



## Life and work of Mulk Raj Anand: A analytical study

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### Abstract

In the preceding unit of this block we have given you a bird's eyeview of the rise of the Indian English novel from the very beginning till the turn of the millennium. In this topic, we shall discuss Mulk Raj Anand who, with R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, established Indian English novel in the gamut of Indian and world literatures. Anand's life may be divided into three periods, according to the place of his residence and activity

- a. The early years in India until his departure for England 1905-1925.
- b. The years in Europe, 1925-1945.
- c. The later years in India, 1945 until the present.

**Keywords:** Preceding, millennium, literatures, residence, activity, establish, beginning, gamut

### Introduction

#### Early Life

Mulk Raj Anand was born in a Hindu family of Kshatriyas on 12 December 1905 in Peshawar, the central city of Northwest Frontier Province, now in Pakistan. He was the third of five sons of Lal Chand, a silversmith turned sepoy. Anand's father belonged to the thathiar caste. People of Thathiar Caste were workers of cooper and silver. Lal Chand left his hereditary occupation to attend school. As an Arya Samaji, Anand's father also served as president of the Nowshera samaj from 1910 to 1913. Anand's mother came from a devout Sikh peasant family of Sialkot, a part of Central Punjab.

The first twenty years of Anand's life seems to have been spent in the Punjab area. After passing Matric in 1920, he entered Khalsa College, Amritsar. In 1925, he graduated from Punjab University with Honours in English. In 1928, he was awarded Ph.D. degree in London University. He then associated with T.S. Eliot's literary periodical the Criterion.

#### Literary career

Mulk Raj Anand enjoys the reputation of being pioneer novelist because of a corpus of creative fiction of sufficient bulk and quality. He is a prolific writer and is continuing to write and publish at the age of ninety-six. Anand became an exciting name with his early novels *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) in which he started the new trend of realism and social protest in Indian English fiction.

*Untouchable*, a powerful novel, can be regarded as quintessential. In 1939-1942, Anand wrote a trilogy, a series of three novels dealing with the same protagonist called Lal Singh.

Besides novels, Mulk Raj Anand has written more than seventy short stories which has been published in various collections.

Awards:

In 1952, Anand was awarded the International Peace Prize of the World Peace Council for promoting peace among the

nations through his literary works. In 1967, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India for distinguished service to art and literature. In 1978, he won the E.M. Forster award of Rs. 3000 for his novel *Confession of a Lover* which was adjudged the best book of creative literature in the English Language.

#### The Thirties Movement

"Among the Indo-English novelists", observes Anniah Gowda, "Mulk Raj Anand is most conspicuously committed writer... Perhaps the best word for it is the plainest it is propaganda writing! *Untouchable*, as also some other early writings of Anand, cannot be fully appreciated unless studied in relation to the movement of the nineteen-thirties in Western Europe. Anand was the General strike of 1926 in the Great Britain.

Sajjad Zaheer who played a prominent role in the organization vividly recalls his association with Anand. The progressive movement then has a reaction against the esoteric and inward looking art of the nineteen-twenties. Anand, like Lawrence, Gorky and Eric Gill believes that the work of a genuine creative writer is inspired by a mission. In the choice of themes, therefore, Anand is unquestionably an innovator.

#### The writing and publication of *untouchable*

*Untouchable* was written over a long weekend in 1930. Mulk Raj Anand tells us that it poured out like hot lava from the volcano of his imagination, and that during its composition he hardly slept for more than six hours in three days. In his article 'On the Genesis of *Untouchable*: A Note' Mulk Raj Anand tells in details about the writing of novel. In April 1929, he went to see Gandhiji in the Sabarmati Ashram in the boiling heat of Gujarat.

By September 1934, the novel had been rejected by as many as nineteen publishers. Anand felt so disheartened that he contemplated suicide. *Wishart Book* was published on 1 May 1935. It received a mixed response to begin with but soon it established for itself a popularity that remains unrivalled for a work of fiction by an author.

**Conclusion**

In this topic we have discussed the shaping influences on Anand's life-parentage, association with the writers of twenties and Gandhi Ji. We have also told you in detail the genesis of his master piece untouchable. With these insights you should be in a better position to appreciate Anand's contribution to literature and society. The thirties movement proved to be a watershed in the literary sensibility in Europe.

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