pioneering work in Indian English fiction. He has published nineteen novels and six volumes of short stories. Besides fiction, he has written widely on a variety of subjects, and the sweeping range of his interests is really amazing. The founding of India’s leading art magazine Marg by him in 1947 remains a speaking monument for his abiding interest in the visual art forms.

Mulk Raj Anand has published on such diverge subjects as kamakala, persian painting, curries and other Indian dishes, the Hindu view of art, the achievements of Khajuraho, the Indian theatre, contemporary Indian
Painting, Tantra magic, cosmetics, Marx and Engels on India, education and contemporary Indian civilization. He has also written exclusively on aesthetics and literature in general and the art of fiction in particular. The sheer energy with which he threw himself into works as a writer and cultural activist sets him up as a rare example to emulate.

Much work has already been done on the fictional works of Mulk Raj Anand but the series of autobiographical novels written during the later phase of his writing career is yet to be studied and evaluated comprehensively and in depth.

Mulk Raj Anand actually planned to write seven autobiographical novels, following the Shakespearean cyclic pattern of seven stages in the life of a man but he could complete only four novels and the first two parts of the fifth. These novels, in the present form, imaginatively recapture the first three decades in the life of the novelist in the *bildungsroman* fashion, and thereby unravel the history of a whole generation. *Seven Summers* (1951) is a brilliant novel on Indian childhood; *Morning Face* (1968) which won him the Sahitya Akademy Award depicts his boyhood; *Confession of a Lover* (1976) presents the traumatic experiences of the young lover until he leaves for England; *The Bubble* (1984) dramatizes the events during the life in England. *And So He Played His Part*, the proposed fifth volume of which the first two parts have been issued as *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi* (1992) remains incomplete. However,
the reputation of Mulk Raj Anand as a novelist rests mostly on his pioneering works that appeared in the thirties. They are *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937).

*Untouchable* became an archetypal work which for the first time brought the underdog in Indian Society – an untouchable scavenger called Bakha – to the very centre of fiction and placed him in the dilemmas of a colonial situation. The novel portrays the happenings on a particular day in the life of Bakha – the central action being a slap on the face he receives from a caste Hindu for the crime of “touching” him. Bakha stands confused at the end of the novel listening to the words of a missionary, a poet and Mahatma Gandhi, and returns home to his old father, having achieved a greater degree of self awareness and with the glimmer of a hope that a change is at hand.

The story narrated with remarkable restrain, became a pace-setter for the social realist fiction on the lives of the poorest of the poor not only in Indian languages but in other third world countries too. This success was repeated in the case of the second novel *Coolie* in which the hero is an Orphan hill boy, Munoo who is beaten from pillar to post, from Daulatpur to Shamnagar, from Shamnagar to Mumbai, from Mumbai to Simla, from misery to misery – atlast becomes a rickshaw puller and meets a tragic end. In the third novel *Two leaves and a Bud*, the locale is a tea estate in Assam where the poor family of the peasant Gangu is crushed under
the destructive apparatus of the British colonial system. The three novels together provide a strong indictment of the colonial order and a compassionate evocation of the suffering of the serfs of Indian society. The publication of the Lalu trilogy during 1939-1942 marked a further advance in the maturing of Mulk Raj Anand’s fictional art. The three novels trace the growth of the protagonist Lal Singh from childhood to youth in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.

The first novel *The Village* (1939) shows the boyhood of Lal Singh at odds with the repressive realities of a village in Punjab and his fleeing the village and enlisting in the army. The second novel in this series *Across the Black Waters* published in 1940 depicts Lal Singh’s traumatic experiences as a soldier in trench warfare in the foreign land fighting for a cause of which the soldiers are totally unaware. The third novel *The Sword and the Sickle* published in 1941 shows his return to an India of political upheaval and unrest among peasants and his gradual graduation into a leading role in the present movement of the times. The trilogy is a magnificent achievement.

*Across the black waters* is unique in that it is the only major novel in Indian English literature at that time. The last novel Mulk Raj Anand wrote during his 20 year long stay in England was *The Big Heart* published in 1945 which embodies all the best elements in his fictional art. It dramatizes the life of Ananta – a typical revolutionary hero of
Anand – faced with a different situation in which the rising industrial modernity is fought by the traditional coppersmith community. Ananta becomes a spokesman of the new industrialism and tries to form a trade union to safeguard the rights of the workers, but traditional elements in the community fails to understand him and he is finally killed. This work has been considered as the most significant of Mulk Raj Anand’s achievements.

The Indian phase in Mulk Raj Anand’s writing career began from 1946, the year in which he returned to the country and settled in Mumbai. A major accomplishment during this long phase is the autobiographical series of fiction. Mulk Raj Anand did write a few more novels during this period and two among this works which deserve special attention are *Private Life of an Indian Prince* published in 1953 and *The Old Woman and The Cow* published in 1960. The story of the Indian Prince, a tyrannical ruler of a princely state in the forties, torn between his infatuation with a nymphomaniac and his responsibilities to the state, tragically landing up in a lunatic asylum in Pune at the end is a very different one in Mulk Raj Anand’s *oeuvre*. Critics like Cowasjee consider it as one of Mulk Raj Anand’s finest creations.

*The Old Woman and The Cow* again shows Mulk Raj Anand facing contemporary Indian social reality. The heroine of the novel, Gauri, a poor village girl on the foot-hills of the Himalayas – is a “docile cow”
throughout; a victim of patriarchal cruelties. Her life is one of subservience and suffering but finally she rises like a tigress in revolt and faces her belligerent husband and walks away to the town rejecting him to make her own life. The novel through a subversion of the Sita myth drives home the idea that new myths are necessary in the changing times. While summing-up the literary achievements of Mulk Raj Anand, Dr. P. K. Rajan, an Indian literary critic observes:

The achievement of Anand as a novelist in Indian English literature has a three-fold significance. First, he is the forerunner of the protest novel in India and the third world with the underdog in society at the very centre of the narrative delineating the suffering of the poor in a colonial situation projecting the hope of a change at hand in terms of the desire image. In this respect his early works became “archetypal” in nature, ushering in similar traditions not only in Indian languages but in other countries of the third world too… (Mulk Raj Anand, 49)

Mulk Raj Anand’s pioneering work is a significant contribution to the making of English in India as a powerful medium for creative expression. Through a dexterous appropriation of English language and imaginative handling of the European form of a novel, he meets the formidable challenge of expressing the intractable reality of Indian life through an alien tongue and emerges as one of the foremost “makers” of Indian
English. The experiment he initiated with partial success in his fiction has been continued with great clarity by writers like Raja Rao, G.V. Desani and present day novelists like Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy.

Mulk Raj Anand’s search for genuine Indianness on the level of form, by incorporating the traditions of the moral fable, parables, folk tales and by assimilating various other elements of Indian story telling tradition, enables him to try to forge, a truly Indian novel form. His novels epitomize this journey towards an Indian form of the novel. Indian English novel as a genre is today an integral part of the general tradition of Indian literature rather than that of the English tradition.

Mulk Raj Anand could become an authentic voice of a great epoch in India’s history. It is a fact that he could not creatively respond to the bewildering configurations of changed reality in post-independent India with the same vigour with which he confronted reality in his early fiction. But his accomplishment as it is entitles him to a secure place in the history of Indian English literature. He remained a true humanist committed to the ideals of social justice, human rights, pacifism, modernity, democracy and socialism and sternly opposed to all forms of religious atrocities, fundamentalism and fascism. He always kept the fire of hope alive in his heart in the midst of all adversity.
Mulk Raj Anand was first Indian Writer in English to start the triumphant journey of the Indian English novel into the western dawn. His working as a part-time proof-corrector in the Hogarth Press-while studying philosophy in London provided him an access to Virginia Wolf’s drawing room in Tavistock Square and then into the charmed Bloomsbury circle in the late twenties of the last century. A taunt by Edward Swest on his writing about an outcaste led him to Ireland where he met W.B.Yeats and George Russell. He visited Gandhi ashram back in India to revise the novel, Untouchable into a simple narrative on Mahathma’s advice. Its eventual publication with a preface by E.M.Forster in 1936 and it has since been translated into fortytwo world languages and earned itself the status of a Penguin Twentieth Century Classic, an honour unmatched by any other Indian to date.

Beginning with Untouchable in 1935, Mulk Raj Anand published another two dozen novels and ten collections of short stories till his death on the eve of his 99th birthday on 28th September, 2004. Mulk Raj Anand advocated freedom and fought against oppression of every kind; social, artistic or political. He was not merely a witness to the turbulent 20th century, but also a product as well as a participant in it. His novels speak about human predicaments. Despite his strong principled stance against oppression he remained a naive poet at heart and refused to become pretentionusly sophisticated. For him the smiles and tears and laughter of
children are as valid as the self-will of Kant. Talking about his work, Mulk Raj Anand once remarked:

….the substance of my work is the whole of my varied experience, the theme of my work became the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationships, rather than only a single part of it… The whole urge of my writing came from love of art as an illuminating factor in human experience and of poetry as a medium through which one can think of humanly…(Journal of Literature, 33)

Mulk Raj Anand made it clear that while a writer must try to become an instrument of social change, his interest should be not to write epics, but to live them. Therefore, the range of realism in his fiction is unlimited.

For Mulk Raj Anand art is but his own life. After graduating from Khalsa College, Amritsar, Mulk Raj Anand sailed for England with letters of recommendations from Sir Mohammed Iqbal whose Israr-e-Khudi (secrets of the self) was to be his window to the world. Going to England was also, in a way an escape from his father Lal Chand’s tyranny who beat up his mother, Iswar Kaur for hiding the truth of his being jailed for participation in an Amritsar banth because he had fixed a job for Mulk Raj Anand in the army through King’s commission.

A fellowship enabled him to research in philosophy under Prof. G. Dawes Hicks. In London, Mulk Raj Anand fell in love with a theatre actress
Kathleen Van Gelder. A daughter was born soon after. Her infidelity disillusioned him and during a visit to Bombay he fell in love with Anil de Silva who gave him the idea for the formation of Modern Architects and Artists Research Group (MARG).

He undertook a hurried trip to get a divorce from Kathleen but a waiting period proved fatal and de Silva decided to marry a Frenchman. Next in line was a Greek dancer. He eventually married Shirin Vajifdar, one of the three dancing sisters in Mumbai to whom he remained officially married until his death.

Mulk Raj Anand had begun to get disillusioned with an India which was not in consonance with Nehru’s ideals and beliefs. He blended Gandhian philosophy and Nehruvian thoughts to create a world view of his own. It is because of this reason that Mulk Raj Anand found solace in Khandala hills in Maharashtra but also satisfaction in working for the depressed and the downtrodden for whom he adopted a village, completed the school building and dispensary which was funded by Sarvodaya Trust to which he bequeathed all that he possessed in the mortal world. While tracing the literary developments and creative faculty of Mulk Raj Anand, William Walsh observes in *Indian Literature in English*:

… Mulk Raj Anand became an essentially thirties man in thought and sensibility, politically committed to Marxism if not to Soviet Communism, involved with the Unity Theatre, and the left-wing literary
movement of the period... His fiction is, of course, exclusively concerned with India. He is passionately involved with the villages, the ferocious poverty, the cruelties of caste, the wrongs of woman and with orphans, the untouchables and urban labourers. He writes in an angry reformist way, like a less humorous Dickens and a more emotional Wells of the personal sufferings induced by economic injustice...(63)

Mulk Raj Anand had been a weakling as a child. And not allowed by his seniors to play hockey with them, he would silently and sullenly watch them from a distance. Sitting on the fence he got hurt one day, and was cart loaded on his back by a sweeper boy. His religious-minded mother reprimanded the boy for touching her son, and sent him away crying for the good deal. This impression remained imbedded in Mulk Raj Anand’s consciousness and eventually became the basis for the writing of Untouchable. So strong has been the impact of this episode on his novel and the glory the work of art achieved is remarkable.

Born in Peshawar as the son of a coppersmith, Anand had entered the Army both for the sake of getting a regular income and for sliding out of at least some of the ignominies that were flung on the caste system. Mulk Raj Anand studied philosophy as an undergraduate. He then went to Cambridge. He did his doctorate in the University of London in 1929. By now, Anand’s eyes had shrewdly garnered a good deal of experience
which included the domestic life-ways of India, the Jallian Wallah Massacre, the trade unionism in Britain and the cultures of the East and the West. He got involved with India's independence struggle and even the Spanish Civil War. During the Second World War he became a broadcaste for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). After 1946 Mulk Raj Anand settled down in India. He received several honours during his life time including the International Peace Prize, Vienna, the Sahithya Akademi Award and the Padma Bhushan.

There is a touch of whimsical romance in the manner in which Anand became a novelist. While in England, he had been reading plays about peasants, fishermen and slum-dwellers. His childhood and boyhood in India entangled by a number of castes called out to him for verbal recordation and he wrote a novel on an untouchable boy whom he had known in his childhood. After he had completed it, he came across Mahathma Gandhi's story of the sweeper-boy Uka in *Young India*. So he came to India to meet the Mahathma.

The meeting is retold by Anand with his characteristic verve. Gandhi replaced Anand's Corduroy suit with a Kurta-Pyjama and asked him to write, “a straight forward pamphlet about Harijans” instead. Anand’s reply was defensive, but firm. He spoke to Gandhi thus:

…”That’s your job. I have written a novel about a day in the life of Bakha-about how he is slapped on the
face by a caste Hindu… I feel I want to tell the story – as you have done in your story about the Sweeper Uka…(Prema Nandakumar, 38)

This was in 1927. Gandhi agreed to listen to the draft provided Mulk Raj Anand did not look at women with desire, did not drink and was prepared to clean latrines. Some of the major changes suggested by Gandhi were a drastic pruning of the pages and avoiding the stream of consciousness passages given to Bakha.

To record one day in the life of the Sweeper-boy Bakha in Untouchable, Anand has literally become a sweeper boy of eighteen. Innocent, hard-working and good at heart. Bakha tries to desensitize himself to his own life. His drunkard father will not have him educated. Mulk Raj Anand’s descriptions are deeply moving. Neither the author nor his characters try to elicit sympathy for the state of affairs. This is a man-made hell. Here lives Bakha, the young man who cleans human waste with enviable expertise. He does not love his job nor does he hate it. But of course, he would like to get away from it all, perhaps by joining the Army.

The problem of untouchability surfaced again in his The Road (1965). Among other themes handled by Anand are the lot of the labouring class in Coolie (1936) and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937), the impact of technology on traditional life in The Big Heart (1943), communist frenzy in The Death of a Hero (1964), feminism in The Old Woman and the
Cow (1961), love failure in The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953) and the failure of India’s educational system in Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts in (1939).

The autobiographical trilogy The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters; (1941) and The Sword and The Sickle (1942) are three novels written as a continuous story and yet each of these in itself, is a complete unit. Together they contribute a trilogy. The three novels depict in three parts of life, adventures, escapades, and struggles of the same hero, whose magnetic personality binds the three works together, through each novel explores different and unrelated themes.

Mulk Raj Anand is a celebrated Indian English novelists with global recognition. He has to his credit a score of novels, hundreds of short stories, a number of books on varying themes and a host of essays and articles on different subjects. Though many approaches to his life and works are possible, his social criticism through imaginative literature and his candid endeavour to demonstrate social evils have appealed to the researcher. Hence the present study focuses at Mulk Raj Anand's concern with the ills of Indian Society. The contemporary relevance and the importance of the present research work can best be explained in the words of K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar mentioned in his foreword to
G.S.Balarama Gupta’s *Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of his Fiction in Humanist Perspective*:

...There are novelists about whom one critical study could be written, but one could be enough. There are novelists who would be effectively suffocated even by one research performance and there are the novelists who are large – who invoke multitudes-who can survive several attempts to probe and contain them. Mulk Raj Anand is surely one of the last category. Each new study adds a little to our understanding of Anand and his work, yet leaves the subject unexhausted...(5)

Mulk Raj Anand is a figure valued not only as a novelist but also for the generosity and enthusiasm of a person untouched by the period’s political in-fighting. As Anand became eminent in the circle of other novelists, critics started to evaluate his works. Most of his major writings have acclaimed him a powerful novelist. The simple fact that his novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie* are available in thirtyeight languages of the world confirms the fact that Mulk Raj Anand is certainly an artist of universal recognition and greatness.

An important aspect of Mulk Raj Anand’s fiction is its concern with the reality of organised evil. In all his novels he appears as a social critic. The society he has seen and observed is the field of his work. His writings probe deeply into the social process. For him, “literature is an
expression of society” and the large majority of the questions raised by
him are social questions; questions of traditions, conventions, norms and
genres, symbols and myth.

Before Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, Indo-Anglian novels were mainly
based on history or romance and they were primarily written for mere
enjoyment. Mulk Raj Anand's temperament and social concerns have not
been suited to such ventures. His missionary zeal for the welfare of the
masses had added purpose and brought a new direction to the Indo-
Anglian novels. His purpose in writing fiction has been to focus attention
on the suffering, misery and wretchedness of the poor and the underdogs
of the society caused by the exploitations of capitalist or the feudal lords
or by the impact of industry on the traditional and agricultural way of life.
Through his art Mulk Raj Anand has been trying to create sympathy for
the underdog of society.

Both *Untouchable* and *Coolie* are excellent examples in this respect.
They depict the wretched condition of the overburdened peasant who is
powerless to fight superstition and social convention and is hindered at
every step in his search for a better life. In other words, Mulk Raj Anand
is a humanist; a proletarian who does not believe in the “Art for Art's
Sake” but writes to awake the social conscience. He is audacious
enough to admit that he is the alleviator of the suffering of fellow human
beings. Mulk Raj Anand has made his position clear in his *Apology for Heroism*: He states:

…Any writer who said that he was not interested in “La Condition humaine” was either posing or yielding to a fanatical love of isolationism… Just as I desire a total and truly humane view of experience, a view of the whole man, in order that a completely new kind of revolutionary human may arise. So I have been inclined to stress the need for a truly humanist art commensurate with the needs of our time…(123)

Mulk Raj Anand has all along written novels and short stories with a view to teaching the society to recognize the fundamental principles of human living and exercise vigilance over the real enemies of freedom and socialism. It has been a lifetime apostolate for him to help the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies and the others oppressed members of society to fight for human dignity deliberately denied to them by the privileged sections of society.

Of all the great Indian novelists in English, Mulk Raj Anand is perhaps the one, whose life is most closely and most obviously connected with his work. For him, his life is his art and art, his life. For convenience, his life may be studied under three periods: the early years in India until his departure for England, 1905-1925; the years abroad, 1925-1945; and the later years in India, from 1945 to the present day.
The first period (1905-1925) is a period of formation. It starts on 11th December 1905 when he was born in Peshawar in a family of Kshatriyas to Lalchand and Ishwar Kaur. He worked hard and passed matriculation and it helped him to become a Head Clerk in the 38 Dogra Regiment of the British Indian Army. His mother was from a traditional peasant family who believed in every legend, mythology and social conventions. She "would place brass idols of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon side by side with a crucifix which she had picked up somewhere, a picture of the Aga Khan, and of Guru Nanak, the first saint of the Sikhs, on a raised platform for worship on various festivals". That always seemed to be incongruous to Mulk Raj Anand, the child. Her excessive religious enthusiasm had negative effect on Mulk Raj Anand from his early childhood. In fact, it developed in him a dislike for religion. His mother's lessons to him in the reading of Bhagavad Gita was for him a source of amusement. When his father had some visitors, sometimes to make them happy, he used to mimic the way his mother used to read the Gita and the prodigious feat of his mimicking often earned him silver coins from his father or his friends. His father's attitude in such matters was a compromise between traditional beliefs and the secular life he led in the British-Indian army. Often his father reconciled God with Mammon in the inimitable way of his English masters, of whom he was a loyal subject. He shrewdly paid lip service to the tenets of Hinduism, while in his heart of hearts he sought to amass a fortune through efficient service,
as well as through various other ways such as money lending, buying and selling homes, accepting mortgages of property and bribes.

Mulk Raj Anand's early education was in cantonment schools. The education imparted in these schools was imitative, giving very little idea of Indian tradition, but mainly 'bastardized' version of English curricula, in English, with particular emphasis on English history, ideas, forms and institutions, deliberately calculated to show everything relating to Indian history and tradition as inferior. This had disastrous effect on Mulk Raj Anand. He "acquired a bias against all indigenous customs and grew up hating everything Indian".

There are a few incidents in his childhood days that made lasting impressions on him. The first, the death of his cousin Kaushalya, aged nine, when he himself was only eleven. Mulk Raj Anand states in “Why I Write?”:

My first real essay was a letter to God Almighty, asking Him why He has caused the death of my little cousin Kaushalya, at the age of nine, by inflicting on her the dreaded disease of lungs, when she had not done anything bad. I put the letter in the hands of the priests of the temple: But God did not answer my protest. So I have tended to regard Him, since then, as the enemy of mankind. In fact, from that time my belief in the man with the big beard sitting on top of the sky, determining the
fate of everyone has been shaken more or less completely...(13)

Equally significant was the dreadful end of his aunt Devaki, driven to suicide as a result of her excommunication by an Orthodox Hindu Society, for among other things, calling on a Muslim woman. Mulk Raj Anand quotes this tragic happening as the initial fire of his protest that enkindled his whole life, a protest against a narrow society bigoted by caste and class and a religion which supported its perversity. But perhaps most important for the nationalist Mulk Raj Anand was to become, was his arrest and caning for unintentionally violating the curfew after the ruthless massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919.

After completing his school, Mulk Raj Anand joined the Khalsa College at Amritsar and he was there from 1921 to 1924. At Khalsa, he revealed his literary taste by writing poems in Urdu. He frequently met poet Mohammad Iqbal and had many literary discussions with him. But for that, his college days were generally not a happy one. In those days, he was active in the non-violent campaign and once he suffered a brief imprisonment. The most terrible thing that happened to him at Khalsa was his abortive amorous affair with a Muslim married woman named Yasmin. Just before the final examination" unable to forget Yasmin, he made up his mind to elope with her to Kashmir getting the assistance of his friend, Noor. Knowing Yasmin’s plan, her husband killed her on the day she was
to flee. It became, a big social issue. Her death led Mulk Raj Anand to despair. Mulk Raj Anand’s *Confessions of a Lover* (1976) is a moving and honest story of his love for Yasmin and its consequences.

The second period of Mulk Raj Anand’s life can be presented as from 1924. After his graduation from Khalsa College, though his father did not like the idea, he managed to leave for England for higher studies and research in philosophy. On his arrival in London, he registered at the University College to do research for a Doctoral degree in Philosophy, under Professor G. Dawes Hicks, the famous Kantian scholar and co-editor of the *Hibbert Journal*. Professor Hicks set Mulk Raj Anand to work on the theory of knowledge and in particular, on the treatment of such relations as cause and effect and identity by Hume and his predecessors.

Soon Mulk Raj Anand found a place to reside at Dolgelly village, with a friendly parson and started his study seriously. In the village he took pleasure in climbing the mountain. One day when he was coming down the mountain, he saw a boy and a girl. As he believed that suppressed behaviour towards girls is treated as dishonesty in the Western world, he took courage and told the girl that he liked her. The girl, Irene, smiled at him and invited him to her house. Her father was a professor of Biology at the University of Wales. Irene found Mulk Raj Anand to be an excellent conversationalist. She also discovered his story telling faculty from the
way he narrated the story of his mother, aunt and cousins. Hence she requested him to write down his life story. To please her, he began a *Confession* modelled on Rousseau's *Confessions*. On week-ends he read out to her all that he wrote. The writing continued and within a few months it reached more than 2000 pages. Irene typed it out. She made up her mind to be married to him if it could be published. But the size of the work caused difficulty in finding a publisher. In the days that followed, the relationship between Irene and Mulk Raj Anand also slowly cooled down. However, the work was not a waste. It served as a reservoir, a source book for Mulk Raj Anand's future novels like *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face*.

In 1926 there was a coal miner's strike under the leadership of Arther Cook. This strike, as well as his involvement with Irene, disturbed his academic pursuit. During the strike, Mulk Raj Anand, together with some other students, was assaulted for supporting the workers. The General Strike which followed almost immediately was ruthlessly battered by the Government.

Despite the many extra-academic involvements Mulk Raj Anand had, he could pursue his studies and in 1929 he was awarded the Ph.D. degree for his thesis on the philosophy of Berkeley, Hume and Russel. With this degree in hand, he did not think of gloriously returning to India. Instead, during the next few years, at the invitation of T.S. Eliot, he wrote a
number of articles for Criterion. Soon other journals also invited him to contribute articles. He also made several memorable acquaintances that included D.H. Lawrence, F.R. Leavis, Middleton Murry, Herbert Read, Aldous Huxley, Eric Gill and Anand Coomaraswamy.

His contact with Anand Coomaraswamy inspired him to recognize the latent glory of Indian art. He began to work on Indian art studies under the guidance of Coomaraswamy. The output of this study resulted in his books, *Hindu View of Art, Persian Painting and Golden Breath* published in 1932.

His appreciation of Indian art and architecture grew and he felt an irresistible urge to return to India to study the ancient monuments. There was also another reason for his return to India in 1932. Mulk Raj Anand gives the immediate reason for it in his essay, "Why I Write?" He writes:

One day, I read an article in 'Young India' by Gandhiji, describing how he met Uka, a sweeper boy, and, finding him with torn clothes and hungry, took him to his ashram. This narrative was simple, austere and seemed to me more truthful than my artificially concocted novel *Untouchable*. I told Irene this. And, in a sudden fit of revulsion against my experience, in elitist Bloomsbury, I decided to go and see the old man.

I wrote to the Mahatma asking for an appointment. He efficiently wrote back and said he would give me an
Mulk Raj Anand stayed in the Sabarmati Ashram with the Mahatma for three months. During that period he revised the manuscript of the novel, Untouchable, he had brought from England. What Mulk Raj Anand has to say about its revision in the Sabarmati Ashram and the mental agony he suffered before the publication of it in England is worth quoting:

I read the new novel to the old man, who more or less approved, though he gave me Tolstoy's Childhood, Boyhood and Youth as a model of sincere writing. He said one must not write anything which was not based on one's experience.

I worked hard to achieve sincerity. I cut and cut, trying to combine the Tolstoyan emphasis on the truth of life in the raw and the Flaubertian objectivity. I had already been made to discard my corduroy suit and necktie and had got into Kurta-Pyjamas, thus being converted to the Indian I once was, and I have tried since then to take off the mask of the "Brown Sahib" I had become in England.

I brought the novel back to London (in 1933) glowing with pride about the austerities I had practised.

My novel was turned down by nineteen publishers.

After I had despaired and contemplated suicide, the twentieth accepted it, because E.M. Forster, to whom a
poet friend of mine had taken the book offered to write a Preface for it… (19)

Thus, ***Untouchable*** was published on 1 May 1935, Richard Maine in one of his broadcasts on the B.B.C. praised it as a “classic” and of all Mulk Raj Anand’s major works, it still receives the greatest critical acclaim.

The Public response to ***Untouchable*** encouraged Mulk Raj Anand to devote more time to imaginary writing. Thus the period between 1935 and 1945 was the most productive period in Mulk Raj Anand's career as a novelist. Though he was busy in this period writing novels after novels, he found sufficient time to involve himself in other activities too. In 1935 he represented India in the International Writers Conference against Fascism. This gave him the opportunity to come into close contact with Kathleen Van Gelder, a stage actress. Their admiration for each other eventually led to their marriage. In 1936, he joined the International Brigade in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Between 1937 and 1945 he associated himself with the British Labour Party and the Indian National Congress. He became a zealous activist of India League organized by Krishna Menon in England for the cause of Indian Independence. A study of India League clearly illustrates that along with Krishna Menon, Mulk Raj Anand did yeoman service to his country by tilting the British public opinion in England in favour of India's aspiration and struggle for freedom.
The third phase of Mulk Raj Anand's life began in 1945 when he returned to India for good. After one year of stay in Lahore, he came to Bombay and started the art magazine *MARG* on the advice of a smart and gifted woman called Anil de Silva. In the same year (1946) his *Apology for Heroism* was published. The next year (1947) a collection of his short stories under the title *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* was available.

Mulk Raj Anand's love for Anil grew rapidly and soon he was infatuated by her. It in turn eclipsed his love for Kathleen and in 1948 he went to London and secured a divorce from her with the purpose of marrying Anil. However, the divorce instead of settling his problems increased his mental agony and he suffered nervous breakdown as Anil breaking her promise to Mulk Raj Anand, married a Frenchman. To save himself from the mental illness, Melpo, a Greek dancer who nursed him in Mumbai suggested him to write it out. The result was the famous novel *Private Life of an Indian Prince* published in 1953.

After his return to Mumbai apart from editing the art magazine, *MARG*, Mulk Raj Anand was busy in attending and organizing many conferences. In 1950, he attended the World Peace Council Session in Berlin. In 1956 he helped to organize the First Asian Writers Conference in New Delhi. In 1958 he visited U.S.S.R. as joint leader of Indian delegation to Afro-Asian Writers' Conference. In 1960 he visited Japan for a special meeting of
Afro-Asian Writers Bureau. In 1961, he visited Australia on a lecture tour and attended Australian Peace Conference, in Melbourne. He also organized there an exhibition of Contemporary Indian Painting. The next year, he visited Cairo as a leader of Indian delegation to Afro-Asian Writers' Conference; he also sponsored formation of the Bureau of Afro-Asian Writers in Colombo and the Indian Committee of Writers for Afro-Asian Solidarity, in New Delhi. In 1965 he visited Weimer as a delegate to the World Writers' Meeting; he also visited Helsinki for World Peace Congress. In 1968 he attended Commonwealth Writers' Conference in Australia. The next year he visited Cairo for a meeting of Afro-Asian Writers. In 1970, when the Fourth Conference of Afro-Asian Writers was held in New Delhi he was its Organizer Secretary-General and he was also a visiting Professor at many Universities in India and abroad.

Mulk Raj Anand appears in his fiction as a crusader against injustice of every type. He steadfastly opposes the exploitation of the poor by any class. This includes the Imperial masters, the village money-lenders, the unscrupulous traders, the native rulers, priests and tea--planters. So deep is his concern for the poor and the underdog that in his novels one finds him crying with anguish against the injustice so prevalent in those days. In fact what has urged him to write novels is the breakdown of decencies in society as he states in his letters to Saros Cowasjee:
There is no avoiding the disgust one feels at the breakdown of decencies in present day India. Perhaps I ought to write more novels because, certainly, nowhere is the drama of meanness, hypocrisy, and double dealing in the interest of power and money and privilege being more actively played, every hour than it is in our country today... (78)

The passage quoted above is part of a letter Mulk Raj Anand wrote to Saros Cowasjee. It reveals what impelled Mulk Raj Anand to write novels. It also shows his faith in the power of fiction to awaken "the slumbering conscience of man.

The social evil Mulk Raj Anand first attacked is casteism. He finds it to be the greatest evil of Indian society. He knows that India, the emerging republic from colonial rule could become a powerful nation only if caste system is done away with. Just as the caste system has been in India since time immemorial, attempts to abolish it have also been there from that time onwards. It is worth quoting here the observation of Swami Vivekananda on this subject in his famous book *Caste, Culture and Socialism*:

The caste system is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached
against caste and every time it has only riveted the chains…(31)

Thus, right from the days of *Upanishades* thinkers have spoken against the caste system. Buddha preached against it 2500 years ago. In the nineteenth century, there were four major movements with the main aim, among other things, to abolish caste system. They are *Brahmo Samaj*, *Arya Samaj*, Rama Krishna Movement and the Theosophical Movement. These Movements tried hard to educate the people about the evils of caste system.

Around the 1930s when the freedom movement picked up momentum and united the whole nation into a great force, the Gandhian protest against caste system became an equally powerful force. The famous fast undertaken by Gandhi in 1932 to prevent the establishment of a separate electorates for the untouchables was the climax of protest against caste system in India. In many universities, the students took a vow not to observe the hierarchy of castes in their social dealings with others.

The angry young man in Mulk Raj Anand found the time perfectly ripe to present his long preserved feeling of protest against caste system. His method of protest was quite different from that of others. Instead of writing a tract againstuntouchability as suggested to him by Mahatma Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand wrote a novel *Untouchable*. Mulk Raj Anand
reflecting on this subject states in his article, “The Story of my experiment with a White Lie”:

**Untouchable** was in its sources a ballad born of the freedom I had tried to win for truth against the age-old lies of the Hindus by which they upheld discrimination. The profound thoughts of the upper orders in ancient India about caste were often noble. Someone in the great *Mahabharata* had cried, "Caste, caste. There is no caste!" And I wanted to repeat this truth to the "dead souls" from the compassion of my self explanation in the various Hindu hells, in the hope that I would, myself come clean after I had been through sewer, as it were...

(11)

To Mulk Raj Anand, casteism is an age-old lie made by the powerful and wicked in society to uphold discrimination. His prime concern as a social critic is to remove caste system as it damages social cohesion by giving certain sections of society an unfair advantage over others permanently. Casteism is a hydra-headed evil contagious like small pox. It is a heinous crime. It poisons and destroys the dignity of man. Hence it must be rejected. Mulk Raj Anand is right in beginning his career as a novelist by presenting the evils of caste system. Besides *Untouchable* (1935), *The Road* (1961) and *The Big Heart* (1945) also project caste system in different perspectives as the greatest malady of Indian society.
By going through novels like *Coolie* (1935) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1942), one will be able to perceive Mulk Raj Anand’s opposition to Capitalism and Imperialism. The British imperialists found India an ideal place for practising Capitalism in its most cruel form. They exploited the poverty and misery of India to make maximum profit. Munoo in *Coolie* and Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* are victims in the tragic drama of exploitation, illustrating how capitalists live by sucking the lives of labourers. The capitalism that one perceives in Mulk Raj Anand's novels is part of the British Imperialism.

The Senecan view, "Vivere militare est", to live means to struggle, is more true in the case of Indian peasants and tenants than of any other section of Indian society. The struggle of the peasants and tenants for "daybreak and daily bread" is a major theme in Mulk Raj Anand 's novels. In his novels, landlords, money-lenders and lawyers are satanic triplets in search of the blood of peasants. Poor peasants are subjected to boundless tyranny by these social leeches. Most of the produce of the peasants is usurped, either in the name of rent or debt, and they are compelled to live forever in the fear of losing their lands, lives and even the chastity of their wives and daughters. These feudal lords are like demi-gods, leading self-indulgent, idle and deluxe lives, at the expense of the toiling and sweating tenants who are despicably treated, despite the legal as well as illegal taxes and 'nazaranas' extorted from them. The
humanist in Mulk Raj Anand could not be a passive spectator to such a social situation. He protests vehemently against the evils of feudalism. This can be noticed in many of his novels but particularly in *The Village* (1942), *The Sword* and *The Sickle* (1942) and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953).

In his novels, Mulk Raj Anand draws our tears by his descriptions of the consequences of war on the poor villagers and the soldiers. The Empire’s ingratitude to the soldiers who fight for it, the untold misery they suffer on their return to their native land, the wretchedness of the villagers who are forced to pay War taxes up to the hilt are vividly presented in his novel *The Sword and the Sickle*. This social criticism of Mulk Raj Anand is an appeal to the British Crown not to make the poor Indian soldiers a prey in their petty quarrels with somebody else and if it does not heed to his appeal, at least to show compassion to them and their family during and after the war.

The social life in India is traditionally controlled by man and the customary laws that we have been following for ages is framed by man to suit his selfish end. As such woman gets only an inferior status. She is often subjected to endless torture by the pleasure seeking selfish husband, the merciless mother-in-law and the nagging sister-in-law. In this land of male chauvinists, woman leading a happy life is a rare phenomenon. Burning woman to death or offering her for prostitution by the ‘faithful’ husband or
torturing her till she runs away are day-to-day news items in the newspapers of this 'spiritual' land. We often preach of noble things like non-violence and tolerance. But every night in each lane of our villages or towns we are sure to hear at least one woman crying aloud after becoming a victim of violence. Mulk Raj Anand, the champion of the down-trodden, out castes, waifs and the abandoned does not fail to portray in his novels the predicament of woman who is a pitiable victim of the rigid social system. Of all his novels, *The Old Woman and the Cow or Gauri* (1960) considers the cause of woman most extensively. In fact, *Gauri* is Mulk Raj Anand’s only novel with a woman as the protagonist. The woman’s point of view presented in this novel can have a purging effect on the reader. A nation which gives inferior status to woman is not a free nation. Hence, the compassionate heart of Mulk Raj Anand eloquently protests in his novels and especially in *Gauri* against the ill-treatment of woman.

Mulk Raj Anand has been a visiting professor in a number of Indian and foreign universities. From 1939 to 1942 he was a lecturer in philosophy and literature with the London County Council Adult Education School. He is associated with the establishment of a number of schools. His experience in the field of education and the disappointing nature of the system of education his country provides aroused his concern. He wrote a number of articles on the futility of Indian system of education. His most
comprehensive view on the system of education needed for India can be seen in his book, *On Education*. Being an artist, Mulk Raj Anand could not be satisfied with writing only essays and books on education. He wanted to appeal emotionally to his countrymen on the need of reforming the educational system. His autobiographical novels *The Seven Summers, Morning Face, Confessions of a Lover* and *Lament on the death of a Master of Arts* contain references to the futility of our present system of education. The last novel is a vehement protest of an artist and social critic against the lamentable condition of Indian educational system.

Most of Mulk Raj Anand's protagonists are non-conformists who hurl defiance at religion. Like Maxim Gorky, Mulk Raj Anand too considers God as fabrication and gets amused by the Ethiop gods having Ethiop lips. Gorky affirms that man sublimated the best in him in the image of God in accordance with the laws of abstraction and concretization. Mulk Raj Anand is rather convinced of the maxim of Marx that religion is the opium of the people and considers it as one of Capitalism's protective institutions.

Mulk Raj Anand's religion is humanism. To be good and to do good is the gist of his religion. He does not approve institutionalised religion as that is a barrier to social cohesion. Mulk Raj Anand's position on religion is
clearly stated in answer to a questionnaire submitted to him by G.S. Balarama Gupta:

I do not believe in institutionalised religion. And like Tolstoy, I would like to leave the beliefs of people to their private conscience, collaborating with them for certain secular ends, without objecting to their pet religion...(21)

Mulk Raj Anand is angered by the Hindu society's acceptance of Casteism and Karma as the fundamental truth of its religion. He protests against the Christian theories of revelation, pre-destination, original sin and human depravity as they are impediments to human progress. He ridicules the inept practices of Islam. He attacks impartially the awkwardness that has intruded into every religion. He wants people to practise the true religion which is nothing but humanism. He disapproves the way religion is reduced to mere rituals and dead custom.

Mulk Raj Anand is an artist with a vision. He penetrates into the Indian social system and identifies the causes of the social evils. He reflects thus in his Apology for Heroism:

...Our inability to evolve a wide, generous and time civilized order is to a large extent due to past repressions of our emotional life, the hangover of the petty restraints imposed by the old system of life...(156)
Hence what is needed for the creation of a healthy society is social change. Since 'the kingdom of God is within you', for any social change, a prerequisite condition is change of heart. According to Mulk Raj Anand what is needed is, the big heartedness, the understanding, the generous, the wise heart, informed by passion and schooled by a knowledge born of love.

Mulk Raj Anand's social pre-occupations and the presentation of social criticism are found by some critics as a cancer eating away the artistic quality of his works. Some accuse him of being a propagandist and some others of being a Marxist humanist, and Mulk Raj Anand denies both these charges. Those who blame him of being a Marxist assert that his writing is weakened by his obvious and, many would imply, dogmatic commitment to the Marxist creed. They say that his novels are designed to fit a thesis and his work, they feel, fails because it is too programmatic.

The present research endeavour, “Social consciousness in the works of Mulk Raj Anand” traces Mulk Raj Anand’s socialistic concerns in Untouchable, The Road, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, and “The Village” trilogy which includes The Village, Across The Black Waters and The Sword and The Sickle, Death of a Hero and The Big Heart to establish Mulk Raj Anand as a writer with social commitments and contemporary relevance.