



A novelist, short story writer as well as an art critic, Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was among the first few Indian writers in English who gained international recognition early in his life. His novels *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) impressively articulate the abuses of an exploited class.

A dynamic personality, impeccably dressed Anand befriended great writers like E.M. Forster, Herbert Read and George Orwell. Till 1947, he spent half his time in London and half in India. It was therefore inevitable for him to be drawn to India's struggle for independence. The most important influence upon Anand was that of Gandhi who shaped his social conscience. With success, Anand came to firmly believe that a writer's work

is an illustration of a ‘fiery voice of those people who through his own torments...transmutes in art all feeling...thus becoming the seer of new vision...’

Anand was proactively associated with the Progressive Writers’ movement of India and was one of the moving spirits behind the drafting of its first manifesto. Equally noteworthy was his passion for the arts whose best expression were the issues of *Marg* which he founded and edited for a quarter century. Even after he withdrew from its editorship, it continued to be the leading art journal of India.

This book is the first ever attempt to put together the biography of such a vibrant personality who left no stone unturned to realise his dreams. With Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, Anand is regarded as one of the founding fathers of the Indian English novel.

Amrik Singh, the author of this volume got to know Mulk Raj Anand in 1938 and remained in touch with him all his life. During his long career, he has been a teacher, an educational administrator, an author of several books on educational policy, a playwright in Punjabi and also a human rights activist.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this book has been uncommonly difficult for me. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) wrote so extensively and about such a variety of issues that to track down each one of his publications was quite a job. That apart, there are a few other things which need to be referred to.

The first one is that while Anand had made a will of his assets several years before he passed away, he decided to rewrite it a few years later. However, it so happened that the new nominee herself passed away a few months before his death. By then, he had become so weak that he could not take the initiative to write out a new will. The situation today, therefore, remains confused. Anand’s original intention was to make his Khandala property, christened as ‘Sarvodaya Farm’, into some kind of a ‘Writers’ Home’ but that remains an unfulfilled dream. While the property at Hauz Khas village in Delhi is invested in Lokayata, a registered society, which is functioning actively as of today, the same cannot be said about his property in Khandala.

Most of his manuscripts and the entire record of his extensive correspondence with hundreds of persons tie in Khandala. Those few people who looked after him during the last few years are controlling the entire

range of this invaluable material. In the absence of a clear title to that property, things continue to drift. Were the Ministry of Culture to take a hand in the matter, it may be possible to save the situation.

Given the confused situation, it was not possible for me to be more specific than I have ventured to be. While writing this book, I came across a number of important gaps in his life and career. For example, it is difficult to say without looking through those papers whether his autobiographical writings which Irene typed out for him are in Khandala or not. In writing this book, I was aware of my limitations. But I persisted in writing it with the hope that this book, however imperfect it might be, will pave the way for some more authentic version of what he accomplished during his life. As long as he lived, Anand was one of the leading intellectuals of India. With the passage of time, things are likely to change. Whatever his stature in half a century or so, he will always continue to be somebody who mattered in the world of culture at one time.

I am particularly grateful to A. S. Dasan of the University of Mysore whom Anand had asked to write his official biography. That was during the last few years of his life but the job remains undone. However, I found him a mine of information and spent more than a month in Mysore in close interaction with him. I thank him sincerely for all the help that he extended. He is scheduled to publish his full-length study on Anand, titled *Mulk in Context: Profile of a Dissenting Pilgrim Artist*, shortly.

Another person who was helpful in a variety of ways was Kewal Anand. He manages Lokayata down to its last detail. Without his help and cooperation, I would have found it difficult to get access to a whole range of inaccessible sources. I am deeply indebted to him for his readiness to help.

Several other people, too numerous to mention here, were helpful in a number of respects. But for their readiness to help, it would have been difficult to complete this assignment.

New Delhi
AMRIK SINGH

1. THE ADVENT

If a novel is turned down by as many as 19 publishers, who would not feel disappointed? This happened to Mulk Raj Anand before his well known novel, *Untouchable*, was published in 1935. At one stage, he felt so

frustrated that he even thought of committing suicide. But the personal crisis was overcome in a somewhat unexpected manner.

One publisher agreed to publish the novel provided E.M. Forster, the author of *A Passage to India*, wrote a Preface to it. This was done, and the novel was published. It proved to be such an immediate hit that Anand is remembered for it more than any other novel of his. Not only that, the publication of Anand's novel was a trail-blazer in what has come to be called Anglo-Indian fiction. Soon after, at some interval of time, other gifted writers made their appearance. The more obvious of them were two. One was Raja Rao and other was R.K. Narayan.

These three writers are generally clubbed together in India. Perhaps another notable new figure who appeared on the scene during the next few years was Ahmed Ali. He published a novel with the title, *Twilight in Delhi*, which dealt with the declining years of the Mughal rule. But, this was during the turbulent phase of the partition of India. Soon after its publication, the author migrated to Pakistan with the result that it became the ancestor of a new stream of English writing which was based on Pakistan and not on India.

In a book dealing with one author, a reference to his contemporaries can be made but no more. One thing, however, needs to be said. Each one of them was different in his own unique way. R.K. Narayan, for example, is best known for his comic style of writing. Raja Rao has a philosophical bent of mind. This became more and more pronounced with the passage of time. As a novelist, therefore, his novel *Kanthapura* stands out in more than one respect.

A good deal has been written about each one of them. What marks out Anand is his social conscience. This is what linked him to Gandhiji's thinking. It was not an accident that after he had written out the first draft of his novel, he got in touch with Gandhiji. This issue is discussed later on and no more needs to be said here except to repeat the point that, in his thinking as well as social perception, he was very much in the mainstream of the Gandhi-Nehru cast of thinking.

II

Why did Anand encounter such a prolonged degree of resistance to the publication of his first novel? During the preceding century or so, a number of competent British writers had written novels about India. Not unoften, what they wrote was based on either history or romance. One or two Indians had also attempted something. The pioneer in this regard was the Bengali

novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who had started writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. After one novel in English, he switched over to Bengali, his mother tongue, and stopped writing in English. In brief, no Indian writers of note had written fiction in English about India till then. Anand was almost the first person to do so.

How he started doing it also needs to be described. Born at the beginning of the twentieth century, he spent his early childhood in British cantonments in north India. His father was working in the Indian Army as a middle level administrator and got transferred from place to place. His own birth took place in Peshawar cantonment in 1905. Anand wrote an autobiographical novel about his growing up years and called it *Seven Summers*. It is highly perceptive and is rich in those picturesque details which influenced his thinking during his childhood.

There is always a distinction between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel. Anand had planned to write an autobiography at one time but never got around to writing one. As to autobiographical novels, he published four of them. He published a portion of the fifth novel also but it remained incomplete. Going by *Seven Summers*, a couple of things stand out. One, that he was a curious child. He wanted an answer to whatever puzzled him. More competent in his knowledge of English than most other children of his age, he followed everything that the British did with great eagerness and a sense of curiosity. So much so that he started copying them in a variety of ways. This habit of his became so notable that he was even nicknamed as Pilpili Sahib. He also wrote a book with that name and it overlaps *Seven Summers* to quite an extent. This colloquial term in Punjabi was satirical in intent and implied that he copied the British in almost everything that he did or encountered.

How he took to reading also needs to be referred to. At least on two occasions in his childhood, he was confined to bed for long stretches of time. This encouraged him to take to reading as a habit. And since he admired the British and he was almost the best student in this subject in his class, it was but logical that his range of reading was much more than most of his contemporaries.

The pro-British aspect of his personality remained unchanged till his college days. It was during those years that the Jallianwala Bagh incident took place in Amritsar to which place he belonged and where he was enrolled in a school at that time. Both these factors made the whole experience much more disturbing than might have happened otherwise.

At one stroke, from being an admirer of the British, he turned anti-British. He took part in some of the protests that were being organised in the city and had to spend one month in jail as well. As is generally believed, the Jallianwala Bagh incident was a turning point in Indian national history and it had a direct impact upon his thinking.

Despite some reservations that Indians had in supporting the British in their fight with Germany, the Indian attitude, on the whole, was helpful rather than otherwise. The British held out high hopes of rewarding those Indians who helped them in the war effort but a certain kind of disillusionment set in when the British failed to keep their word. Worse than that, they shot down approximately 400 people in a public garden which had only one entry and exit.

About 2,000 people had assembled when General Dyer issued the order to the crowd to disperse, otherwise they would be forcibly dispersed. There was hardly any time to think about what to do and, before long, General Dyer issued the order to shoot. Many more could have been killed except for the fact that the Gurkha regiment which he commanded had exhausted its ammunition.

This entire incident created such a hostile reaction against the British that when an anti-British movement started and Gandhi emerged as its leader, it did not take long for Anand to adopt a strong anti-British attitude. As a matter of fact, after 1919, Anand became an ardent supporter of the Indian National Congress and also of Gandhiji who had more or less established himself as its new leader.

III

A couple of years later, Anand finished his college at Amritsar and started looking for an opening. One lucky coincidence was that during those days when he was an undergraduate, Annie Besant happened to visit the college. He interacted with her at some length. One of the things that emerged as an outcome of that interaction was that she advised Anand to go to England for further study. Besant could see that he was a bright and eager young man who, if he remained in India, would get drawn into the national struggle and land up in jail before long.

All this happened in 1923-24, about the time he finished his college education. There is no authentic record of what he did during those unsettled years. He did some odd jobs here and there. One of the things that he did was to go to Shimla where he became a private tutor to several of the hill

princes. Himachal Pradesh did not exist at that time as we know it today. In that area, however, there existed a number of small states which were ruled by local chieftains. Anand somehow came in contact with a couple of them. This experience stood him in good stead. Later, he utilised this experience to write a novel about an Indian prince.

Apart from his connection with Shimla, he frequently visited Lahore. One of the people he got to know there was Mohammed Iqbal, the leading Urdu poet. He became fairly close to him and one of the outcomes of that interaction was that it confirmed him in his plan to go abroad for higher education.

What triggered the act of his departure from India was the situation at home. By the time he passed out, Anand had become explicitly anti-British whereas his father continued to be pro-British. This led to a confrontation between the two. It also led to a scene between the two parents. Like any mother, she was partial to her son, Mulk Raj. The father recognised his talent but was uneasy about his independent thinking and rebellious ways.

The fact of the matter was that while the father showed considerable interest in his future, he was, however, more concerned about his own future. He was afraid that his son would sooner or later get arrested or something of that kind. This, in turn, would prejudice his standing with his British bosses to whom he was loyal in every way. The confrontation between them became so violent that on one occasion the father hit his wife while she was defending her son.

Rebellious as he already was, Anand there and then made up his mind to go abroad. Among those who helped to fund his foreign trip were Iqbal, the poet. Another was the then Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar, from where he had passed out. Obviously, the Principal must have been impressed by the potential talent of this young man and gave him a loan out of his own pocket. The most crucial help came from his mother. She pawned some of her gold with a professional money lender and gave him whatever she could raise. Coming from a lower middle class family, this was a daring step to take but she took it.

IV

In London, Anand got admitted to a course in Philosophy in the University College. Iqbal had also specialised in Philosophy, even though he was known as a poet before he went to Germany for his higher education.

Anand too opted to study Western Philosophy in London. Whether he was influenced by the example of Iqbal or not cannot be said for certain.

No record of the difficulties he faced in London in those early years is available anywhere. Perhaps the most notable thing that happened was that the professor under whom he studied was very helpful and secured him some kind of a scholarship. More than that, a few months into his course, he asked him to go out of London and spend some quiet time in Wales. Till then, he had hardly any background in Philosophy. His teacher wanted him to read the classics and bring himself equal to the same range of reading and level of understanding as his other contemporaries had. Armed with a packet of books, he settled down somewhere in Wales and started studying.

During his stay in Wales, he came across an Irish girl, Irene, who played an important part in his life. He was captivated by her charm and personality and he did not hesitate to express his liking for her. As time went by, she became fond of him. Her father was also a university teacher and looked upon him as a bright young man in whom his daughter was interested. In later years, this fact played an important role in his life.

Years later, he wrote a book which he published about the time when he was proposing to return home after some 20 years of stay in UK. This book was called *An Apology for Heroism: A Brief Autobiography of Ideas*. This book along with another book, entitled *Conversations in Bloomsbury*, published in 1981, gives a somewhat detailed picture of how he evolved as a young, thinking person. A study of both these books throws a good deal of light on his life during those hectic days. No more need be said about them at this stage.

What is relevant to note here is the fact that what he saw of British life in UK was markedly different from what he had seen in India. In India, the British were the imperial masters. In UK, the situation was different. He had been impressed by the dignity which even those who may be described as menial workers conducted themselves. This was unlike what he had lived through in India.

Not everything that he saw came across in glowing terms. For instance, he made a shocking discovery when the General Strike of 1926 took place. It was opposed, among others, by his fellow students in the University College. The British miners who constituted the backbone of the Labour Party led this strike. That the strike did not succeed was another thing. He was in favour of the strike but it was only a small group of students who had

adopted this attitude. On the whole, however, his first impression about UK was favourable. One instance of it may be quoted here.

In England, he found no such thing as untouchability as he had encountered in India. He has recorded one instance in *Seven Summers* which had made a profound impact on his thinking. The hero of the novel *Untouchable*, was a sweeper boy, Bakha. Anand was very friendly with him and admired him in a number of ways.

One incident that had happened when he was growing up may be recalled here. Once Anand was injured while at play. The sweeper boy took care of him in every way and took him home. Anand's mother, instead of feeling grateful for the care extended to her son, rebuked the sweeper boy for having physically touched him and made him impure. Anand was baffled by what he saw. What the sweeper boy had done was a normal human thing—to help someone who had been injured—and he had no intention of doing anything which would undermine or outrage any one's belief in Hinduism. As a matter of fact, the sweeper boy was also a Hindu but men he was an untouchable!

This was something which profoundly disturbed Anand and he found it difficult to accept. What he saw in England was qualitatively different. There was no question¹ of anyone being regarded as an untouchable. A human being was a human being and there was nothing else to it. This aspect of Hindu society in which he had grown up bothered him and upset him profoundly. What he saw in UK was a preview of life which he regarded as acceptable. What was happening in India was unacceptable to him and to the kind of society which he wanted to see established in India.

During his stay in Wales and the close interaction he had with Irene, he talked freely to her about his early childhood, his various experiences and so on. There developed such a close bond between them that, partly because he had found someone sympathetic in Irene, and partly driven by his own personal experience, he started writing a kind of confession for her. Irene encouraged him to do so and he reduced the story of his childhood to writing. He wrote something like 1,800 pages. While Anand wrote in long hand, Irene typed it out. If the manuscript is still available in his papers which are in Khandala, it would be a great mine of information about his early years.

Regardless of whether that manuscript still exists or not, the fact remains that much of his later writing can be traced back to what happened in those early years of his life. When he took to novel writing in a professional way,

he was writing on the basis of what he had gone through and recorded in that manuscript. The more important thing to understand is that Anand's youth coincided with the new political awakening that was taking place in India during those years. It was a period of social turmoil. Things that had been accepted for centuries together now came to be questioned. The Western ways of thinking began to make an impact on Indian society. The steady emergence of the movement for Indian freedom acquired a mass character under the influence of Gandhi. Before long, Anand got drawn into it.

Untouchability was one unacceptable dimension of what he saw and he began to question it. Many other things too were being questioned. Not only that, the imperialist hold on India was also being questioned. The link between imperial rule and the feudal setup that held India under siege was also under attack. There was estrangement between the Hindus and the Muslims, and as time went by, the British started to fish in trouble waters. Being a sensitive and thoughtful young man, Anand reacted to all these things in a manner that, years later, when his writing career took on, his sociological imagination and vision could not but assume a prominent role in it.

V

To come back to the 1926 Strike, Anand had found it a somewhat disturbing experience. Before long, he came to the conclusion that the bulk of Englishmen and women stood for the kind of *status quo* which imperialism represented in the rest of the world. He had seen ample evidence of it in India and, now, for a change, he witnessed it even in UK.

The rise of the Labour Party, the new emerging political force, took another 3-4 decades to come to power. It was only in 1945 that the Labour Party won a decisive victory. It had won a victory of sorts in the early 30s as well but it was not decisive enough to change the political situation as it might have.

Anand's interaction with Irene proved to be exceptionally productive as far as his own personal growth was concerned. She not only typed out his manuscript, they both became so close to each other that, together, they visited the continent for several days and went around Paris and various other places. This was his first visit to the continent and he found it both educative and stimulating. The funding for this visit had come from Irene's father.

Irene was active in the Irish movement for independence. At one stage, she was arrested and put behind the bars. Anand visited her in jail and remained in touch with her almost all the time. What is relevant here is the fact that Irene, being both a thinker and a doer, influenced Anand profoundly. His decision in 1945 to return to India after two decades in England was to quite an extent influenced by the example of Irene. There is more to be said on this subject which will be taken up later. We now move on to how *Untouchable*, his first novel, came to be written and in what circumstances it was published.

2. UNTOUCHABLE AND AFTER

Of all things that Anand experienced in childhood, nothing distressed him more than the issue of people being regarded as untouchables. Students of history know that this was one of the foremost issues in the 20s of the last century. Gandhi led a systematic campaign against this evil social practice. He visited several parts of India where this problem was more acute than elsewhere. Kerala was one of those states which he visited in the later half of the 20s. In that State, even the shadow of someone who was regarded as 'impure' upon another person who was not 'impure' was strongly objected to.

Ever since he had become an adult, Anand had identified himself with the dispossessed and the underprivileged. As a part of this outlook on life, he looked upon Gandhi as an innovator in Hindu society. More precisely, his experience as a child persuaded him to write something on the subject. There was an incidental story in Gandhi's weekly newspaper, *Harijan*, about a young untouchable boy which excited Anand's imagination. Prompted by that, he wrote a letter to Gandhi asking for an appointment with him. Gandhi promptly replied in the positive. As hinted earlier, perhaps Anand was already busy writing something on the theme of the equality of all human beings.

At this stage, it is important to recall his experiences in London which are discussed in some detail in his book, *Conversations in Bloomsbury*. As is clear from a reading of this book, Anand had got drawn into what was generally known as the literary life of England soon after his initial stay in London. Leonard and Virginia Woolf, a well known literary couple, generally played host at the time to some of the leading writers of the day in their home in Bloomsbury. It was located in the heart of the central London. Being almost next to the British Museum and encircled by some of the better

known bookshops in London, it was an ideal location for the weekly meeting of some of the leading writers of the time.

Leonard Woolf had worked in Ceylon, as it was known then, for a few years as a civil servant. But he soon chose to resign and returned to London. He established a publishing house, called the Hogarth Press, and started publishing the writings of some of those people who mattered in the world of letters. Anand somehow got to know Leonard and started correcting proofs for him in order to supplement his income. This in turn put him in contact with a number of leading writers and made him sensitive to the currents and cross currents of contemporary literary life.

James Joyce was a leading writer of that period. Anand had read him extensively. One of the things that impressed him after a reading of his *Ulysses* was that he had compressed the happenings of the events in one of his novel into one day. Following that model, Anand attempted a novel, entitled *Bakha*. Bakha, as referred to earlier, was a sweeper boy who had been a friend of his as a child. Anand decided to write about him and projected him as the hero of his novel. Eventually the title of the novel was changed to *Untouchable*.

It was during this period in his life that he came very close to Irene. He would write out something and she would type it out for him. How to go and see Gandhi who had responded so promptly? He had to find money to travel back to India and it was not so easy but somehow he managed it. He had gone to London in 1925 and his first journey back to India was in 1929. A couple of years later, he revisited India and this time he came back with the manuscript of his maiden novel which he read out to Gandhi and rewrote it substantially in the light of what Gandhi had told him.

At that time, Gandhi lived in Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad. As arranged, he went to the Ashram. He was dressed like an Englishman at that time. The moment Gandhi saw him in his corduroy jacket; Gandhi expressed disapproval of his dress. Indeed, without asking for his consent, Gandhi told Mahadev Desai, his secretary, to give him some *khadi* clothes. After he had changed into the Indian dress, Gandhi had another meeting with him and asked him about his mission.

Anand told him about the novel that he had written. Gandhi's first observation was that he might write a pamphlet rather than a novel but, on Anand's insistence that he preferred a fictional mode of communication, Gandhi did not press his point any further. For the next several weeks, at an appointed hour of the day, Anand would read out one chapter of the novel at

each sitting and Gandhi gave his reactions to what was read out. But before this could be done, Gandhi had told Anand that there were three conditions which he would have to fulfil.

The first one was that he would not drink. Anand replied honestly to the effect that while he had been drinking in London, he would not do so in the Ashram. The second condition was that he would not look upon any woman with a feeling of desire. To this, Anand replied that he would act as desired but he could not forget his girl friend in¹ England who, among other things, had helped him come to India. Gandhi accepted this contention without any further discussion. Thirdly, he would have to clean the latrines like other members of the Ashram. Anand accepted this condition readily.

One important outcome of his long stay in the Ashram was that Gandhi told him in no uncertain terms and in convincing detail that his characters should not speak like Bloomsbury intellectuals. On the contrary, they should speak like ordinary men and women whom Anand had encountered in the course of his growing up. This was a piece of advice which made him re-examine his assumptions. To refuse to accept social discrimination as a fact of life was perfectly in order. But how to express it in terms of conversation in daily life was something that he had yet to learn. To some extent, Gandhi taught him that.

To cut a long story short, the novel got condensed by about one third. With that draft in his pocket, Anand revisited his family in Amritsar and travelled around the country for quite some months. Travelling around the country was one of the things suggested to him by Gandhi. He told him that he had gone to England for higher study but had had very little experience of life in India. If he wanted to be a writer, one of the things to do was to go around the country and understand it better. Anand acted upon this advice and visited different parts of India during the next few months. Among other places, he revisited Kangra where he had spent some time during his childhood. He also visited the Assam tea gardens. Sometime later, when he published his novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, he based it on his visit to Assam.

II

Let us come back to *Untouchable*. After his return to London, he got busy with a book on *Persian Painting* and another on *The Hindu View of Art*. These two were specialised books and there was an established market for them. In another year or so, he was almost ready with his manuscript of

Untouchable and started looking around for a publisher. But no one was prepared to publish it. It is important to understand why.

While a number of British citizens who had lived in India had written novels about India, their point of view was essentially imperialist in character. One important example of it was the kind of fiction that Rudyard Kipling had written. His novel, *Kim*, had proved immensely popular. If Kipling eventually went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, one important feature of his work was the imperial view of India which he had projected. This perception of India was generally accepted in the West. Indeed, it was the prevalent view about India in the Western world, at least till then.

In the 1920s, E.M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*, was published. There was something fresh about it. The point of view projected here was more humanistic than imperialistic. After *Kim*, this was one novel which had compelled attention, so to speak. Forster had spent quite some time in India and understood the country much better than the earlier generation of imperialist writers.

What Anand now attempted went much beyond E.M. Forster. Two things about him and his novel were unmistakable. One was his unconcealed hatred of imperialism. This was at odds with the kind of writing that Kipling and most others had been doing. The other important dimension of his writing was his total disapproval of and disgust with the kind of feudal life which he had witnessed and lived through in India. His opposition to the caste system and his fervent belief in the equality of all human beings dripped from every word that he wrote.

What was the motive power behind his writing? His own answer is revealing. In his book, *Apology for Heroism*, he states:

I had come abroad, not merely with the purpose of sight seeing, but with the vague and genuine ambition to learn the secrets of European civilization, to reside for a time in a world where ideas of social and human equality could at least be discussed freely, if they were not quite sincerely accepted.

This very idea is expressed a little more graphically later in the same book:

I struggled to weigh up the double burden on my shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of my Indian past, all my senses aching to realise the significance of the history of my country, all my heart and brain devoted to the search of those causes which had led to its present degeneracy.

These two quotations illustrate the kind of mental and emotional thinking with which he wrote *Untouchable*. Everything came from his heart. The hero of the novel, Bakha, has a number of hectic experiences which, following the model of James Joyce, he compressed into one day. Each experience is different in character but each one of them illustrates how he is treated as an untouchable all the time. As E.M. Forster who wrote the Preface to the novel pointed out, the novel has a form though not a tight structure. Even though some people think that it is loosely constructed, that is not exactly so.

Towards the end of the novel which, in a sense, reveals, and indeed underlines his marginalised existence as a sweeper boy, Bakha has three options open to him. One is to listen to the words of a missionary who wanted to convert him to Christianity. This might ease his situation to some extent but would not solve the problem. The second was to go by the wise and gratifying words of Gandhi who told his countrymen that to look upon anyone as an untouchable was not the right thing to do. Everyone was pure or impure in the same measure, and to look down upon anyone was not right. The third choice was that the new technology adopted in the West be adopted in India also so that human refuse is washed out, and no one can be labelled as a sweeper. The third option made good sense to him, and Anand leaves the matter at that.

It is not necessary to go into further details except to make the point that Anand was talking about a world which was so distant for the English speaking reader that they had only heard about the situation in India and not seen it in the disturbing manner in which Anand had described it. If the novel was not published, the principal reason was that Anand's point of view was not seen to be familiar with the English speaking reader. At least, that is what the publishers thought. It was the overwhelming popularity of the novel which made them reconsider their earlier conservative, indeed overcautious, perception of the taste of the reading public. The fact of the matter was that times were changing but the publishers had not yet understood the changing ethos of the age.

Once it was published, public support to it was immediate and overwhelming. It was eventually translated into around 40 languages of the world.

That kind of initial resistance and eventual resounding success is not an unknown phenomenon in literature. There are several examples where what is called consumer resistance comes in the way of a new kind of writing being published. Once it is published and wins public acclaim, the earlier barriers are overcome, and the kind of sensibility which new writers project

comes to be accepted readily as well as enthusiastically. Anand's distinction lay in this fact that he was the first man to overcome this kind of consumer resistance and, in the process, projected his unique kind of sensibility.

III

As soon as *Untouchable* was published and once the critical doors were opened to him, Anand followed it up with his next novel, *Coolie*, which had been germinating in his mind for a long time. Indeed, it was written within three months of the publication of *Untouchable*. For Anand, this was some kind of a breakthrough. He had been struggling to express himself in his own distinctive way. Once the artificially manufactured kind of resistance which had delayed the publication of his first novel had been overcome, Anand started drawing upon his earlier experience of life and came out with many more novels and short stories.

The hero of *Coolie* is a 14 years old boy, nicknamed as Munnoo. He belonged to Kangra Valley, then a part of Punjab. Anand had known that part of Punjab right from his childhood and he revisited it on his first visit to India after his half decade's stay in UK. Over the years, this Valley had come to have the reputation of supplying a large number of domestic servants to the newly emerging middle class of Punjab.

Once Munnoo got to the plains, he became a domestic servant in the family of a junior officer in one of the banks. He does a series of jobs as a domestic servant, a worker in a pickle factory, then a textile factory and so on. Each job represents a different phase of his bitter experience. His last job is with an Anglo Indian lady in Shimla where he had to pull a rickshaw for her. Owing to the unsanitary conditions in which he had to live, he got infected by tuberculosis. This proves fatal and he succumbs to the disease in the end. Altogether, we see him functioning only for two years and each job is a story of his unrelieved misery and exploitation.

While *Untouchable* had confined itself to the experiences of one day in Bakha's life, Munnoo has a different kind of career. He flits from one job to another and it turns out that each one of them is worse than the earlier one. In both cases, it is an instance of exploitation by those controlling the social set up in which these two characters find themselves. Anand describes the successive stages of this desperate struggle for dignity with profound concern and compassion.

These two novels revealed a dimension of India's social life which had not been unveiled earlier by anyone in Indo-Anglian fiction. A leading

British critic, V.S. Pritchett, wrote in a letter to Anand, “I got more out of *Coolie* than any other novel I have read for a long time, indeed. It is the only political novel which has profoundly satisfied me.” This comment was made in March 1937.

As an extension of his commitment to social causes, Anand got drawn into the anti-fascist movement which was then emerging in Europe. Not only that, he went on to participate in the Spanish Civil War which was raging at that time. Indeed, he spent three months in Spain. Anand was perhaps the only Indian writer to have done so. So many others belonging to different countries were involved in this adventure which had a pronounced anti-fascist bias.

No wonder when he came out to India in the following year, he was already a famous man. As the author of two widely acclaimed novels and as having participated in the Spanish Civil War, Anand came to have a reputation which signified that here was a man who had something new to say. Not only that, having taken a consciously anti-Imperialist stance and written about those aspects of Indian life which had hardly been touched upon earlier, there was something distinctive and unique about him.

The Nehru family was one among the other people he got to know in the course of his visit. Nehru’s sister, Krishna Hutheesingh, became a close friend and the two of them later collaborated in writing a book, titled *The Indian Bride*. Jawaharlal himself extended patronage to him. He spent some time in Allahabad and acted as Jawaharlal’s political secretary for a few weeks. These things are being referred to here because they were destined to play a helpful role in his later career when he returned to India after 1945.

In conclusion, it may be added here that during his entire writing career, and even today, Anand is mainly known for these two novels. As far as one can judge, even in the decades to come, the kind of Indian reality which Anand projected would be historically difficult to ignore. For one thing, he was almost the first writer in English to project this issue. For another, that reality has not yet undergone a qualitative change.

Almost every feature of it—its extent, spread, coverage, character, the feudal hang ups that stem from it and, above all, the sheer fact of exploitation by those who shamelessly indulge in it—are so stubbornly present even today that Anand continues to be relevant, even contemporary, both socially and artistically. And this was no mean achievement.

After he had completed his doctorate from University College, London, he did not choose to return to India but attempted to establish himself as a professional writer there. He had some success in it in so far as he was able to publish two books on art criticism which have been referred to above. Meanwhile, he had written the novel which was eventually called *Untouchable*. At one stage, he even toyed with the idea of writing a play rather than a novel.

That apart, having published two novels in the idiom that he had worked out for himself, he wanted to do more of that kind of writing. He theorised about it in the following manner:

It is only by extending the range of one's sympathies to all human beings and by concentrating on all that exalts them that we can rescue the disinherited from the morass of superstition and poverty in which they are steeped. But mercy and generosity and love for humane causes ought not to blind us to the evils, the falsities and stupidities that prevent goodwill from emerging among human beings. Nor should false notions of personality as a mere bundle of personal desires limit the conception of man as an improving animal.

V

At this point of time, Anand made a trip to India. In 1936, a new body called the Progressive Writers Association had got established. The main person behind this initiative was Sajjad Zaheer. Anand had known him from his London days. Indeed, they had become close friends. When this writers' body was set up and its first meeting was held in Lucknow under the chairmanship of Munshi Prem Chand, Zaheer became the Secretary of that organization. In short, the transition from being a writer to an activist did not require much effort on his part. It all looked so natural.

Restless as he always was, Anand moved about a good deal during those days and made a large number of fresh contacts. Some of the people he had known earlier during his stay in London had come back to India and were doing, a variety of jobs and following different professions. No wonder, Anand spent several months in going around the country and getting to re-contact these people. As a matter of fact, the contacts made at that time were so numerous and so close that Anand paid yet another visit to India in

1938. It is equally important to remember that Anand did not neglect his writing. In 1937, he brought out a new novel with the title, *Two Leaves and a Bud*.

It excited considerable controversy, and to some extent, if the British tea owners felt upset about how they had been depicted, this should not have come as a surprise to him. Years later, looking back over the publication of this particular novel, he made a comment which may be reproduced here:

I conceived *Two Leaves and a Bud* as a poem of suffering. I admit that it is the most bitter of my novels, but it is poetic; were it a literary reportage, it would have been hundred times bitterer.

The reasons for giving these details is that these early novels by Anand gave him a certain kind of moral and literary projection. The two basic elements in that projection were that Anand understood the life and longings of his people in India. He projected their struggles almost in the manner in which several of the writers writing in Indian languages were writing. They were in closer touch with things as they were happening, and truly speaking, there was hardly any distance between them and the common people. That is why they were so authentic. Munshi Prem Chand was a prime example of this kind of writing and there were many others in various other Indian languages.

Secondly, Anand was the first writer in English to write about this exploited segment of Indian society. In doing so, he had fought many a battle. Eventually he had his way and that is what explains the verve and the authenticity of the first phase of his writing career. It lasted from 1935 when his first novel was published to 1937 when his novel about the ruthless exploitation going on in the Assam tea gardens was published.

His overall perception is best described in the following lines which are taken from a letter he sent to one of his critics:

Man's fate, today, is no longer in the hands of the gods, but is often in conflict with the evil in other men. Man makes himself, or thinks he can. The heart and mind of contemporary man is, therefore, moved by other casualties than salvation.

While something has been said about his writing career after the publication of his first-phase novels, no one had visualised that the Second World War would come so soon, and in a sense, Anand would get trapped in London. It is that phase of his career which requires to be discussed now.

3. THE WAR YEARS

Anand's 1938 visit in India was spread over several months. Apart from everything else, he visited different parts of India. As stated earlier, this was

in keeping with the advice given to him by Gandhi on one of his visits to India that he should see much more of the country than he had done till then. There were two cities which attracted him more than others. One was Bombay. It was much more cosmopolitan than any other city in India and the other was Lahore.

He had known Lahore right from his childhood. Not only that, he had spent quite some time in that city. Culturally speaking, it was a lively city, and both during this visit and his subsequent visits after the end of the war, Lahore remained the centre of his activities to quite an extent. Iqbal, the famous Urdu poet, who was a kind of mentor for him, had also lived in Lahore. Since Anand was fairly close to him and the latter had also subsidised a part of his fare to London, it stands to reason that he must have spent some time with him also, though, when he returned for good to India in 1945, Iqbal had passed away by then.

One incident described by Khushwant Singh (he was personally present when it happened) about the 1938 visit to Lahore may be referred to here. It shows how the kind of neo-colonial thinking which had captured the thinking of most of the English speaking crowd in India refused to die down. The colonial masters had come to terms with what Anand had stood for, but the neo-colonials found it more difficult to do so.

After the publication of his first three novels, he had a better grasp of the English speaking world. No other Indian had been able to overcome the barriers of ignorance or neglect which was the fate of most Indian writers writing in English then as he had done. Years later, in 1977 to be precise, when he recalled the intellectual struggle of those early days, he observed in an essay, titled “The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie”:

I certainly felt in the midst of my poetry and exile, the compulsion that it is better to win applause by conforming to any establishment, but to face the privileged order, and to claim the right to notice the existence of a man like Bakha.

Before long, his early novels came to be compared to the early work of Dickens who, when the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century was getting into stride, had unveiled certain dimensions of life which had not been brought to public light till then. Anand had not only given evidence of a first hand knowledge of how the poor and the marginalised lived, he had also made two of them the heroes of his novels. *Two Leaves and a Bud*, his third novel, during those years, which had appeared before his 1938 visit to India, had also provoked considerable controversy. It had focused upon the

exploitation of a poor family from Punjab which had been misled into seeking a better living in the Assam tea gardens.

The leading organization of tea planters in Assam was politically influential. Though Anand was able to effectively rebut their criticism of his work for being anti-British, particularly with the help of official documents (the Whitley Report on Assam tea gardens and the rest), the tea planters managed to have that particular novel banned in Assam. Such a step generally makes the book even more popular and this is precisely what happened in this case too. It may have got banned in Assam but elsewhere it was on sale. By that time, Anand had forged a place for himself in the literary landscape both of England and India. After 1947, when the novel was no longer banned, he re-published it with a fresh introduction.

One thing which he had done more or less extensively was that he thought in Punjabi and translated some of the colloquial and picturesque expressions into English, more particularly words of abuse and sacrilege, for the benefit of the non-Punjabi speaking readers. This was breaking new ground, and for years together, people continued to refer to this practice as an innovation. But Anand himself has recorded somewhere that, to some extent, he had carried forward a practice which Kipling had started earlier. Only he made the whole thing a part of the artistic presentation of Punjabi life which he was seeking to project in a picturesque manner.

To come to the point, during his stay in Lahore, he was given a reception by some of the elite citizens of the city. They consisted mainly of lawyers, Indian members of the civil service and some senior officials. The idea was to honour him on his achievement as a writer. Some of the people present were not so enthusiastic about him. A couple of them went to the extent of saying that, given an opportunity, they too could have done the same thing.

Anand listened to all that in silence and with a sense of dignity. Obviously they were reluctant to concede to him what people elsewhere had conceded readily as well as generously. When it became too much, he simply walked out. Before doing so, he told them that they had to produce an acceptable piece of writing, get it published and then talk in the manner they were talking. Those who wielded power in India under the patronage of the British were not prepared to go as far as the British critics had gone. This was not true of most places in India. Maybe there was also an ill-concealed sense of rivalry with some one who had chosen to stay on in UK and had eventually made his way and won public acclaim.

He travelled all over the country, and more notably, to Calcutta and Bombay. The anti-fascist sentiment was growing in the country. Anand was looked upon as some kind of a glamorous figure and he basked in the glory that his writing had earned him. As referred to earlier, the Nehrus took to him warmly, and when Anand returned to England in early 1939, he came back with the feeling that he had made his name as a gifted writer and now it was up to him to build upon that.

He had not worked out anything definite in his mind. The only thing that came as a surprise to him was that the war with Hitler came so soon. In the beginning of 1939, things were moving in the direction of a war but his guess was that it would take a little longer to break out than it actually did. One unavoidable outcome of this development was that, whether he wanted it or not, or had so planned it or not, he had no choice but to spend the war years in London.

II

The British government, without consulting anyone in India, took the decision that India too was at war with Germany. After the 1937 election in India, the Indian National Congress had captured power in more than half a dozen major provinces. The real power at the Centre was, however, wielded by the Viceroy. The federal part of the Government of India Act, 1935, under which things had to be reorganised differently, did not get enforced, largely owing to the reluctance of the Indian princes to give up their old ways of functioning. The British had not chosen to pressurise them in any way.

Since the Congress Party did not accept that India too was at war with Germany, there was a marked divergence of approach between the former and the Indian government. The next few years saw all kinds of developments, including the mobilization of the entire country in favour of the war effort, the rise of Jinnah as a political force, and the eventual partition of the country in 1947.

Without going into any of these details, what needs to be noted is that Anand found himself in an unenviable and difficult position. Living in England during those years was not easy. His own point of view was that he was anti-fascist in any case and was opposed to Hitler as much as any one else was. The real problem was that India was being taken for granted by the British government as a participant in the war against Hitler and no attention whatsoever was being paid to India's servile status. The Congress Party

wanted an arrangement to be worked out in terms of which, if this party cooperated with the British in the war effort, there would be a public assurance from Britain that, at the end of the war, India would be more or less free of the imperial hold.

In this connection, he brought out a book, called *Letters on India*, in 1942 which accused the British of exploiting India and not doing what ought to have been done at this stage of the war against Hitler. Broadly speaking, Anand's position was in conformity with that of the Indian National Congress. It should not be necessary to go into details or trace the ups and downs of the Congress policy in its dealings with the British government.

While Atlee, the Labour leader, was a member of the British Cabinet, the important thing to remember is that the Prime Minister was Churchill. He had a blind eye as far as India was concerned. At one stage, Churchill went to the extent of saying it in so many words that he had not become the first minister of the King in order to liquidate the British Empire.

These details have been provided in order to underline the point that Anand was faced with a very difficult personal choice. On the one hand, he had brought out several novels which depicted the imperial exploitation of India and its unspoken support to the feudal forces which, in sum, were collaborating with the British government, and on the other hand, Anand was invited by his friend, George Orwell, to participate in the anti-German propaganda launched by the BBC. Orwell, a major figure in the British intellectual circles, was appointed director of this programme by the BBC.

He and Anand had been friends for a number of years. The two were so close to each other that a critic in USA has gone to the extent of writing a book, entitled *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics*. One of the four authors covered was Mulk Raj Anand. When Orwell wanted him to be a part of the BBC anti-Nazi campaign, Anand found it difficult to go with him beyond a point. There were unmistakable differences of political approach between them.

Anand was not an unknown figure in Britain at that time, if it may be added here. He had published a series of novels in about half a decade and his work had been widely appreciated. Stephen Spender looked upon him as an important revolutionary novelist. He remained busy with his literary work during these years. It was also during this period that he brought out what is called the Lulu trilogy. It was based on his perception of rural life in Punjab in the World War I era. On the whole, the first two novels of this trilogy were widely appreciated but the third one fell somewhat flat. Obviously

Anand had not been able to sustain the same level of competence and creativity in the third novel as he had attained in the earlier two novels. It seemed to lack the sureness of touch of the earlier two novels.

At any rate, as the war went on and Russia came under attack from Germany and the political climate began to change, the distance between Anand and people like Orwell began to diminish. Consequently, Anand started participating in the BBC programme. Perhaps it would be in order to quote Anand himself to explain his position more precisely:

The one question that has been taxing my mind is how to reconcile that (Congress Party) affiliation with my belief that fascism would destroy all I stand for. I am afraid the British government had done nothing which may help to solve the dilemma which faced some of us. It had declared neither its war aims, nor its peace aims and India seems to be its one blind spot.

III

As stated above, Anand found it difficult to work out a mode of functioning which would be consistent with his position as a revolutionary thinker and radical writer. Over the years, he had worked out a certain way of working for himself. This was manifested in the novels that he had written. They marked him out as a man who stood for a certain set of culturally progressive political values. Basically, he was a humanist, if it may be added.

The circumstances of his life had placed him in a situation where, had he been located in India at that time; he would have, perhaps, participated in political activities in line with the thinking of the Indian National Congress. Since he was obliged to be in England during those years, he conducted himself with dignity and a sense of commitment which he did not wish to give up or sacrifice.

It will not be unreasonable to suggest that his eventual decision to return to India at the end of World War II was, to some extent, dictated by various developments taking place all around him. On his various visits to India, he had formed a fairly precise idea of the cultural and political temper of the country. When he came out with his *Apology for Heroism* in 1946, this much had become clear to him by then that the political scene was changing. Whether it would also lead to the partition of the country or not could not be visualised at that time.

The way things were changing, it was clear to Anand that the earlier imperial dominance of India was no longer tenable. In the *Apology*, he

described his position as “a jigsaw puzzle of my Indian upbringing and my Euro-Asian experience”.

It was no coincidence that it was at this point of time that he wrote the book which he entitled, *Apology for Heroism: A Brief Autobiography of Ideas*. This book is crucial for an understanding of Anand. At one place, while talking of his decision to come to UK, he says somewhat tellingly that, “after realizing I should die or disintegrate if I could not satisfy my curiosity for truth, I left India at last in the autumn of 1925”.

What he encountered in Britain has been briefly described already. At the personal level, what was happening to him was a reflection of the way his mind was evolving. Soon after his return from India in 1939, he married a British actress, Kathleen van Gelder, who was beginning to be known. They had a daughter but after a few years the marriage began to turn sour. Can it be said that it was for this reason that he thought of returning to India? In other words, could his decision to return to India be linked to his failing marriage? It is not possible to return a clear answer to this question. At any rate, everything that was happening led to a situation where returning to India seemed to be the obvious thing to do.

At this stage, it would be relevant to quote from his book, *Apology for Heroism*, about one thing which had shaped and conditioned the kind of writing that he was doing. What he says below is the outcome of prolonged and intensive thinking. Even the slight touch of defensiveness in what he says is not without meaning. Explaining his position, he writes:

I could not, of course, sense the suffering of the poor directly because I had always been comparatively better off. No, mine was secondary humiliation, the humiliation of seeing other people suffer. I do not know to what extent envy of the rich on my part was disguising itself as a hunger for social justice. Perhaps there was an element of this. Also the inadequacies of our life in India may have contributed something to our preoccupation. But I do not apologise for this, because it is not easy in the face of such wretchedness and misery as I had seen in India to believe that material happiness and well being had no connection with real happiness and the desire for beauty. So I thought of the India in which I grew up, with a view to rediscovering the verities, the vapidities, the conceits and the perplexities with which I had grown up, indifferent to the lives of people around me. I felt guilty, for needless suffering was no matter for complacent pride or gratitude.

If it may be said, this was a fairly accurate description of his state of mind during those years.

IV

The war years must have been a period of considerable emotional strain and turmoil for him. Though his earlier difficulties had been overcome to a large extent and he was accepted as a radical writer who had substantial literary standing, he was faced with the problem of having to come to terms with what was happening around him. Except for a few enlightened souls, the rest were not prepared to see India's point of view. India was opposed to fascism as much as any one else in UK was. But India was not prepared to fight a war where her own future would remain undefined or uncertain. India wanted to be freed of British domination but hardly any one in England was prepared to see India's point of view as a problem which required sympathetic and urgent attention.

Throughout the war, the situation remained undefined for India. At certain levels, it was even hostile. Meanwhile, he had got married and had family responsibilities. The war time situation made things difficult and Anand did a few odd jobs, adult teaching for instance, to support himself. It was fortunate that he had made a name for himself as a writer with the result that, as stated earlier, the BBC wanted him to take part in its anti-fascist programme. Commenting upon his relations with British intellectuals, he said, at one stage, about the contemporary dilemma:

I was also firmly convinced that there could be no dignity in the personal relations of British and Indian intellectuals unless British writers realised that the freedom of speech and opinion which they took for granted was denied to their friends (in India) and unless they saw to it that intellectuals everywhere enjoyed equal rights of citizenship.

This was sharply put and this would not have endeared him to some of those with whom he was interacting most of the time. In his book, *Letters on India*, Anand had taken the position that while the British intellectuals accused the German fascists of all kinds of crimes, they did not apply the same yardstick to what they were doing in India.

Estrangement from most of those with whom he worked and tension with some of them was one source of his unhappiness. Another factor, though not articulated all that openly, was also at work. After almost two decades of stay in UK, his perception of India rested mainly upon his earlier memories.

He had paid several visits to India, and at least one of them had lasted almost a year. Therefore, he could be said to be in touch with things in India.

But being in touch with one's country was one thing and being involved with what was happening or could happen was another. To put it bluntly, his sense of belonging to India was under serious strain. This conflict between his sense of his roots in India and what he was doing in UK presumably made him take the final decision to return to India, He did so as soon as the war ended.

Since the springs of his creativity were beginning to run dry, he decided to adopt a new line of action. His interest and involvement in the study of art had been one of his strong, even obsessive, passions. On return to India, he wished to pursue the plan that he had worked out in his mind for a long time. It was a turn of good fortune that he was able to interest some of the more committed and influential people in India in this plan of his to launch a new journal. That India needed something like it also seemed obvious. Fortunately, almost everything now fell in place as he had planned, and the first issue of *Marg* came out in 1946.

This succession of developments happened before India became self governing. This fact had no direct impact upon what he had planned or what he was doing. But the fact that it came about through a combination of circumstances in which Pandit Nehru, JRD Tata and Homi Bhaba were involved was a fortuitous coincidence. That this happened in the beginning of this phase in his career when his restless energy and creativity could not find expression in the manner he had dreamed about made it doubly fortunate. What was started in 1946 is still continuing. What is remarkable is that its impact and quality both have remained undiluted as well as undiminished.

One can go further and say that India, once she became independent and self governing, was at a stage of development when rediscovering her past was very much a part of the new agenda. The promotion of handicrafts was yet another important dimension of this hitherto-dammed creativity. It received unprecedented stimulus in the years following 1947. In brief, the situation was ripe for the kind of thing that Anand had planned and which now got launched on the eve of the independence.

V

Hardly anything substantial has been said so far about some other dimensions of his life during the war years. Two of them do call for some

notice. One was his involvement in the Bloomsbury group. The principal source for what we know about it is his book, *Conversations in Bloomsbury*. While reasonably factual, this book, as noted by most people, is a reconstruction of what had happened half a century earlier. Meanwhile, things had changed to a considerable extent. Long conversations are reproduced but not on the basis of any contemporary record which might have been kept. Anand did not maintain a diary, it seems safe to say, nor did he claim that he recorded anything, even informally, which should have become the basis for what was being reported now.

This fact is recognised by all those people who have read the book. It makes interesting reading and throws meaningful light on what was happening at that time in the British literary circles. Also, certain individuals who mattered are given the opportunity to hold forth in great detail. For instance, there are as many as four conversations with T.S. Eliot. Each one of them is meaningful in its own way but none of them throws any new light on what we know already. In brief, the book makes no additional contribution to contemporary literary history.

Nevertheless, Anand's reporting of what happened at that time reveals a good deal about the years of his maturity in London. The phase covered in that period was before the war and dealt with that aspect in his life where he was getting drawn into British literary controversies. To be more specific, this was the period of his life when he was still a student. In the ultimate analysis, perhaps his interaction with Irene was more meaningful than his casual interaction with some of the well known literary writers whom he encountered during those years.

The second factor at work was his Marxist cum humanist leanings which became a powerful force. What started happening now was his involvement in anti-fascist organizations. This became a noticeable feature of his activity at that time. To some extent, it more or less synchronised with his period of struggle for recognition. During the war years, the situation got even more complicated. In other words, the early Marxist phase of thinking contributed to his growth as a writer but did not diminish his anxieties when he was feeling somewhat isolated and marginalised in the early 40s.

One key to his state of mind during the war years lies in two factors. The first is his novel, *The Big Heart*, which he completed about this time. This novel is somewhat like his earlier novels. And yet, it is unlike them.

In his earlier novels, he drew upon the fund of his past memories. In this particular case, he knew his own caste fraternity at first hand and there is an

unmistakable sense of authenticity about the manner in which he depicts his goldsmith community. At the same time, he was somewhat anxious about the declining vividness of his childhood memories. No wonder he brings in something in *The Big Heart* which is more British than Indian. There were machine riots in Britain in the nineteenth century. He had read about them in detail. But it would be a bold man who can say that there were similar riots in India also. In a sense, the use of this innovation in his writing—if one may use that word— was an attempt to cover up the yawning gap in his creative imagination.

Secondly, if one may venture to say so, Anand was running out of the raw material for his fiction and the impulse to return to India could not be ignored beyond a point. He was not exactly ignored in the literary circles. His contemporaries—particularly George Orwell—wanted him to participate more actively in the anti-Hitler front which was getting forged than what Anand could bring himself to do. But, as explained above, he could not forget his Indian roots nor reconcile himself to the unrelenting policies of Churchill's government which was in power then. It should not be necessary to go on with these details except to refer to what he was passing through. It is his *Apology for Heroism* which records his thoughts around that time.

The date of its publication, 1946, is important. By then the war had ended and he had even paid a long-delayed visit to India in the year 1945. What needs to be remembered is that the book might have been published in 1946 but it had been written earlier. Those were years of emotional turmoil and confusion for him. He was not clear in his mind as to what he wanted to do next. The visit to India in 1945 proved to be just the right thing to have happened.

4. THE PUBLICATION OF MARG

After half a century, what would Mulk Raj Anand be remembered for? Would it be for his earlier path breaking novels or his later novels or the publication of *Marg* which he edited for over three decades? It is difficult to answer this question.

If one may hazard a guess, his novels would continue to loom somewhat large on the literary horizon for the next half century. It was with the publication of *Untouchable* that he announced his entry into the world of literature, In terms of historic importance; this accomplishment will continue to be significant, particularly in respect of Indo-Anglian fiction. While many

other novelists had written about India, none of them had accomplished what Anand had.

Regional languages had published many novels which were close to the ground reality. Munshi Prem Chand's well known novel, *Godan*, is an obvious example. But no one had done the same kind of thing in English. When Anand came out with *Untouchable*, he was virtually breaking new ground. That he followed it up with an equally impressive second novel within a year and called it *Coolie* reinforced the image that he wanted to project.

No one can forget that Anand had been profoundly impressed by Gandhi's thinking and sensibility. At one point of time, he described Gandhi as his anchor. In his intellectual and artistic development, Gandhi had mattered a great deal, both as a person and as a writer of fiction. Gandhi had many fads and pet ideas but Anand learnt to ignore them. However he imbibed the basic lesson which Gandhi was trying to put across. What thrilled and inspired Anand is best expressed in the following oft-reproduced comment of Gandhi:

I will give you a talisman, whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following experiment. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.

Anand literally followed what Gandhi had suggested and this becomes abundantly clear from the first couple of novels referred to earlier. If the British reading public was not prepared to read what Anand wanted to convey, it is a tribute to his persistence and his faith in himself and his ideas that he managed to get published at last. Once published, the novel made a place for itself within a matter of days. Indeed Anand became a minor celebrity overnight. As time went by and as he dug deeper and deeper into the life and destiny of the poor and the oppressed, he embodied it all in his mode of imaginative thinking which demanded to be projected.

Why has so much been said about his earlier struggle and his eventual success? The answer is explicit. In historic terms, what he did was truly memorable. If Anand made an impact both in England and India and the various other languages in which he was translated, it was, to repeat, largely

because of his unique sensibility and the courage to be himself. In the near future, say, the next half century or so, his literary contribution is likely to stay undimmed. It could be even longer than half a century. But perhaps it will not extend to a whole century.

Eventually, what he will be remembered for would be the historic role that he played in giving a new turn to the contemporary Indian sensibility of those who read and wrote in English. Indeed, what he might be more remembered for is his role as a critic and promoter of Indian art. In this connection, the publication of *Marg*, started in 1946, would be seen as a landmark. His role as the man who started it would be cherished forever.

Nothing like that had appeared in India until *Marg* came out. Not only was it exceptionally well produced and printed, its contents were so varied and so thoroughly researched that Indian art, both ancient and contemporary, received an extraordinary degree of projection and understanding. That *Marg* still continues to run is a tribute both to Anand who conceptualised it in the first instance, and his successors who have continued to sustain it with the same degree of commitment and excellence of which the very first issue of *Marg* had given stunning evidence.

It is a pity that more than a thousand articles were published in the journal under the editorship of Anand and almost a hundred or so were written by Anand himself, but hardly any bit of that scholarly output is to be found in any other form except what is contained in *Marg*. If nothing else, there are more than 50 to 100 books which are incorporated in those thousand odd articles and are waiting to be made available.

How is it that no one in the management of *Marg* has chosen to think along these lines? It is high time that the articles are arranged under different headings and, one by one, a whole series of books are brought out. Libraries which have been subscribing to it right from the beginning are very possessive about their collection. Indeed special care is taken to preserve these early issues so that the valuable record is not lost.

That apart, the argument advanced here is that, while during the next few decades, Anand would be remembered as a novelist and short story writer, his equally valuable contribution is likely to be as an art critic. In fact, Anand had three parallel careers, as a novelist and short story writer, an art critic, and a critic of Indian society. Each one of them deserves to be remembered and valued.

What is relevant just now is to discuss his role as an art critic. Through this journal *Marg* he opened up new layers and dimensions of art

appreciation. These had remained neglected for a long time. His real stature will be seen if the full range of his art criticism is brought out in the form of books, as proposed.

If his art writings have remained both unavailable and inaccessible, it is for those responsible for this state of affairs to offer an explanation for it.

II

In *The Bubble* which he published in 1984, one of the characters says, “I find that every philosopher imprisons me in his thoughts while I love the free flow of my insatiable feeling away from abstract ideas”. Even though it is a character speaking, Anand appears to be speaking for himself in these two lines. He was certainly interested in ideas and grappled with them endlessly throughout his life and his imagination came alive mainly when he wrote fiction. There can be no doubt that when he used those words in the course of a dialogue, he was revealing his inner mind. The transition from fiction writing to gearing himself for a career in art criticism is also equally important.

At the end of the 20s, there was an impressive exhibition of Persian paintings in London. Somewhat excited, he dug into the development of Persian painting more or less from the beginning of the Christian era. Around the first millennium, the Chinese had influenced Persian painting a good deal. A little later, in the 15th century however, there appeared an outstanding painter, Bizhad, who dominated the Persian art scene for the next few centuries to come. Not only that, there was close and intimate connection between the poetry of the great Sufi masters like Hafiz, Rumi and Jami and contemporary painting, and this is widely recognised. A good deal of this was discussed in his book on *Persian Painting* which he published in 1930 when he was not even 30 years of age. It was a slim volume but it showed the way Anand had started preparing himself for a career in art criticism.

A couple of years later, Anand came out with another book, *The Hindu View of Art*. This book was strongly influenced by the path breaking work of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. At that time, he was Keeper of the Indian and Oriental collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Coomaraswamy was a Sri Lankan who played a pioneering role in the study of Indian art. Since Indian art had spread over several countries of Asia like Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and others, Coomaraswamy was uniquely placed to underline the point that the Hindu view of art was strongly influenced by the

Hindu view of life. More than that, the Hindu art was to be found not only in temples and other holy places but also in a whole range of crafts and the objects made by unlettered workmen who had an intuitive way of embodying beauty and grace in things they made for daily use.

Another important influence on Anand was that of Eric Gill. Gill contributed a foreword on 'Art and Reality' in that book on Hindu Art. Gill was a uniquely gifted master craftsman. He was also an engraver and a type designer. Because of his background and intensive study, he had understood the role of craftsmen who were organised in guilds in the European middle age. Eventually this bit of background led Anand to a better understanding of tribal art in India of which ample evidence is to be seen in the pages of *Marg*.

During the period of his early education and the struggle to write that book on Hindu art, Anand had been all the time preparing himself for what he started doing after 1946. When the first issue of *Marg* appeared, its impact was immediate and overwhelming. Within a few years, it virtually became mandatory reading for anyone who was interested in Indian art.

As is widely known, some of the people whom Anand had got to know in Bombay were renowned architects. Anand had always been interested in architecture. As Charles Correa has aptly put it, he had an instinctive understanding of architecture and design. No wonder, he took a great deal of interest in the organization which some of the architects had set up in England. The organization was called the Modern Architectural Research Society. He replaced this last word with the use of the word Group and coined the word *Marg*. This word also happened to be a Sanskrit word which meant showing the way. Since this group of architects had originally planned to bring out a quarterly journal about architecture, Anand persuaded his friends in Bombay to somewhat expand its scope and coverage. That is how *Marg* became a journal of architecture and the arts when it was decided to publish it from Bombay.

Planning such a journal was one thing, publishing it was another. Not only were funds required, it was equally important that the layout, printing and presentation should be of international standards. When all these ideas were floating in his mind, Anand outlined them to Homi J. Bhabha, the father of atomic research in India. Anand had been introduced to him by Jawaharlal Nehru some time earlier. When he talked to Bhabha who lived in Bombay, and they were in regular touch with each other, he put him in touch with J.N. Tata who was the head of the Tata organization. Tata not only blessed the idea but ensured two other things.

The first one was that, as suggested by Anand, the Tata Trust undertook to advertise up to 12 pages per issue. Anand did not want anyone to control *Marg* and this was his way of doing it in terms of actual organisation. He wanted *Marg* to be autonomous and independent. In order to put him at ease regarding the fact of ownership, the Tatas agreed to advertise up to a certain number of pages in each issue. In a way, this would become a form of subsidy to the journal. This was agreed to. The second was that the Commercial Printing Press, which later on became the Tata Press, agreed to extend credit facilities, as and when necessary. As a matter of fact, everything went along favourably as visualised.

The next question was how to constitute the Editorial Board. All these details were handled by Anand. He involved architects, art historians, academics, art lovers, and several other people who had a genuine understanding of Indian art and were widely known for it. Karl. J. Khandalvala became the Art Advisor and Anil de Silva became the Assistant Editor. A word about Anil would be in order here. She was the daughter of a minister of Sri Lanka or Ceylon as it was known then. Anand had met her in London some time earlier. She was enthusiastic about the project. Over the years, she had drawn exceptionally close to Anand. It had so happened that she along with her sister had come to Bombay and presumably rented a flat in Colaba. Both Anand and Anil became so close to each other that, before long, Anand moved to that flat and they started living together.

Eventually, that Colaba address became his permanent address in Bombay.

It was after *Marg* had got going and India had become independent that Anand decided to go back to England in order to get divorce from his wife. The understanding between Anand and Anil, it appears, was that they would get married after the former had got a divorce from his wife. Anand acted as planned though it took him a little longer to get the divorce and come back to Bombay. He looked forward to his marriage with Anil only to discover on his return that she had meanwhile changed her mind and opted to marry a Frenchman. This shocked him deeply and he had some kind of a breakdown. Fortunately, he recovered from it soon after, and *Marg* began to grow from strength to strength.

III

It is not necessary to go into further details regarding the publication of *Marg* here. The first issue which came out had a long article on

Mohenjodaro, the first Harrapan city in the Indian subcontinent. It has been dated to something like 3000 B.C. Until the city was discovered, Taxila was regarded as the most representative city of ancient Indian history which had figured even during the invasion of India by Alexander, the Great. This long article gave an exhaustive account of the discoveries going back to several thousand years before Christ.

There was an article on Amrita Shergill and another on Jamini Roy. Also, there were articles on the industrial town of Jamshedpur and how to build a worker's colony and so on. One article was titled 'Architecture and You'. Anand wrote an editorial on 'Planning and Dreaming'. The production and get up were superb in every respect, and everything was highly readable and, no less important, addressed both the expert and the common man.

Marg introduced another unique innovation. All those who advertised had to accept the format of the text as worked out by those members of the staff who worked for *Marg*. In other words, even the advertisements published in *Marg* maintained the same high level of design and production as the contributed articles.

The range of articles was comprehensive and the content all inclusive. There was no aspect of Indian art which had not been covered. Crafts like pottery and metal casting were included for purposes of analysis right from the beginning. As suggested earlier, it is astonishing that the wealth of contents made available in each issue were so comprehensive and varied. As to the authors, there was not a single name which had made a mark in the field of art criticism or had made any notable contribution and was not involved with *Marg*. Not only that, there were special theme numbers. Topics like Ellora and Ajanta art, Bharata Natayam or the Erotic Art of Konarak were covered more than once. Each issue, as Anand put it once, was 'an encyclopaedia in instalment'.

When *Marg* started, the statement of objectives was formulated in these words:

To rediscover the heritage of Indian and Asian Art through the centuries, to celebrate the continuity of tradition of arts and crafts, textiles, pottery and metal casting. To analyse contemporary trends in architecture, sculpture, painting and graphic design.

Whether *Marg* lived up to this self-defined objective or not is illustrated best of all by the message which Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, sent in 1971 when *Marg's* silver jubilee was being celebrated. She wrote:

Congratulations to *Marg*. It is hard to believe that this fine periodical is already celebrating its silver jubilee. Along with many others, I look forward to its issues for it brings a breath of fresh air and opens windows to diverse aspects of art—as a conscious creation and as an integral part of the daily lives, religious traditions, and festivals of our rural and other folk. In these twenty-five years, *Marg* has come to occupy a unique place amongst Indian journals. It has helped students of art in our country and abroad to evaluate the range of our art experience. It has created an awareness and appreciation amongst the uninitiated by giving them an insight into the rich and vast art treasures of our country....

IV

A few more things require to be mentioned here. One of them is whether the publication of *Marg* was a part of an overall plan on the part of Anand or the end product of a combination of circumstances which came together at that particular point of time.

It is not possible to return a spontaneous answer to this question. Anand was not only a writer of novels and short stories or only an art critic or a keen student of contemporary Indian society. He was a combination of all three, and throughout his life he never got tired of playing any one or a combination of these roles. It is another matter that, towards the end, he became somewhat repetitive and did not always have new things to say.

This becomes particularly noticeable in respect of the last phase of his fiction. Hardly any book dealing with his craft or the thematic content of his novels refers to the crop of novels which he brought out in the last decade or so of his life. Almost each one of them goes over the same ground which he had covered earlier. As to his art criticism, he would write some occasional piece but, when his connection with *Marg* got severed, he had no readymade forum of expression. As to the actual details of his social and other writings, those will be discussed later.

In other words, what needs to be reiterated is the fact that the publication of *Marg* came at a stage of his development when his grip over the Indian reality on which he had based his early fiction had begun to weaken. Therefore, he had to map out an alternative for himself. He could have stayed on in UK but more or less as a cultural exile from India. If he returned to India, as he eventually did, he had to have an alternative plan of action.

Another fact also needs a mention here. Around the time he was struggling for recognition as a writer who had something new to say, he discovered Marx. This was some kind of a turning point in his mental growth. In this connection, the best thing to do is to quote from his *Apology* where he has summed up this issue in these words:

I had come to socialism through Tolstoy, Ruskin, Morris and Gandhi, imbued with the sense of this doctrine as the embodiment of an ethical creed, in so far as it was a protest against misery, ugliness and inequality .

So like many of my generation, I accepted Marxism as a fairly good historical yardstick but considered humanism, the view of the whole man, as the more comprehensive ideology.

What he regarded as admirable in Marxism was the striving of the individual to “create freedom for himself within a coercive system”, as a critic once put it. These ideas of his found expression neither in his fiction nor in the main body of his art criticism but mainly in political action. For a decade or more after his return to India, he remained involved in the activities of peace movement and several other initiatives promoted by Pandit Nehru.

Once *Marg* got going and he got more and more involved, he moved to Chandigarh as the Tagore Professor of Fine Arts. Partly social preoccupations, partly political activity and partly his involvement with *Marg* kept him going. No wonder creative writing did not receive as much attention as it had been receiving earlier. However, it must be acknowledged that his role as the man who overcame the British resistance to the advent of contemporary India as one of the acceptable literary themes began to receive greater critical attention than before. And, he started paying more and more attention to the projection and display of Indian art.

V

What happened next was unfortunate. JRD Tata had both blessed and supported the idea of *Marg*, but the administrative set up within the Tata organization started changing with the passage of time. JRD Tata got more and more involved in his business affairs and the cultural activities undertaken by the Tata Trust came to be increasingly looked after by other members of the Trust. Before long, these individuals began to take much greater interest in the affairs of *Marg* than Anand had been accustomed to till then or, more precisely, was prepared to accept. Nothing very specific happened and there was no confrontation with anyone. But Anand began to

feel somewhat uncomfortable with the kind of intrusive interest that was beginning to be taken by some of them who handled cultural matters of the Tata Trust.

What has been stated so far is not documented anywhere. The only two people who knew what was happening are no longer alive. One was Anand himself and the second was Dolly Sahiar. In saying this I am relying heavily on my memory and some speculation.

Regardless of how it happened, it is important to recognise that it jolted Anand considerably. He had sought help from the Tatas to ensure editorial independence of judgement. That did not get undermined at any stage. But some of the things that were happening must have disturbed him to a certain extent and he decided to step down. In other words, though nobody asked him to step down, he sensed changes in the work ethos and decided to withdraw.

But, did this decision eventually have a negative impact on the editorial policy of the journal or did the Tata commitment to *Marg* get diluted is a bone of contention. It can be claimed though that after some initial uncertainty, things picked up again. *Marg* is running successfully as well as productively even today. India required something like Anand's constructive imagination and sense of commitment as also the support of the Tata Trust to make this enterprise possible in the year 1946. Its immediate as well as long range impact has been unmistakable and it is to that aspect of its publication that we turn now.

5. THE IMPACT OF MARG

It was important to dilate on the working and the impact of *Marg* in some detail. This was for two reasons. One, there is such a wealth of scholarly material in the journal and access to it is so difficult that some further details needed to be provided. Secondly, though the journal was professedly devoted to architecture and the arts, the range of articles published was much wider. Some of them related to the past, both distant and not so distant.

If something was written on the Taj, for instance, there would be no occasion to come back to it again unless some new facts were unearthed or a new interpretation had to be given to established facts. In that sense, once the pageant of Indian art and culture had been projected in lavish detail, both in range and substance, as *Marg* was doing in issue after issue, there was little more to say on that subject, at least for some time.

The discussion on architecture however was somewhat different in its range and focus. Architecture was a living reality throughout India and was growing all the time. A recent statement made by a member of the editorial staff of *Marg* may be quoted here. According to her, “Architecture was the site where questions of art, design, social change, democracy and history were most clearly tied, and for Anand, it was the largest and the most profound testing ground for the making of a modern nation based on humanism and socialism”. There were situations when some kind of policy intervention was decidedly called for. Two of them may be taken up for detailed discussion here.

II

The first one that may be referred to was building the new town which came to be called Chandigarh. When India had been partitioned into two countries, Lahore had been allocated to Pakistan. That city had substantial non-Muslim population but when it came to division between the two countries, Amritsar (partly because of the location of the Golden Temple there) was allocated to India and Lahore was allocated to Pakistan. Interestingly enough, Amritsar too had substantial Muslim population. All towns in what came to be called East Punjab had large concentrations of Muslims in the cities, and Amritsar was no exception. The partition of Punjab was, therefore, equally painful both for Muslims and non-Muslims, if it may be added.

The more relevant issue is that Lahore which was the capital of the undivided Punjab continued to be the capital of West Punjab. In that sense, hardly any disruption in the administrative life of Pakistani Punjab had been caused. But there was not a single city in East Punjab which could be right away declared as the capital of the new state. No wonder, Indian Punjab remained undecided about the location of its capital for quite some time. Meanwhile, Shimla was designated as the capital of the state, largely on the ground that it used to be the summer capital of the undivided Punjab. In any case, this was a stop gap arrangement. A goodly part of the rehabilitation matters were, by and large, handled at Jalandhar, mainly because of its relatively accessible location. This arrangement lasted for almost a decade. By then, those who had been uprooted had settled down and things had become more or less normal.

During the first couple of years, nobody thought of building a new capital. Chandigarh did not exist at that time and it took a certain leap of imagination

on the part of the Punjab government (backed by Pandit Nehru's vision of new India) that it was decided to build a new city. Anand played quite a role in the state of Punjab coming to this decision.

P.N. Thapar, a senior and influential ICS official, raised the matter with Anand at one stage. The latter said without any hesitation, "Why not build a new capital?" "Hardly anybody had thought of such a thing till then. In subsequent years, a couple of other Indian states, Orissa and Gujarat for example, built their new, respective capitals. Till the beginning of the 50s, however, such an idea was regarded as much too daring.

There was a problem about where to locate the new capital. If at all a new township was to be built, it had to have room for expansion also. There was very little open space available on the main railway line running from Amritsar to Delhi. Chandigarh was located on the Ambala Kalka railway line and was considered to be a deviation from the heart of Punjab. The matter remained under discussion for quite some time and it was only after a couple of years that it got finalised. As far as one can see, Anand was not involved in any of the administrative details but he played a decisive role when it came to the selection of who was to design and plan the town. To some extent, the two issues were linked with each other.

Once, however, it had been decided to build a new capital town, the choice of the man who was going to plan it became crucial. Anand played a leading role in this respect. He put forward the name of Le Corbusier, the French architect, as the man who should be asked to do the job although it was not certain that he would accept the offer. He had so many other commitments that it virtually required a certain amount of effort to persuade him to accept the offer. What clinched the issue was the fact that almost every other project that he had undertaken had generally involved his designing a building or two. In this case, he had the freedom to plan a whole, new city.

Anand himself took the initiative to persuade Le Corbusier to accept the offer. It goes without saying that this was done after due authorization by the Punjab government and the encouragement of Pandit Nehru. He did not know Le Corbusier personally but he had heard glowing things about him from his friends connected with the field of architecture when he was in London. What was relevant now was the fact that he knew something about this innovative architect who was a brilliant personality and an equally brilliant architect with innovative ideas. After being authorised to do so, Anand called upon Le Corbusier during his next visit to Paris. As already

mentioned, an arrangement was worked out to involve him both in the concept and the planning of the new enterprise.

Once the details were finalised, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew who had worked with Le Corbusier at one time agreed to spend some time in Chandigarh. The third important member of the team was Pierre Jeanneret who had been Le Corbusier's partner at one time for several years. While Le Corbusier was designated as the planner-in-chief, the other associates spent more than two years in working out the details of what had been conceptualised by Le Corbusier. To start with, the city was designed for a population of 1.5 lakhs but a provision was made for its expansion so as to be able to accommodate a population of 5 lakhs. Despite the various problems that came up later, this is how it eventually worked out. The city, even today, does not have a population of 5 lakhs but subsequent political developments have led to the establishment of two new substantial suburbs. The stamp of Le Corbusier's impact is unmistakable in each case.

One has only to refer to some of the earlier issues of *Marg* to see that, Chandigarh received a good deal of attention in every possible way. For instance, Le Corbusier himself wrote an article on Urbanism in the pages of *Marg*. Otto Koenigsberger, one of the consulting editors, also wrote a detailed analysis of the way things were shaping up in Chandigarh. Jane Drew contributed a piece explaining the whole concept. Indeed it was based on a talk that she had given on the subject in London.

Anand himself bestowed a good deal of attention to all that was involved in building the new town. In a special issue which *Marg* brought out in late 1961, Anand wrote an editorial on 'A New Planned City'. In order to strengthen his argument, he referred to two earlier planned cities in recent Indian history. One was Fatehpur Sikri which Akbar the Great had built and the second was Jaipur which had come up under the inspiring leadership of Sawai Man Singh. Anand focused on certain important features in each case and attempted to link up with what was under construction now. The entire planning team helped in designing the special issue. All sketches used in this issue were done by Le Corbusier himself.

Having said all this, it may not be out of place to add here that with the publication of *Marg* from Bombay, Anand spent the bulk of his time in that city. Apart from everything else, he undertook a lot of travelling both within India and in the neighbouring countries. Countries which had been influenced by Indian art received priority attention but quite a few others also received considerable attention. After about a decade, Anand organised a road trip to Europe. This meant travelling through Afghanistan, Iran,

Turkey and a good many other countries. Most of what he gathered from his visit was published in *Marg* from time to time.

III

Apart from his involvement in the Chandigarh project, Anand was intimately involved with what eventually came to be called the Greater Bombay Scheme. In the first issue of Volume II (which came out in 1947), there was an article by Otto Koeingsberger dealing with the proposal to expand Bombay. Actually, the proposal to do so had been mooted even before the Second World War began. During the war, the city kept on expanding at a pace even greater than before.

Some of the foreign experts, either on their own or on invitation, got involved in planning the next cycle of developments. It took some time for those developments to reach a stage when the issue of Greater Bombay moved centre stage. In a city with such a large population and limited availability of land, the issue of future planning could not but become somewhat controversial and even excite passions. Also, a good deal of big money had got unavoidably involved. In any event, from the angle of town planning, it was a major undertaking and was bound to influence thinking in respect of whatever else was being done in this area of development.

It was as a part of this controversy that one entire issue of *Marg* was devoted to Planning for Bombay. Anand himself wrote an article, entitled ‘Splendor and Miseries of Bombay’. It went back to the East India Company days when the island of Bombay had been handed over by the Portugese to the British as a part of a marriage gift. It is a detailed article and traces the rise and development of the city. In addition, there are contributions by a couple of experts and copious extracts from the Plan as drawn up by the Municipal Corporation of Bombay.

The main focus of the special *Marg* issue lay in the insightful inputs of three leading town planners. In his article

on ‘Mulk Raj Anand at 100’, published in the book *Mulk Raj Anand: Shaping the Indian Modern*, edited by Annapurna Garimella, Correa has given a detailed description of how this act of collaboration between *Marg* and these three committed architects was undertaken. What Correa had to say in the matter may be described in his own words:

Suddenly we had all the resources of *Marg*, and all those colour pages, for discussing the future of our city. The three of us spent many sessions with Mulk, and with Dolly Sahiar—the brilliant designer who was his main

collaborator. It was they who produced *Marg*, creating every quarter a unique journal—not only in its content, but in its visual look and feel as well. For Dolly cleverly used different kinds of paper, from thin tissue paper to the most wonderful handmade varieties, as well as different printing techniques, from chaste black and white to the most opulent colour spreads, to evoke the pluralistic collage that is the essence of India. Looking back, it seems to me that *Marg* represents the apotheosis of the India of the 1950s.

The three collaborators were Charles M Correa, Pravina Mehta and Shirish D. Patel. The article was divided into three parts. One of them dealt with ‘Patterns of Growth’. The second dealt with the ‘Twin City’, and the third one was called ‘Current Proposals’. These three contributions gave an overview of what were the issues involved and what was required to be done. A few other contributions were also included. This was the kind of well informed professional intervention which was required at the critical juncture of finalizing the Bombay Plan of redevelopment. One can even say that it was exactly the kind of thing which was required to be done in the overall situation as it was developing.

Anand himself was deeply committed to what was proposed and made no secret of where he stood. The editorial of that special issue was titled ‘In Dreams Begin Responsibility’. One of the slogans projected in that issue of *Marg* may be reproduced here:

Cities are nerves of civilization
What we make of Bombay
May well determine what we make of India, and
Will ultimately determine what we make of ourselves.

What deserves to be underlined is that when he was planning *Marg*, Anand was completely professional in his approach. That did not exclude intervening in the subsidiary debates which were arising, provided it could be ensured that the overall plan was discussed objectively and professionally and in relation to what was consistent with the resources and needs of the country. In this case, the city of Bombay had grown in line with its earlier legacy and was now required to expand in the progressive manner it was now visualised.

Without going into further details, it may be stated that this professional intervention might not have been entirely successful but it did ensure some important successes. For instance, as visualised, the new Bombay port is

handling large masses of goods today. The city has now expanded in that direction in a fairly planned manner and, in terms of transport, an appropriate railway connection and all other infrastructural facilities have been provided. While expansion had been taking place, there were some other developments also. Everything cannot be talked about in detail here except to bring to notice the fact that the process of planning got indisputably politicised over the years; As a result, some of the assumptions made earlier had to be given up. Despite these ups and downs, professional planning and the westward expansion of the city opened up new vistas for development.

Marg did not choose to discuss these subsequent developments except marginally because Anand did not stay with *Marg* long enough to deal with the issues that were gaining ground. Or possibly because the matters had got over-politicised. Once Anand's connection with *Marg* got severed, those connected with it later did not perhaps have the same kind of active involvement in the project as Anand had.

It may not be out of place to say that after Anand ceased to have any connection with *Marg*, things more or less continued as before except that in the new situation nobody planned in an organised or creative way. Things continued as before and there was no compromise with the standards of performance and production. But no one gave thought to planning and diversifying it further. In brief, Anand's creative touch was missing.

To say no more about it, *Marg* played a notable role both as a scholarly enterprise and a policy making journal. Its interventionist role was quite influential at the time it was made, and helped to orient public policy to a certain extent. As to its scholarly contribution, a good deal has been said already. What requires to be reiterated is the need for easy access to the issues discussed and published over the years. How precisely it is done is a matter that would require further planning and discussion.

IV

While something has been said about the range and coverage of the themes that were discussed in *Marg*, it would be appropriate to mention that its publication and its wide acceptability became a vehicle for Anand's self expression in a manner which he had not visualised earlier. *Marg* did not confine itself only to issues relating to architecture and the arts as claimed in the subtitle. It went beyond that. For instance, there were articles about different schools of Indian dancing, different handicrafts, the artistic use of

different materials like clay, lacquer, leather, wood, different metals and what not. Fairly early, in the third volume for instance, an article on 'The Playing Cards of India' was published. In fact, there was nothing which had a bearing on beauty and design and was excluded. It was creativity at its most incisive. The only thing that Anand did not get involved in was the world of music.

In the pages of *Marg*, Anand took up themes which had not been analysed earlier or not in such great detail or had remained neglected for a long time. Perhaps not many people had paid much attention to them. More than that, Anand covered different cultural regions of India in great depth. There was hardly a state of the country which was not covered by *Marg*. The artistic heritage of different states was analysed in great depth—this was something that had not happened till then. Most states also collaborated in providing data and other relevant facilities. In parenthesis, the states would be generally prepared to buy quite a number of copies, provided the reprints, if done as recommended earlier, were handled professionally and appropriately. It would give them an extra sense of satisfaction if these were to be reprinted and circulated more widely. Themes like Buddhist art, Kangra painting, temple architecture and numerous others were taken up one by one and explored in depth and can easily be made a part of the reprint programme, as suggested earlier.

As emphasised, there is so much of research and analysis in the pages of *Marg* that it is a pity that most of those writings are as of today beyond (he reach of most readers. Quite a few of them were written by Anand himself. In the September 1969 issue of *Marg*, for instance, Anand had given a long analysis of Gandhi's views on Art. This analysis was largely based on his own personal interaction with Gandhi during the course of his stay at the Sabarmati Ashram.

Having projected his version of what Gandhi's views on art were, he went on to discuss issues like the role of the hand and the heart, the creative process at work in the folk imagination, the peasant women and the modern artist, uses of different materials, the sources of kinetic energy, inherited racial memory and inspirational hunches, animism, pantheism, folksy art, the failure of the Indian intelligentsia to connect with popular art and countless other issues. Each one of them was important and each one needed to be understood. It is a 10-page long essay which should have been better circulated.

Similarly, there is a detailed analysis of the builder of the Taj under the title, 'Dream in Marble'. In addition, there is a separate article with the title,

‘Shah Jahan, Architect or Lover?’ It is a 30-page long discussion on issues connected with the building of the Taj. Once again, it is a piece of writing which remains unavailable to the common reader. Similarly, there is a rigorous analysis of Mughal Architecture by Jadunath Sarkar, the famous Mughal historian. Probably it has not been republished anywhere else, and remains out of scholarly circulation.

Yet another area of India’s traditional past that was projected in *Mnrg* was the publication of *Kamasutr*n by Vatsavan. Anand did two things. One was to write a Preface and the other was to republish the text in conjunction with a number of reproductions from various works of art from different parts of the country. Most often, either only the text was available or only the illustrations were provided by putting them in appropriate conjunction with one another. By collating the two, Anand made the reading of the text easier to understand and appreciate. In the course of his remarks, Anand was forthright as the following quote shows:

The unabashed directness of his confrontation of sexual relations, the subtleties of his apperception of feeling, mood and emotions, the delicacy of the nuances of love freed from all fears, inhibitions and awkwardness of accepting the routine society, have rarely been seen in any civilization.

He expands on this theme and goes on to explain what was unique about the tradition of coping with the ritual of love making in India. Indeed what he did was to project the essence of 2000 years or more of the worship of love. Not only that, he made love ‘holy’. According to him:

He (Vatsyayan) touched off the sources of love in the true souls of man and woman.... He exalted spontaneous love. He filled the physical union with a grace that uplifted the human couple to the *state* of godhead.

In Europe, there is a distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’. In India, according to Vatsayan, all love is sacred, whether it is between a couple married according to the Vedic rites of going around the fire or the *Gandharva* marriage of flying spirits. In fact, his contention was that “no other girl other than one who is in love should be married”.

The truth of the matter was that at a certain stage of development the marriage by *Swayainvar*, was gaining ground, as in the romance of Nala and Damyanti, to marriage by love. But the Brahmins who regulated the functioning of the society assumed the function of becoming match makers in order to earn a living. Anand was critical of their role. He went back and forth to those pieces of sculpture which are to be seen in Khajuraho and

various other places where sculpture and architecture had virtually become one.

There is a good deal more to it. Some people thought that *Marg* need not have gone into the publication of this volume by Vatsayan. But Anand disagreed. We in India, according to him, were being influenced by the unsettling influence of the West. On the contrary, what we need to do is to go back to the tradition of Vatsayan and restore the balance.

V

Some indication of the working of his mind during those years can be seen in a book which he brought out in the early 50s. This was called *Lines Written to an Indian Air*. He put together 16 essays in this book in which he attempted to analyse those aspects of Indian art and culture which required to be put at the centre of things.

While writing this book, he went beyond the parameters of what he had covered in his *Apology for Heroism* which he had written and published in England before he returned to India for good in 1945. Among the problems which he covered were those relating to literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, education, radio, cinema, women and youth. All of them could not be covered in *Marg* but Anand had dealt with several of them at one stage or another.

This book of his marks a stage in his intellectual development, although it is out of circulation today. Here he talks as someone who has felt deeply concerned about the faltering cultural legacy of the country and how it has been languishing for a long time. His role as a public intellectual received a sharper definition after its publication.

As mentioned already, it was open to Anand to have stayed on in London and written both about India and her society, the unfolding political turns and twists and also about her art and culture. Several people were doing this kind of analysis from a distance. But Anand's make up was different. He was both a novelist and a short story writer and also a student of Indian art. While Indian art could be studied from a distance, it was not possible to write about Indian life and society if he had remained away from India.

His understanding of Indian life was beginning to diminish owing to his absence from India. If he had to ensure his future as a novelist, it was imperative for him to return and renew his intimate understanding of what it meant to be an Indian. In political terms too, the end of the war had created a situation where things were no longer the same as they used to be. This is

not to suggest that he could foresee the process of the transfer of power to India and the partition of the country that somehow became an inseparable part of what was happening. All that one can say is that things were changing and he wanted to be in tune with them. This meant that he should return to India.

His several visits to India during the two decades that he had stayed in London had kept him in touch with the happenings there. Not only that, he met a large number of talented Indians who, like him, had gone to UK for education. Several of them eventually became his close friends. Quite a few of them were connected with Bombay. When he returned to India and developments of various kinds took place more or less at a dizzy speed, he could not settle down in Lahore as he had originally planned. Bombay now became the centre of his activities and it was here that he chose to settle down. The publication of *Marg* provided the occasion and the starting point.

VI

When Anand was about to reach the age of 100, the Editorial Board of *Marg* planned an issue to celebrate the occasion. Unfortunately, he passed away a few months before he completed his' century. The tribute volume, published by *Marg* was, as mentioned earlier, titled *Mulk Raj Anand - Shaping the Indian Modern*. The phrasing of the subtitle sums up the man. In the introduction to that volume, Annapurna Garimella describes the mission of his life as follows:

Mulk Raj Anand shaped a concept for Indian modernity in the pages of *Marg*. In early issues, he took positions on matters such as urban planning, contemporary art, architecture, arts education and training, heritage, tourism, popular and folk cultures, and musicology. Throughout these discussions, certain ideas of what it means to be modern and modernist informed his interventions. Mulk Raj Anand developed these positions in dialogue with many of his peers, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Le Corbusier, Anil and Minnette de Silva, Pupul Jayakar, and others, all of whom inspired or collaborated with him.

Coming from someone connected with the editorial staff of *Marg*, this comment is both perceptive and fair. The only thing that requires to be recalled is that Anand's achievement was multidimensional. This is well recognised. Those connected with *Marg* are aware, somewhat obliquely if it may be added, that in his fiction, Anand had blazed a new trail. Building on the significant contribution of *A Passage to India*, Anand had succeeded in

going beyond that distinguished book. The Second World War eventually helped to undermine the British Empire, and the cultural challenge had come, apart from others, from Anand himself. Only a person with the combination of qualities that he had could have pulled it off.

Anand possessed three important qualities. As a writer of fiction, he was both original and courageous. While his close observation of life was a God-given gift, the element of humanity and courage came from Gandhi. As he told one of his critics who was writing a book on him:

The whole of my life was transformed from lies, half-lies and pretending to truth. Gandhi's humanity entered in me. I have become humble enough, I differ from him in many ways but he built in me integrity of purpose.

His second asset was in his role of devising a concept for Indian modernity. What has been said above was said with reference to what was said or written in the pages of *Marg* but it is equally applicable to his two other roles. The role of a modern intellectual covers both *Marg* and his numerous other writings. That on occasions there is discontinuity or disjunction between the two may be acknowledged. But it is equally important to recognise that transition from one plane to another is generally logical.

Without something like *Marg* being born at that point of time, Anand could have lost his way. This is something that needs to be underlined. While we started by talking of 'The Impact of *Marg*', the reverse is equally true. But for the establishment of *Marg*, Anand's achievement would have remained incomplete, if not also flawed. In other words, when both the journal and the editor got identified with each other as happened in this case, it was a coincidence the like of which had not been witnessed in India for a long time.

6. THE MIDDLE FICTION

The dates of the publication of his novels are not without significance. In 1938, he published his novel, *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*. It was published from Lucknow. As a novel, it is a considerable comedown from the standard of writing that he had set for himself in his first few novels. Since he visited India in 1936 and then again in 1938 (this time for almost a year), he seems to have established contacts with some Lucknow publishers and it was published by one of them. It would not be too rash to state that Anand would have found it difficult to place this slim novel with a British publisher. It is so steeped in mawkish sentiment that one is surprised

at his own inability to distinguish between what is fake and what is genuine in literary terms.

His next three novels, *The Village*, *The Sickle and the Sword*, and *Across the Black Waters*, were published in 1939, 1940, and 1942 respectively. Generally, these three novels are described as a trilogy, which they are without question. Something not very favourable has been said about them earlier also but we may now highlight the favourable aspects at this stage of the argument.

The first two novels of the trilogy had established a certain standard of perception and writing. The basics of the novel, *The Village*, go back to his long childhood visit with his mother to her native village and there is unmistakable evidence of authenticity as well as unconcealed sympathy for the struggle of the oppressed against feudal oppression which was so widespread and so typical of the rural scene.

In regard to *The Sickle and the Sword*, he must have done quite some research in London. There are vivid descriptions of fighting in the trenches in which the hero of the novel is involved. Living in London, it was perfectly feasible for him to have had access to what had been written about the First World War and the trench warfare which had gone on and on for a great many years during the war. Critical opinion is almost unanimous in speaking favourably about these two earlier novels.

It appears however that, in the third volume, his inspiration seems to have run into a rough patch. More precisely, his limited knowledge of village life comes through without much reason to mitigate it. His childhood had been spent in British cantonments upon which was based his contact with Bakha, the hero of *Untouchable*. If most critics think that the third novel of the trilogy is weak, even unconvincing, this is because of the fact that he was relying upon certain sources of inspiration which were now proving inadequate for the purpose. In any case, he was getting exhausted in terms of inventiveness and it would not have been possible for him to keep on writing as a creative writer if he had stayed on in England. Whether Anand was fully aware of what was happening or not cannot be said. If his *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* is any guide, Anand was not always self critical enough.

It was in this somewhat difficult situation that Anand decided to write *The Big Heart* which was published in 1945. Speaking for himself, Anand was quite pleased with it. In this novel, he wrote about the fraternity to which he belonged and which he knew at first hand.

Basing himself on that intimate knowledge, he thought he could pull off a good novel, more particularly when he brought in something which had hardly been projected in India till then. In the early days of the Industrial Revolution in England, those who lost their jobs because the machines took over what they were doing with their hands sometimes became hostile to the role of the mechanical aids. There were anti-machine riots in several places and, through his readings of history. Anand had informed himself reasonably well with regard to what had happened at that time.

When he projected this twist of history to the Indian situation, the outcome was not all that satisfactory. As stated earlier, *The Big Heart* did not make that much impact upon Anand's readers as he had envisaged. There was no ring of authenticity about what he was saying nor did it create a genuine dramatic situation which, so to speak, Anand had manufactured mainly for himself. It is another example of his lack of the faculty of self-criticism.

There were two other books which he got published from UK after his migration back to India. One was titled *Seven Summers: the Story of an Indian Childhood* which came out in 1951, and the second was *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* which came out in 1953. Since he had moved to India after 1945 and had got involved with the publication of *Marg*, it seems safe to presume that his old contacts were still alive even though the focus of his activity had changed to India.

II

To talk of Anand's middle fiction is to enter into slippery territory. In the earlier phase which lasted till his final return to India in 1945, Anand wrote mainly about the core issues of social disparities, feudal exploitation, and the atmosphere of intimidation and flattery that had begun to flourish as one of the unsavoury outcomes of the British occupation of India. He had witnessed the process at work with his own eyes during his childhood. Life in a British army cantonment was just the setting for it.

While the process of India's conquests had gone on for more than a century and culminated in the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the rest of India had come under British rule by then. This is not the occasion to go into how British power spread from one part of the country to another. We are more concerned with the character of that impact which had been making steady inroads into Indian psyche and the results it had produced. Punjab may have

been the last part of India to be taken over by the British but the eventual outcome was about the same as elsewhere.

With the passage of time, a new class of people (generally referred to as the middle class now) came into existence. To some extent, there was an alliance between this class and the feudal order. At the same time, the middle class also became the starting point of discontent against the British occupation of India. Before long, this class developed unconcealed admiration for the kind of liberal democracy that the British had built for themselves in their own country. Access to the study of English language made it possible for the members of the Indian middle class to understand how the British had gone about building their country, though one of its outcomes was to impose imperial rule over India, and among other things, recast and restructure its economy in her own economic interests.

Anand's involvement with the Bloomsbury group may have been accidental but it has to be acknowledged that this was in tune with the way his mind was functioning and growing. With his remarkable powers of observation and the ability to recall the details of the earlier experience, he took a conscious decision to become a novelist even though he had been trained as a student of philosophy. Some bits of the contributory developments to this process have been discussed already. It is time now to turn to the developments, particularly two of its main features.

The first one was that his creative career, though frustrated to start with, eventually led to a splendid beginning. While *Untouchable* might have been the outcome of a certain kind of planning, and even the involvement and collaboration of Gandhi might have contributed to it, the vitality of his creative craft made it abundantly clear that, with his advent, a new voice had begun to speak. This phase of his earlier experience has already been discussed.

The second development has also been referred to though concrete evidence for it is difficult to adduce. As argued earlier, several factors intervened to give a new direction to his thinking. One, he was beginning to get emotionally exhausted and the second was his enforced stay in UK during the war years. Before the war, and more particularly after his glamorous advent in the field of Anglo-Indian writing, he had made meaningful contacts with quite a few people in India during his visits before the war. It was those visits which led to his building up a string of social connections which, on his return to India in 1945, led to fruitful results.

The question now was: what next? It was not entirely clear to him how to move over to the next round of activity nor was he all that clear in his mind as to what should be its direction. Certain developments intervened. One was the publication of *Marg* more or less as he had conceived it. Another was his chance encounter with the de Silva sisters whom he had met earlier in London and who had now moved to Bombay from Colombo. The elder sister was an architect but it was the younger one, Anil, who got personally drawn to him. One of the factors which led to his return to the writing of fiction was Anil's decision to leave him in favour of someone else. This resulted in an emotional crisis and he was advised to do creative writing as a form of therapy. This eventually helped him overcome the nervous breakdown that he had suffered.

It was in this background that he wrote his first novel after his return to India. All his creative work till then had been done in UK and the details have been discussed in the earlier chapters. He now decided to write a novel and called it *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*. Such was the emotional pressure to write it that he completed it within a month.

III

Although the novel was complete by the end of 1949 or say 1950, it was published in 1953. It is difficult to explain the reasons behind this. It could have been Anand's preoccupation with the demands of editing *Marg* perhaps, which was beginning to claim more and more of his time and attention. It could also have been indecision on his part as to where to get it published—in India or UK. It may however be noted that, in the decade of the 50s, he did not publish any new fiction except for some short stories.

It is difficult to say as to how many of them had been written during that period and how many earlier but they were being published now. This was also a period when he got drawn into the peace movement promoted by the USSR in pursuit of its international policies and he played a fairly active role there. He also travelled a good deal during these years. It can be claimed that, in terms of his creative output, the 50s were more or less an unproductive span of time for him.

In the case of *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, the critical opinion is divided. Most of the critics do not rate it highly. This was despite the fact that the stage for the merger of the states with the Indian Union during the years after 1947 was a burning topic of discussion and was very much a part of the contemporary political agenda. If Anand chose to write on the private

life of an Indian prince, it was more or less in tune with what most people were talking about.

Before he left for UK, Anand had spent some time in Shimla. During this period he had worked as a tutor to a couple of small princes. This dimension of life was therefore not unfamiliar to him in other words, when he chose to write on this theme, Anand was writing about something which he had known at first hand. Despite these favourable factors, most readers are critical of this particular novel. For one thing, it was unlike his earlier novels where the heroes were invariably victims of the social forces at work. For another, he had dignified them by making them the leading characters of his novels and by taking up their crisis situation as the core issue. To be precise, in writing the kind of novels that he wrote in that phase of his career, Anand had broken new ground.

Writing about the princes was to some extent the obverse of what he had been doing so far. The only notable critic who has said anything positive about this novel is Saros Cowasjee. In his edited volume, *Mulk Raj Anand Omnibus*, published by the Penguins after Anand's death, apart from *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, this is the third novel to be included. Cowasjee has described it as the most "profound" of Anand's novels. According to him, "by focusing upon the principal characters of the novel—Vicky and Ganga Dasi—these characters are described as individuals of such complexity and with such psychological insight that critics will go on redefining them". Cowasjee goes on to say,

Private Life of an Indian Prince has something to offer to every kind of reader. The historian will be fascinated by the intriguing relationship between the Prince and his subjects and the new Government of India; the moralist will find confirmation of his belief in Vicky's destruction; the romanticist will find consolation in the Prince's ultimate love for Ganga Dasi and his sacrifice; the realist will point at the futility of knowledge which is not backed by a will to act; the psychologist will either agree with Dr. Shankar's analysis or gleefully take issue with him. But the novel will most please the committed reader who is also an artist. An order has been ruthlessly condemned, but the hereditary architect of the order remains sympathetic to the end.

In contrast, however, the following opinion of MK.Naik, one of Anand's better known critics, may be quoted here:

Whatever the achievement of *Private Life of an Indian Prince* is, it is hardly a profound interpretation of "Indian life in a phase of pervasive

crisis". It could well have been, if it had not been afflicted with the artistic schizophrenia of trying to be at once a case history and a political chronicle. With all its own limitations, Manohar Malgaonkar's *The Princes* is a far more realistic and balanced political chronicle of the troubled times of the merger of the states.

Most critical opinion does not agree with Cowasjee's view and describes the novel as superficial. What else can explain the description of a tiger hunt and a juggler's show in the novel? These are calculated to attract the Western audience. Maybe that was the reason why the first edition was published in UK and not in India.

The second thing that needs to be recalled is that Anand wrote this novel in the background of his own emotional crisis. To what extent this fact came in the way of his writing an acceptably good piece of fiction is difficult to say. The fact remains that if Anand is remembered today as a novelist, it is not because of this or other novels but *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, which have been included by Cowasjee in his Omnibus volume. What is more significant, however, is that, in terms of his creative output, the decade of the 50s was comparatively barren as far as Anand was concerned.

IV

In 1960 Anand published a new novel titled *The Old Woman and the Cow*. It was republished in 1980 with a changed title called *Gauri*. Of all the novels published after his return to India, this one is perhaps the best. All that was needed to make it almost flawless was the deletion of a few pages towards the end where an attempt is made to dilate upon what was explicit. Had that not been done, it would have become a novel with a much clearer focus and an unblemished artistic finish. Perhaps this statement requires a bit of explanation.

Gauri is a villager and is sold to an old man even though she is already married. Her mother who had been widowed a few years earlier had developed relations with somebody. That man who was her lover was some kind of a crook and sold Gauri for a certain sum of money. The mother was aware of what was happening but kept quiet because her lover was the kind of man who was not above pulling a fast one on others every now and then.

What followed was not unexpected. Though her husband was difficult to get on with, Gauri knew how to come to terms with her situation. Through a series of circumstances (into which it is not possible to go here) Gauri was sold to an old rich man who wanted a young wife. Eventually, she found

herself working in a private hospital. The hospital was controlled by two doctors who were in partnership with each other. The two were different in their mental make up. Not unexpectedly, they adopted conflicting approaches towards Gauri. Eventually this leads to a breakdown of the partnership and Gauri returned to her husband.

This is one of those few novels by Anand where the growth of a character under the stress of changing circumstances produces a change in the personality of the person concerned. When her husband tries to bully her after her return to him, Gauri resists that kind of bullying. Not only that, when she shows willingness to leave him and go back to that job in the hospital which she had left earlier, the husband is unable to understand her. The plain fact is that Gauri had evolved as a human being but he had not. This is a kind of climax which is not all that common in Anand's fiction. By implication, what we witness in this novel is the sight of a village woman who, till her exposure to new influences in that private hospital, was soft and submissive. She however outgrows that stage of development to become a different person now.

These details have been provided so as to make the point that, for once, Anand had left his earlier concern about exploitation by different social forces at work and chosen to focus on the problems of a village woman who, given an opportunity to respond to the new challenges, refuses to act like the traditional Hindu wife. Things changed and so did Gauri. As put by one of the critics, Gauri graduates into modernity overnight. Earlier, she was firmly rooted in the ancient tradition of submission; now when the occasion came, she went beyond it. To put it another way, she shuns the tradition upheld by the Indian idol, Sita. She is grounded in reality and aware that in today's world, the earth is not going to open up and swallow her as had happened in Sita's case.

The agent of change in this instance was Col. Mahindra, one of the doctors in the private hospital. He is enlightened and well intentioned, and believes in doing good rather than being a self seeker and does not compromise with evil. The only weakness of the novel lies in Col. Mahindra's talking a little too priggishly. As a character in the novel, he plays the role that is expected of him but as a human being he is not all that convincing.

Much more can be said about the novel but the point to be recorded is the fact that, as a novel, this one by Anand comes across as a more finished piece of writing than anything else that he had written. He had been proud of having written *Untouchable* and *The Big Heart* but in terms of finish and the

craft of presentation, *Gauri* is much ahead of those two novels and of most others.

V

A year later came *The Road* which was, candidly speaking, quite disappointing. Towards the end of the 50s, Anand chose to settle down in Gurgaon and bought some property there. One of the shocking things which he witnessed there was the system of caste discrimination which was as strong as it used to be when he had first encountered it in his childhood. This prompted him to write a new novel on the same theme of caste discrimination about which he had written in *Untouchable*.

This issue was very much on his mind and he even talked to Pandit Nehru about it at one stage. The latter's response was one of disbelief in the beginning and then of irritation with what was happening. But Anand decided to express his sentiments in the way he had been doing; that was to write another novel on that very theme.

The Road covers the same ground as *Untouchable* does but there is a world of difference between the two novels. Despite some flaws of construction and projection, *Untouchable* stands out as a convincing and powerful indictment of the caste system. Apart from the fact that he was not handling the caste issue for the first time and had indeed blazed a new trail in Indo Anglian fiction, he did not feel compellingly involved in the writing of this new novel. In writing *The Road*, he was covering familiar ground but he was neither original nor inventive. Almost every single critic of Anand has decried this novel as unworthy of him.

How far did he succeed with his next novel, *Death of a Hero: Epitaph for Maqbool Sherwani*? It should not be all that difficult to judge. This novel was based on an actual incident. Sherwani was one of those heroic persons who fought Pakistan when Kashmir was attacked by the tribals in October 1947. He laid down his life while fighting. According to Anand's own statement, it was first written in New Delhi in late 1947, in other words, within a few weeks of the actual incident. This incident was written about in considerable detail in the newspapers and Anand chose to fictionalise it. Anand revised this novel in 1961 according to his own statement but it was published only in 1963. These different developments seem to suggest a certain kind of indecision of mind on his part.

Even a casual reading of the novel brings out two things. One, it is a long story rather than a novel and there is no sense of progression. Secondly, the

novel reads like a piece of reportage rather than fiction. In a piece of fiction, when anything happens, the motives behind the happenings are always analysed in detail. Anand's novel gives some kind of a description but it is totally lacking in depth and understanding. That is why the word reportage has been used.

The paltry details about this novel as given above clearly point to one thing. What Anand had done in the first round of writing was based on genuine, first hand experience and he was moved by his creative urge to write about them. This is evident not only from his first three novels which have been discussed in some detail but also in the Lalu trilogy referred to earlier though not described in detail. The plain fact is that Anand had ceased to be creative by then.

As one of the critics put it, when Anand first wrote, he was angry and full of genuine passion at what he had been seeing all around him while growing up and what had been happening around him and to him. By the time he returned to India, the creative spark had virtually died out. Whatever he was doing now was either to repeat himself or to write for the sake of writing. In plain words, he had entered a phase of mental and spiritual vacuum. How to get over it? The answer that he found for himself was to dig into his past once again. *Seven Summers*, a novel about his childhood, which he had completed in UK and was first published there had shown the way. Why not use the same formula? In all **likelihood, something of this kind would have happened and the result was *Morning Face*** which he published in 1968.

7. THE LATER FICTION

Anand's autobiographical novels fall into a special category, if one may say so. *Seven Summers* had, by and large, been sifted from the 2,000-page long autographical account of his past that he had written for himself under the inspiration— or whichever way we put it—of his friend, Irene. He kept on pouring out the details of his childhood and the subsequent years to her. She was fascinated by what he was telling. Before long, he reduced it to writing and, little by little, it became a manuscript of almost 2,000 pages. Irene did him the favour of typing them out, and the manuscript became the potential source material for some bits of what he wrote later.

Apart from this particular feature of *Seven Summers*, a notable quality of this novel is a certain kind of freshness about it. This feeling of freshness comes from a variety of sources. One is the mood of effortless ease which it conveys. Another is the kind of child that he was - irrepressibly curious,

always willing to experiment and to learn and adjust. Anand depicts the child as one whom he cannot but project in any way other than with genuine warmth and sincerity.

As Anand himself says somewhere, an autobiographical novel is not the same thing as an autobiography. The distinction is important and has to be kept in mind while discussing these novels. Even though he intended to write an autobiography, he never got around to doing so except incidentally. In a pamphlet put out by his publisher, even the title of each of the seven volumes of the proposed series was given. It was envisaged that, on the lines of *Seven Summers* and others, three more novels would be written. Those were listed as So *He Played His Part, A World Too Wide, and The Last Scene*.

Only the first four got written and the other three remained unwritten or, maybe, he changed his mind or whatever. There was one exception which will be dealt with a little later. One other was that he wrote a small book titled *Little Plays on Mahatma Gandhi*. This slim volume was published and circulated but did not measure up to the earlier volumes.

The point is that perhaps owing to his other preoccupations or a change of plan, the autobiography was not written. In addition to the one referred to above, the other three autobiographical novels that were published were *Morning Face, Confessions of a Lover, and The Bubble*.

There was also a further confusion in respect of planning the series of autobiographical novels. In his dedication to *Morning Face*, Anand projected the problem in these words:

When you first appeared in *Seven Summers*, the critics said variously that you were an incarnation of Krishna of the Yadus or just a Punjabi Spark'. They were not far wrong, because, if I may confess to you the truth, the old myth was dormant in my heart and mind as these myths were inherited by every Indian.... The 'spark' of the street urchin was, however, also in me and I may have imbued you with it. But...you are really not the Krishna of the age of gods...you cannot be, because the age of the gods is over, you seem to be aspiring to the new contemporary myth of man of the *kaliyug*, the iron age, in which Money itself, as a vast impersonal mechanism of power, inexorably governs life, like an unknown fate, as the unknown Gods, or the unknown evil in man, commanded life in the past, pursuing its seemingly mysterious ends, indifferent to the feelings of men and women.

In his eventual approach, he does not stick to either of these approaches with the result that there is a certain degree of ambiguity about the whole

thing. Even when one overlooks all this confusion, the fact remains that each one of the novels needs to be evaluated in its own right. This is for the simple reason that he was not consistent in his planning or approach nor always consistent in the execution of what he had planned.

How does Anand come across? Of his childhood, this much is indisputable that he was curious and even precocious to some extent. He was all the time asking all kinds of questions. While some of them were answered, others were not but each one projected a new dimension and level of understanding. As a child, he was extremely fond of his mother and was somewhat afraid of his father.

In addition to the fact that he received boundless love from his mother, one thing that endeared his mother to him particularly was her gift for story telling. In this connection, his own words given in the novel may be quoted here:

My mother had a vast fund of folk tales, having heard them in her childhood from her own mother, as legends, fables, myths and other narratives of gods and men and birds and beasts have been told in endless variations for thousands of years on the flat roofs of the mud huts in the villages.

As a matter of fact, his mother seems to have stimulated his imagination by telling him stories day after day. A kind of special bond grew up between them. This happens in many a home. All that one can say is that his mother was one of those exceptional women who laid the foundations of a goodly part of what he accomplished in later life. Altogether, *Seven Summers* makes for compulsive reading and successfully evokes the picture of a lively and curious child. And there lies the strength of this first autobiographical novel.

II

The second novel of the series which he wrote was published in 1976. In other words, it was published 15 years after *Seven Summer.*, had been published. According to the claim made by the author, this novel covered the next seven years of his life. It is difficult to divide one's life into such neat divisions. The fact however remains that each autobiographical novel is interesting, largely because each one of them corresponded to the physical and mental changes that were taking place in his life.

The dominant themes in the second novel are two. One, he gives a more detailed description of life in British cantonments than what he had described earlier. To take one example, in the earlier novel, his mother had

forbidden him not to mix with either the British soldiers or the scores of minions who had been engaged to look after the needs of the soldiers and to render service to them. From the mother's point of view, it was an important injunction but the kind of child that he was—inquisitive and self-willed—he ignored it.

When it came to mixing with the minions, it was an impossible injunction to obey. Most of his friends came from that social background, and indeed, some of them were close to him, Bhaka of *Untouchable* fame being one of them. There were several others also and Anand was equally close to them in a whole variety of ways.

The second feature of his childhood which increasingly made an impact upon his consciousness and began to matter in his life was the kind of man his father was. It took Anand some time to understand the situation. As an administrative assistant to the Battalion Commandant, his father was expected to play a role which he took to mean unalloyed loyalty to the British masters. While Anand has given several details of the uneasy relationship between his father and his mother, step by step, he began to understand what was happening. The following few lines describe the situation as he saw it years later:

Over long, anxious days, father sought the evidence of a smile on the faces of the Sahibs to assure him that they did not suspect him of disloyalty. And with that fear of someone backbiting through jealousy of him, he lived in dread of some enemy who might go and poison the Sahibs' minds about him. And he went about sedulously cementing his relations with his friends in the regiment.

Another couple of his new experiences also need to be referred to: The first one was the fact of interaction with other members of his family. During the earlier years, his contact with them was casual and superficial. Because of his father's frequent transfers from town to town, he was now admitted to a school in Amritsar. He had now to interact with the members of his family about whom he had hardly heard till then. Now, he had to deal with them.

The other new development was that, not unoften, he found himself at the receiving end of repeated physical punishment by teachers in the school. He refers to several of them. A couple of them derived pleasure from inflicting physical punishment but that was not true of everyone. There were a number of such incidents in his school career but, in the long run, what saved the situation for him was that he was one of the brighter students in the class and

his knowledge of English was distinctly better than that of most others. This stood him in good stead.

Seven Summers is perhaps the best of his autobiographical novels. The rest have their own standing but it is not possible to go into details here. For instance, *Morning face* was given the Sahitya Akademi Award. That was given partly for the reason that over the years he had become a literary celebrity but no one in India had chosen to honour him in a formal way though eventually some of them did choose to honour him. Till then, he had not been given even an honorary degree by any one of the Indian universities. The Akademi Award seemed to be the obvious thing to do and it was done.

III

The more pertinent issue is why, instead of wanting to write his autobiography which he had plans to do, he wrote autobiographical novels. That they were based on his earlier life certainly lent greater authenticity to his fiction than might have happened otherwise. The truth of the matter is that, apart from one significant novel of his, *Gauri*, which he published in 1960, either he repeated himself or wrote things which were somewhat wanting in a genuine spark of creativity or that sureness of touch which had characterised his earlier writing.

What he was doing in *Marg* was so much more meaningful and self fulfilling. A good deal has been said about it earlier but the full impact of what he wrote and published in *Marg* has not been projected in as full and comprehensive a manner as deserves to be done. Meanwhile, these autobiographical novels served the purpose of helping him to remain afloat in the literary world.

When it comes to evaluating those four autobiographical novels, perhaps the best of them was *Seven Summers*. *Morning Face* gives many more details of his earlier life and some of those have been referred to. Of the remaining two novels, *Confessions of a Lover* is on the whole a little pedestrian. What is unpardonable, it is somewhat juvenile in certain portions. But *The Bubble* is distinctly more substantial and makes for more consistent and absorbing reading. For one thing, it gives many more details of his growing up in the student environment in U.K about which we do not know all that much, for another, the personality of Irene—one of the more central figures in the novel—is so much more many-sided and authentic and comes across with a degree of personal warmth as well.

Irene, as a matter of fact, played a much more meaningful role in his life than is generally recognised. When Anand met her, she was already a more mature person than perhaps he was at that time. In more specific terms, she was clear in her mind as to what she wanted to do in her life. This comes across in *The Bubble* unambiguously. With her Irish background, she felt suffocated under the spell of British domination. But in her own way, she had marked out her concerns in a manner which, relatively speaking, were more sure-footed than Anand's. When Anand was struggling to get his first novel published, she told him in the spirit of encouragement to a struggling writer that she would be prepared to marry him provided he could get it published.

Right till his last years, he kept on writing letters to her in his numerous writings. This was despite the fact that she had passed away decades earlier. Her memory haunted him and he continued to think of her. Their conversation with each other was not empty chatter; indeed, it was about serious issues of life. To illustrate the point, in the course of a conversation with her, Anand remarks at one stage, "But who told you we are spiritual? We are a suppressed people." Coming from an Indian to an Irish woman, this was significant. Both India and Ireland had been enslaved by the British and both were finding it difficult to shake them off.

Secondly, it was against this background that Anand was profoundly influenced by what Irene was doing. She not only talked about freedom, she actually participated in the struggle for it. In *The Bubble*, a good deal of space is taken by Irene's activities and her eventual imprisonment for a year. As stated already, this had an unspoken but meaningful message for him. Irene had opted to pay for her convictions and, as argued earlier, this influenced Anand's thinking when he decided to return to India after two decades in UK.

That her impact on Anand's thinking was long lasting should be clear from two other examples. In *Little Plays on Mahatma Gandhi*, there is a postscript letter to Irene. This slim volume was written in 1991. Not only that, in one of his last-phase novels, *Nine Moods of Bharata: A Novel of Pilgrimage*, which was published in 1998, he starts (and ends) with a letter to Irene. Though both these pieces of writing show an obvious decline in his creative power, and for understandable reasons, the fact remains that she continued to loom large on the horizon till the very end of his days. This speaks for itself.

IV

There is one other novel which may be described as semi autobiographical. In addition to *Little Plays on Mahatma Gandhi*, he wrote one more novel with the title, *Caliban and Gandhi: Letters to Bapu from Bombay*. It was published in 1990. What is interesting is the manner in which the novel is dedicated to Bapu. The exact words are as follows:

Bapu, these letters written to you from Bombay are written by your rebel 'son' as apologies for his failure to live up to vows taken in your Ashram.

Krishan

The meaning of these words would become clear when the details of the story are sketched somewhat out. As a resident of the Ashram, Anand got to know an American divorcee, Mary, who along with her son was spending some time there. In the course of the novel, apart from everything else, Anand takes the opportunity to express his disagreement with Gandhi in respect of a number of issues which have a bearing on the sexual code of conduct followed by him.

For instance, he totally disapproves of Rama's treatment of Sita who is thrown out of the house after she had been rescued from Ravana. Similarly he is critical of Draupadi being shared as wife by five brothers. Not only that, Arjun has loves outside his marriage to Draupadi but nobody seems to object to it. Altogether, he differs with Gandhi openly in his being traditional in his outlook on life and, also, the sexual code of conduct professed down the ages.

As to the other details of the novels, one little incident in the novel may be referred to, Anand and Mary went to a Bombay slum together. Anand gives several lurid descriptions of what life is like for that segment of India's humanity. They are able to rescue a poor woman who has had to sell herself for her livelihood off and on and there is a feeling of triumphant vindication on their part. This is projected as an act of moral deliverance. This is days before Mary's return to the U.S. In the course of those adventures, while waiting for the ship to sail, Mary wants intimacy with the narrator, Anand, and the latter responds to it. Mary knows about Anand's love for Irene. But Anand leaves it behind him and violates the vow taken by him in the presence of Gandhi when he went to stay at the Ashram.

It should not be necessary to provide any further details except to say that it is one of Anand's poorer novels. During his last couple of decades, Anand

seems to have run out of inspiration. And he is not self-critical enough to reject what does not deserve to be published.

At the same time, given his life long habit of writing something everyday, he either repeated himself or wrote fiction which lacked the kind of creativity of which he had given such striking evidence in the first phase of his fiction writing. Among the poor specimens of his writing, mention has not been made of some of these titles, for instance, *Of Power and Pity*, published in 2001. In this connection, a reference may be made to the last novel published by him in 2002, two years before he passed away.

This novel was entitled, *Reflections on a White Elephant*. It begins very promisingly. Having been educated in Cambridge and spent most of his young life away from Kangra where he had grown up, the new Mahant of the temple in Kangra, Kalidas by name, wishes to follow the kind of Hinduism which he had seen practised in Pondicherry and several other places. But the local influences are at odds with his thinking.

The novel describes how his step mother shows him a document. According to it, the shrine was to be inherited not by his son, Kalidas, but by his grandson who was yet a minor. When Kalidas finds that it is not a registered will but a mere letter, he tears it with the result that both his step mother and his Parsi wife leave the shrine in a huff along with whatever money they can find.

Meanwhile, there is a local intrigue which, in an act of over simplification, is described as offensive to the kind of belief which he seeks to project. As a part of that intrigue, his white elephant which had been gifted to the shrine by the Maharaja of Mysore is given some drugged drink. The elephant gets intoxicated and this causes the death of a devotee. The whole sequence of developments is melodramatic. The new Mahant is unable to cope with what is happening and commits suicide. The novel had got off to a splendid start but failed to maintain the momentum.

The 60s and the 70s of the last century witnessed a whirl of critical activity among the academics mainly with reference to his earlier fiction. More than a dozen critical books were written about his writings. It is not without significance that almost each one of them concentrates on his early work and his later fiction is not even referred to in most cases.

IV

Where to place *Pilpali Sahab: The Story of a Big Ego in a Small Body*? It is not autobiographical but straight forward autobiography! The

circumstances and the manner in which it was written puts it in that category in the Preface.

In 1927, he went on a visit to Vienna to see an academic in connection with his doctoral work. A little before his visit to Vienna, something tragic had happened in his life. As he puts it, “I suffered from a break-down on hearing of the death of a beloved person, supposedly ‘shot while escaping’ by the British Black and Tans in Dublin.” The reference seems to be to the death of Irene.

His professional friend whom he had gone to see in Vienna was working in the laboratory of Dr. Sigmund Freud. Through his good offices, he was able to see Freud and explained his problem to him. As is customary in all such cases, Freud wanted details of his childhood before he could express his professional opinion. Anand gave him the first part of his *Seven Summers* which was autobiographical in character but not exactly his autobiography.

Freud read it with great interest and even commended his writing and mode of presentation. But what he wanted was something more factual. In a few months, Anand wrote out a detailed narrative and called it, *My Childhood*. This enabled Freud to understand his problem. He had five long sittings with him and Freud gave him an analysis of what he understood to be his problem. This helped Anand without question.

Coming to the manner in which *Pilpali Sahab* has been written, the only other thing that may be mentioned is that a good deal of *Seven Seasons* deals with some of the same incidents but the autobiographical details are much more numerous in the latter book and he has the space to dwell upon them. In other words, the requirement of Freud, the psycho analyst, obliged him to write *My Childhood* and that became the first draft of *Pilpali Sahab*.

There is no point in raising or discussing the question why Anand did not write a full fledged autobiography as he intended to write. The decision has to be made by the writer himself and no one else.

8. THE SHORT FICTION

When Anand’s first novel, *Untouchable*, was being turned down by publishers one after another, he somehow managed to get the first collection of short stories, *The Lost Child and Other Stories*, published. As a matter of fact, this was his first book of fiction to be published in UK.

It is not necessary to go into the question of how or why all this was happening. The truth of the matter was that *Untouchable* dealt with a theme

which was totally unfamiliar to the British reading public. Therefore, as argued earlier, it encountered consumer resistance. That reservation did not apply to his volume of short stories. Most of these stories have an Indian setting though the technique of writing is in line with what the Western audience was used to or looked forward to.

Altogether, Anand wrote something like 70-80 short stories. Some of the earlier volumes of his short stories were published in UK and there was no problem about their publication in the book form. In terms of style and presentation, Anand understood the British point of view as also what the Indian reading public expected. As to the substance of what he wrote, he did not deviate from the Indian reality with which he was intimately familiar.

In his Preface to *Selected Stories* which was published in 1955 in Moscow, Anand explained his approach to story writing as follows:

One of the oldest books of stories in India was entitled *Ocean of Stories*. I have always thought of this book as symbol of the highly finished art of story-telling in India. I read it at an early age and was inspired by it to read and hear many of the folk tales told in my country.

And always I felt I wanted to write stories as finished in form and as rich in content as the stories told among my people. In fact, the folk tale form has seemed to me the most perfect form of short story... The folk tales of India... interpret the joys and sorrows of a peasant people of the long eras of Indian feudal life. And in spite of the wit, wisdom and morality which they represent, they are not typical of the modern sensibility. Therefore, while accepting the form of the folk tale, especially in its fabulous character, I took in the individual and group psychology of the European *conte* and tried to synthesise the two styles. And thus I sought to create a new kind of fable which extends the old Indian story form into a new age, without the moral lessons of the Indian story, but embodying its verve and vitality and including the psychological understanding of the contemporary period.

The crucial point to note is that, in respect of his stories, while accepting the formal requirements of perception and projection, Anand took into account the individual as also the group psychology of the European mind. As even a casual reading shows, he successfully combined the two elements in his work which have been referred to above.

Two other influences which worked in his case effectively were, one, the overall impact of the folk tradition and, two, the impact of his mother's story telling. He repeatedly talks about this part of his inheritance. One of his

mother's favourite tales related to the adventures of Raja Rasalu, a legendary fighter of Punjab. To quote Anand again:

One of my favourite folk tales was the *Adventures of Raja Rasalu* and I would pester my mother to tell me this over and over again. The humorous anecdotes concocted by one of our teachers, Master Shah Nawaz, based on the legendary incidents in the life of Raja Birbal and Akbar the Great, impressed me with the gift of laughter that one could bring to bear on human foibles. When I read some of the stories of Tolstoy in his *Seveslopol Sketches* as well as Gorky's stories, *Creatures that once were Men*, I began to conceive the short story as I would write it, by combining the framework of the folk tales with concentration on character and situations of contemporary life. Then I read the fables of Theodore Powys in London and tried to apply the Indian fables of*Panchatantra* to my human beings.... adapted the prose poems of Turgenev and my own allegories to the lyric story... Altogether, the allegory, the fable, the lyric short story, the satire and the long short story, in my hand, are all, in a peculiar style of my own evolved under various influences, typical of the neo-folk tale, which is my ideal of the short story. The whole concept was built on the hunch that the old Indian short story remains the deepest reference back to various layers of consciousness. Only it had to take in the disintegration of mind and body of the present age and bring flashes of illumination into the dark to reveal layers and under layers of suppressed feelings. The bardic narrative with its moral lesson at the end had to yield to the revelation in which the neo-psychology, which has taken the place of morality, is implicit.... What I left for the novel was the epic theme; the story expressed the lyric awareness and a compassionate sense of humour.

This long quote is instructive in more than one way and projects two things. One is to acknowledge the influence of his mother on the development of his imagination and the legacy of the traditional Indian folk tales, told generation after generation. The second is to describe how the various other influences contributed to his work. This requires to be explained further.

The long quotation given above is taken from his Introduction to *Aesop's Fables* which he brought out in 1960. What needs to be underlined is the fact that, almost as an act of conscious planning, Anand went back to the tradition of the Indian folk tales which he had written in two volumes with an interval of several years between their dates of publication. One was entitled, *Indian Fairy Tales*, and the other was *More Indian Fairy Tales*. In other words, Anand adopted the attitude of a craftsman who followed his

inherited craft which he had received from his mother and whatever else he could learn from the Indian, Arabic or European or any other source.

II

How is it that while Anand's fiction as a whole has received considerable attention, his short stories have not been appreciated in the same measure? On the whole, they have remained neglected as well as underrated. In his Introduction to the volume of *Selected Short Stories* brought out by Penguin, Saras Cowasjee begins by saying that Anand, in his letters to several friends and literary persons had repeatedly lamented the fact that little or hardly any attention had been paid by the general readers to his short stories. His longer fiction has received more attention than his short stories is something so obvious that it leaves no room for debate.

As far as his early fiction is concerned, it has received more attention than his middle or later fiction. This was for the reason that Anand was the first Indian writer to make an impact upon the British readers. All these years, Englishmen who were writing novels about India generally selected such themes as were either romantic or historical. After the 1857 Mutiny, some novels came to be written about certain incidents connected with that chapter in Indian history. Apart from those few novels, the dominant themes in the rest of them continued to be what they had been all this time. Kipling enriched it further in a variety of ways and also gave it international projection.

Anand's distinction lay in opening up certain new layers of Indian reality which had remained neglected. What he did now was something so new that, except for some occasional writing in Indian languages, hardly any one had turned his/her attention in this direction. The themes which remained, by and large, Anand's special area of concern were his encounters with social discrimination which had almost become a part of Indian life. The subsequent ideological approach adopted by Gandhi served to give birth to a new version of the changing Indian reality which Anand projected in his own unique way.

In other words, it was the originality of his perception and the boldness of his projection which came together to make him the unique, almost inimitable, writer of short stories that he came to be. If his short stories have remained neglected, it was not for lack of ability to use the right kind of technique. Rather, it was the content of these stories which did not compel as

much attention as they deserved. This point of view needs to be illustrated with a couple of examples.

Even a brief look at the different selections of Anand's short stories makes two things clear. One, something like a score of them are to be found in each selection. Secondly, as to the rest, there can be arguments for inclusion or exclusion into which it is not possible to enter here. But there is one thing about them which stands out, and this needs to be dilated upon.

The most impressive thing about these short stories is the wide range of themes and his uncommon ability in being able to deal with them. The sheer variety of what he writes about is impressive. The incidents taken are both from rural India and the urban mess that is spread all around us. Whatever the background, Anand is able to make his point in each case with the touch of a master craftsman. What is distinctive about his short stories, to reiterate, is that they have not remained confined to a limited range of themes or sub themes.

How does he do it? There is no single formula which he adopts. More than that, what stand out are the short stories themselves. His novels are serious, in fact deadly serious. Here and there, there is some comedy but the overall thrust is in dilating on the theme of the unending exploitation of the poor and their inability to defend themselves.

III

The first story which almost selects itself as an illustration of what has been stated above is 'The Lost Child'. It does not have comedy as its core like the other stories do. But it is a gem of lyrical writing which has been translated into other languages more extensively than any other story of his. At this point, it may be in order to quote Saros Cowasjee again:

The story can be read at different levels. At its simplest it is about a child's natural fear of being left alone; at its most profound, it is a metaphor for the human condition. The child in the story epitomises our individual cravings, desires, fears, but most of all our vulnerability and dependence on one another. Anand has said that a maxim by Guru Nanak—'We are all children lost in the world fair'—was reverberating in his mind when he wrote 'The Lost Child'. This provides the essence of the story. The nameless child is the proverbial 'everyman', and the village fair is a microcosm of our universe with its beauty, joy and pleasures, but underscored by pain and insecurity.

Most people agree that it is almost a perfect story. A child gets lost in a village fair. Before he gets lost, he wanted his parents to buy him certain things. Now when he recovers from the trauma and his parents are still unavailable, he is offered all those things his parents were reluctant to buy. But the child yearns for his parents only and the emotional security it signifies stands nowhere in comparison to those things. This is the dominant theme of the story.

Even when Anand is talking of exploitation, as in *Coolie* for example, he is sometimes able to inject comedy into the narration. For instance, the bank clerk who is the first person to employ Munoo as a domestic servant wants the British boss to be well entertained. All kinds of lavish arrangements have been made and the idea is to impress the boss. Munoo, the domestic servant is required to play the role that has been planned out for him. But having just come from a village, he is unable to grasp the intent of the plan. Instead of the boss being impressed, almost the opposite happens. By bringing in the element of the comic twist, Anand deftly changes the plane of social analysis.

What is done in this instance is done several times over in his short stories. Stories like 'A Pair of the Mustachios', 'The Maharaja and the Tortoise', 'A Promoter of Quarrels', 'The Man Whose Name Did Not Appear in the Census', 'The Man Who Loved Monkeys More Than Human Beings' and numerous others belong to the comic category. As a matter of fact, this element of comedy is more distinctive of his short stories than any other element.

It would be possible to quote many similar examples but two stories which amply illustrate the point may be taken up for somewhat detailed discussion. While the child is more concerned about his parents and the emotional security they provide, nothing else matters to him. In three brief pages of 'The Lost Child' Anand is able to write something which, as Cowasjee says, can be read at more than one level.

What is unique about this story is that it is built brick by brick, not a word is wasted and there is no attempt to overstress any point as frequently happens in his novels at crucial turning points. On such occasions, Anand generally decides to intervene and makes explicit what, really speaking, is implicit in the situation. It is his inability to hold himself back and underline the meaning of what is clearly implied which takes away a good deal from the uniqueness and depth at which Anand is moving. In *Gauri* for example, all that is required is to delete 2-3 pages of uncalled for preaching in which

Dr. Mahindra indulges towards the end. Had that been done, that novel would have been much better than what it now is.

It is not contended that the stories are completely free from unwanted priggishness. Several of them suffer from it but they are no more than one-tenth of what is encountered in his novels. The inability to leave something unsaid takes away a good deal of the quality of his fictional writing. For the most part, the stories are free from this effect.

The second example that may be given is the story entitled ‘The Maharaja and the Tortoise’; it is not as uproariously funny as some of his other stories are but is hilarious enough to make the point simply and effectively. Being persuaded by his wily Prime Minister, he gets a tank made in his home and has it filled with the water of the holy Ganges. Most unexpectedly, there is a certain complication which changes the plane of narration. While the tank is filled with the holy water of the Ganges, a tortoise manages to enter the tank and, before long, bites the big toe of the Maharaja. The whole thing written in a comic vein is an attack on the vanity of the Maharaja. It is also an attack on the feudal set up and the world of humbug it unveils. The story needs to be understood from that point of view. There are numerous stories like this. One of them, ‘The Liar’, was included by Salman Rushdie in his *Vintage Book of Indian Writing - 1947-1997*. This story is as good as several others which have been left out here.

IV

It is time to redefine the standing of Anand as a writer of short stories- Whenever a writer writes both novels and short stories, the latter are, generally speaking, marginalised and most of the attention is given to the longer fiction. There is nothing wrong with that approach except that it needs to be recognised that when it comes to short stories, Anand is not always writing in the same vein as in his long fiction. He may be serious in some stories but not in several others, That needs to be underlined is the fact that not many people look upon Anand as a writer who is anything but a novelist. The basic themes which he covered in his fiction were serious in terms of content as well as emphasis. It is only rarely that Anand can adopt the comic approach. It is mainly in his short stories that he does so and that is what is unique about his story writing.

The focus in his short stories is on the irony of the situation and the disproportion between what should be done and what is actually done. What needs to be remembered is that his stories belong to a genre which has not

been projected in any other portion of his extensive writing. However, it is important to treat Anand as a serious short story writer and evaluate him accordingly. This is not to underplay what he has written in the main body of his fiction. Having conceded this fact, it is equally important to concede that, in his short fiction, Anand is doing something which is different both in terms of content and focus. In the long run, this is one of those things for which he would be long remembered.

9. ANAND'S OTHER WRITINGS

The first book which Anand published was on *Persian Painting*. He published a couple of other books also during the next few years, including *The Hindu View of Art* and *The Lost Child and Other Stories*. What brought him recognition, however, was the publication of *Untouchable*.

What needs to be noted is that he had shown genuine interest in two distinct areas of writing. One was the study of art and the other was fiction. The trend continued during his stay in UK except that he brought out a book entitled *Letters from India* in 1942. The publication of this book amounted to venturing into political territory. Against the backdrop of the Second World War and India's far from enthusiastic support to the British Empire, this shift to matters political had become somewhat unavoidable.

Towards the end of his stay in UK, he also published his *Apology for Heroism* which he described as an autobiography of ideas. During the two decades in UK, his mental evolution had undergone considerable development, and this book chronicles these changes to a large extent. Once he came back to India and got involved in the publication of *Marg*, his interests got further diversified. In the changed situation, writing about art and related issues assumed greater importance than before.

One way of looking at his wide range of interests would be to look at the titles of the various books which he brought out during the next few years. He published *Indian Fairy Tales*, the *Story of Man*, the *Indian Post Office* for different publishers, and the *Story of Chacha Nehru* for the Children's Book Trust. Writing for children was an area in which he remained involved for a number of years. One of his publications, *Some Street Games of India* which he himself had played as a child, was published in an illustrated form both in English and Hindi by the National Book Trust, India, in 1983.

Apart from his fiction (both novels and collections of short stories), he also wrote about social and cultural issues. *Lines Written to an Indian Air*, which was published in 1949, was a collection of several pieces on various

aspects of art and literature. Some of them were written during his stay in UK and some in India. What he did was to collect them now and compile a book.

This book has remained somewhat neglected though it contains fairly good writing by him, especially in respect of Indian art and the pioneering studies of artists like Jamini Roy, Amrita Shergill and Rabindra Nath Tagore. There are also pieces on Indian sculpture and a masterly piece on 'Architecture, Old and New'. There is a fairly long piece on the status of women in India. This piece is based on a book, *The Brides Book of Beauty*, which he had written in collaboration with Nehru's sister, Krishna Huttheesingh, some years earlier.

He published a substantial piece on education a year after India became independent. He does not have much to contribute by way of new ideas but it says all the right things, particularly his focus on ensuring freedom for every child to grow in terms of his/her potential. It is competently done. Those concerned with teacher education would find it profitable to read it even after several decades.

Physical punishment which he disapproved of has not disappeared from Indian schools even today though, it must be acknowledged, its incidence has come down considerably. It would be helpful to quote one comment from his article on the Sergeant Report where he had said, "Progress (in education) cannot outstrip the supply of teachers." This is something that those concerned with educational policy should not forget. That most thinking on education continues to be traditional is underlined in this observation of his:

One does not expect the fossilised minds, bred in a feudal cum servile colonial structure of society to re-educate themselves. The only hope is that the younger generation of our intellectuals, who were the products of the freedom movement... will take the lead in urging that the ideal of all education is freedom—a well integrated social human being—and the free mind. And they will have to declare categorically that those who love freedom are not afraid of license.

It may be noted here that among the policy makers like the ministers for education, there have been hardly any persons with a turn for original or bold thinking. No wonder things continue as they were. And as to bureaucrats who virtually control educational policy, the one thing that they are afraid of is the freedom to experiment. In plain words, what was diagnosed and recommended then has not been implemented.

A related piece is about the study of Indian art. He is of the view that there is a good deal of falsehood, prejudice and sentimentality which needs to be overcome. Then he goes on to analyse the initial British reaction about the wealth of the Indies. But by the 16th and 17th centuries, there was a subtle change from admiration to contempt. In the following century, there was a swing between appreciation and depreciation.

It was in the 19th century that opinion about Indian art got further sharply defined. There had been controversy between Anglists like Macaulay and Orientlists like William Jones, Colebrook, *Max* Muller and the lot. It was only in the beginning of the 20th century that some people stood up decisively for Indian art. The role of C.B. Howell who was Principal of the Government College of Art, Calcutta, was pioneering in character. Soon after, he was joined by Coomarswamy. Though a Sri Lankan by birth and a geologist by training, he devoted himself to the study of Indian art. Indeed he defended everything Indian, including the caste system and the practice of *Suti*. What Anand said about the system of education as a whole however needs to be reproduced here:

Our educational system, once a forcible imposition on us by the West is still, under our national regime, a compromise between a third-rate imitation of the English system and Gandhiji's 'earn while you learn' child-self idea. And nowhere in the new schemes. Except in Zakir Hussain's and Sargeants', does one feel that the aim of education has been conceived on the basis that every man and woman is potentially a special kind of artist and the real aim of education is not classrooms and syllabus but freedom, the real freedom which comes from the 'free mind', the mind whose fears, hates, guilt and anxieties are relaxed, so that the dynamic energy latent in the person expresses itself creatively through pleasurable acts and movements.

These words were written soon after India became self-governing. Anand who had spent two decades in UK had not lost touch with India. Indeed he came back precisely because he felt that he belonged here.

II

What has been said above comes from *Lines Written to an Indian Air*. Some stray pieces of Anand's writing were put together and published in the form of a book. Its year of publication, 1949, says it all Anand included partly what he had been writing before he came back from England and partly what he had written during his first couple of years in India. During the next decade or so, most of his time was taken up by looking after the

Marg. With the passage of time, Anand got more and more involved in what was happening around him. In brief, his next significant contribution to the world of scholarship was what happened in the early 60s.

The occasion for it was a UNESCO sponsored seminar on 'Traditional Values' and the focus was on the dialogue between India and the West. Most of the participants (quite a few of them were known personalities) talked of the traditional Indian spirituality and the materialism of the West. Everyone, however, did not accept this formulation and Anand was one among them.

He accepted the contention that, traditionally speaking, the thrust of Indian philosophy had been predominantly idealistic but this was changing. To overlook this fact was to be out of the touch with contemporary reality. Indeed, he was so emphatic on this point and presented it so convincingly that he got a favourable response from no less a person than C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer who was presiding over the session.

Ramaswamy Iyer was a well known champion of the idealistic school of thought. In the wake of what Anand and others had said, he passed on a note to him complimenting him on "the shower bath" rather "the needle bath" that he had administered to the audience. This was gratifying.

Coming from a redoubtable champion of the traditional Indian philosophy, this was quite something. After the seminar, he decided to enlarge his comments and also bring in the necessary historical background.

He showed in the course of his analysis that there were three traditional values which had continued to operate almost throughout Indian history. These were universalism, tolerance and compassion. Anand did not claim that these values had been followed in full or consistently. What he emphasised was these had been subscribed to almost all the time. This was something which could not be overlooked.

Having enlarged his thesis and even published it in a tentative way, he decided to go further. He rewrote the whole of it as a book so that it could become a basis for further discussion. In the course of this book, he developed his humanist point of view at quite some length. According to Anand, our society "tends to pose every question simply in terms of power, religion, money, caste and language or an issue between the yogi and the commissar". Having said this, he was modest enough to say that he had titled the book as *Is There a Contemporary Indian Civilization?* The whole issue was posed as a question and not as a well-worked formulation. It is years since he published this book, but it failed to excite much discussion.

There is no doubt, however, that he raised the question with a sense of genuine earnestness.

One significant thing to note is that he posed this question after a decade and a half after 1947. During this period, he had got fully involved in whatever was happening around him. More than any one else, it was Nehru who loomed large on the horizon. And it was Nehru who next to Gandhi had had the maximum impact on his thinking. In the late 50s, Nehru was at the peak of his power when Anand brought out a new edition of his book *An Apology for Heroism* in 1957. This time the book was dedicated to JLN. He did not choose to be more specific than that.

The way India was evolving and the fact that Nehru was the dominant figure, whether in terms of history, politics or technology, seemed to be the most significant thing at that time. Anand was one of those who looked up to him as a mentor and did not make a secret of it.

It would be helpful to quote a few lines from the preliminary chapter of this book *Is There a Contemporary Indian Civilization?*

This basic misunderstanding arises from the fact that those who are attempting to shape a contemporary Civilization in India have been thinking aloud without producing an *ersatz* commodity called the new India. And they have made mistakes, giving less thought to the problems of integration of machines to man than was necessary. At the same time, they have been asking what values to take from the past, how to inherit them, and whether they can be inherited at all. Also, what to take from other people—how much of it and in what form. Obviously, the process of synthesis of cultures is not like a school-boy's arithmetic, merely addition and subtraction. Behind the ideas of the past, there were many social facts, and behind the heterogeneous beliefs there were the mental struggles of many generations. And behind the mechanical Civilization of the West was the ferocious man-eater of the profit system. All these facts and ideas have to be sifted, because this was not done during the period of Western domination, to an extent, as there was a natural tendency to exalt everything European by the rulers and deprecate everything Indian by the Indians. Now, however, there is a process of rediscovery and the various traditions have begun to be assessed. Of course, the very joy of rediscovery often obfuscates the purpose for which the researches were launched. And no one will understand the Indian mind if this process of inheriting the past, with a view to synthesis with the present, is not studied from the compulsion to see that it is a serious, if halting, effort towards shaping a new destiny.

This long quotation more or less sums up his argument. In the course of this book, he dilates upon the three traditional values which had been a part of the past Indian heritage. Having said this, he went on to dilate on the process of synthesis and the forces, negative and positive, which had been at work as a result of the British impact. Among them, he talks of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nehru, Gandhi and several others. Without reproducing the details of his argument, it may be said that what he emphasised was the need for a well formulated philosophy of life and he focused on what he described as humanism.

According to him, humanism had a certain kind of insistence in the traditional Indian thought and he traces it to some important influences. In this connection, he talks of the Buddha, the medieval Hindu saints, the influence of Islam, the rise of Sikhism, the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his colleagues, M.N. Roy and Nehru. Anand himself had been a student of philosophy, He was well versed both in Western and Indian philosophy. What he was attempting to do now was with a purpose which he defined as follows:

Perhaps, the humanism I put forward is against all organised faiths, though I feel that, by relegating religion to private conscience, the tasks of social reconstruction are more easily possible. Freedom of conscience is, however itself a touch-stone of humanism. Only, it is gradually more amenable to the sanctions of enlightened emotion, reason, science and imagination, and goes to make that something unconquerable in the spirit of man, which is proof against perversions, untruth, social injustice and oppression.

After this, he puts down twelve basic points of this humanist philosophy. He begins with the statement that humanism places man in the centre of all things and ends with the assertion that this humanism of which he is talking would eventually link with international humanism. That Anand's formulations did not succeed beyond a point is obvious. But the fact that he chose to work out a certain new alternative line of thought is significant. Also significant is the fact that all through the 50s, he had been relatively unproductive from the creative point of view. In terms of his intellectual evolution, however, he did not remain idle. It so happened, however, that what he put forward then did not catch on beyond a point.

During the next couple of decades, he got drawn into a number of related activities, at least one of them needs to be mentioned here. In 1962, Anand was appointed the Tagore Professor of Fine Arts at Punjab University, Chandigarh. For the next two years, he was based in Chandigarh rather than Bombay. Though not planned that way, this period of his life too turned out to be quite productive. Among other things, he wrote pieces on art education which he had left untouched for some time.

During his stay at Chandigarh, Anand continued to function as if he had never left Bombay. One development which followed his stay at Chandigarh should be referred to here. His appointment as Tagore Professor was one factor which led to his subsequent appointment as the Chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi. During his tenure, he did several things which in a sense were a continuation of what he had been doing during his editorship of *Marg*. One thing now stands out and may be referred to.

He initiated what came to be called TRIENNALE. This was a 3-yearly international exhibition which the Lalit Kala Akademi started putting up. During the first few years, the media looked forward to this event. In course of time, it became a part of the overall functioning of the Lalit Kala Akademi. He projected several other ideas also in regard to the promotion of fine arts which he tried to put into effect. It provoked some controversy. But Anand did not compromise. In course of time, the controversy died down. It needs to be acknowledged that his leadership of the Lalit Kala Akademi was characterised both by imagination and vigour.

With the passage of years, most artists began to look upon him as a friend and a patron. His editorship of *Marg* had placed him in a central, almost commanding, position in any case. Seeking his opinion became the done thing, or almost so. Not only that, he established a lively cultural centre in the Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi. He bought a plot of land there from the prize money earned from the International Peace Prize. What he did now was to develop what eventually came to be called the Lokayata Art Centre. It ran summer workshops for children and others in the fields of theatre, painting, music and so on. Even book exhibitions were arranged sometimes in collaboration with others and sometimes on its own.

Since Anand's death in late 2004, Lokayata has become remarkably active. Every few weeks there is an art exhibition. Without question, it has become a beehive of artistic activity. Most of them are run on a self-financing basis though off and on there is a surplus. Since the whole thing is owned and managed by a registered society, whatever surplus is generated

gets ploughed back. In a sense, the whole thing is a tribute to his love of art and his mission to spread it further.

As he had visualised, his set up at Khandala, near Bombay, was meant to be a writer's home whereas Lokayat at New Delhi was to be a centre for the promotion of art. The New Delhi centre is functioning as it had been envisaged but the Khandala initiative has got embroiled in various legal complications. It is not worthwhile to go into details here. What require to be noted is his vision and his commitment to art and creative writing. Also, without the active intervention of the Ministry of Culture, his plan of having a Writers' Home at Khandala cannot come true. To rescue the raw material of his activities during the early years of his career is both important and urgent.

With the passage of time, Anand emerged as an outstanding figure both in the world of fiction and the fine arts. Anand as a fiction writer came into his own in the decade of the 60s and was honoured by the Sahitya Kala Akademi award. Not only that, by then he had become some kind of a father figure. With his wide range of interests and intellectual and social commitments, he got involved in all kinds of public issues. One of them related to the republican on of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's writings on 'Sattee'.

IV

The first thing that deserves to be noted here" is that the book is dedicated to the memory of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentick. He describes both of them as two dynamic pioneers of the struggle for equal rights for men and women. It should not be necessary to say anything more for Anand's own words are self explanatory and eloquent. As a critic has said:

It is important to underline one thing. His belief in equality between men and women was basic to his overall thinking. His very first novel dealt with the theme of social discrimination and could not have been written but for the fact that the absence of equality between some people and the rest outraged him. This belief was central both to his thinking and his wider belief system.

Social discrimination against anyone who was capable in every sense of the word weighed heavily on his mind. Not only did he refuse to follow what he had been told by his mother to keep away from Bakha, he continued to be close to that sweeper boy for years together. The fact of discrimination against another human being was a matter of deep and abiding concern to

him. As he grew older and saw what was happening around him, he became convinced more than ever before that there was no reason for it whatsoever.

By the time he grew up, Gandhi had emerged as the tallest national figure. One of the things Gandhi consistently insisted upon was that all human beings should be treated as equals. The story of his early experience, Gandhi's views and personal example and how he spent some time in his company and the benefit of his personal contact with him have already been narrated.

What is relevant here is the fact that in the Hindu society to which he belonged, not only were some individuals—in fact the majority—discriminated against, there was discrimination even against women. The practice of burning the widows alive, *sati* as it was called, was nothing less than that. The second paragraph of the preface of this book is relevant in this connection:

In the reissue of Ram Mohan Roy's writings on the theme of *Suttee*, after more than a hundred years, I have no reason to ask the readers for forgiveness. To give our people the opinions on the question of burning widows alive of the 19th century thinker, scholar and publicist is to give a gift of conscience from the acknowledged 'great' initiator of the modern India renaissance, to our people, who still persist, in traditional India, on perpetuating the inhuman rite of *Suttee*.

Having said this, it would be in order to note the fact that Ram Mohan Roy had accepted the validity of the criticism of Christian missionaries in respect of *sati* as a system of burning women alive when they became widows. When he investigated this matter, he further discovered that the barbarous custom of burning widows had not been sanctioned by any of the *shastras*. It had grown over the centuries and continued to prevail not because there was any sanction in any of the holy books but simply because it had got started. Once started, no one challenged it and it continued to thrive.

It was Lord William Bentick whom Anand describes as 'brilliant and eccentric' who took courage into both his hands and banned this system. Though there was considerable opposition to the ban, there was a good deal of support for it too; and it came mainly from Ram Mohan Roy. In fact, when he went to England some years later, he was feted by quite some Englishmen for having taken up the courageous stand. As is known, Ram Mohan Roy died in England and was cremated there but he had the

satisfaction of being looked upon as an enlightened social reformer. The conclusion of the preface sums up the argument as under :

I reproduce his writings on *Suttee* as a reminder to the intelligentsia that the struggle, which the pioneer launched more than a hundred years ago against the heinous crime of burning of widows, openly and covertly, has to be renewed, in several parts of our country. In the face of the fact that some of the would-be democrats condone the 'dark sides' of the revivalist culture, forgetting our emergence into a secular state with the fundamental human right of men and women to live, it becomes obligatory to invoke the conscience of Ram Mohan Roy and wipe out this and other shames of rejection in our land.

Anand is correct in saying that the struggle launched by Ram Mohan Roy has not yet been won. There are parts of India where the hold of *sati* is still strong. During the preceding few years, there were a few incidents. It needs to be acknowledged, sadly though, that the kind of thinking which prevailed some two centuries ago is still alive and needs to be combated. The writings of Ram Mohan Roy were reproduced by Anand in 1990 and it cannot be claimed that the situation has undergone a qualitative change since then.

V

While the system of *sati* in its more blatant form is much less widespread than the traditional caste discrimination, this is something that had outraged Anand even as a child. It also led him to write his first novel *Untouchable* on this theme. While doing so, as described earlier, Anand had sought the guidance of Gandhi. It was during those days that Anand had got to know Ambedkar.

By the end of the 20s, Ambedkar had already emerged both as a thinker and a social activist. When the Round Table Conference was convened by the British government in the early 30s, Ambedkar was one of those invited to participate. Both he and Gandhi clashed with each other over a number of issues in that conference. Details are not important. What is important is that they had opposite point of views. As everybody knows, Gandhi had coined the word *Harijans* for the Untouchables. For Ambedkar, that was an instance of patronising the poor and the oppressed. Not only that, Ambedkar thought:

Though the Mahatma was for the Harijans, he did not give up his belief in the Varnashram dictated by the *Bhagwad Gita*. By calling them as the sons of Brahma the Supreme God, he thought he was exalting them. In fact they were left at the lowest of the low.

These words are taken from a conversation which Ambedkar had with Anand in May 1950 in a public park in Colaba, Bombay. This conversation is recorded in Anand's book, *Annihilation of Caste* which Anand published in 1980. As a matter of fact, there is a background to how this particular book came to be written and published. Properly speaking, it is not a book; it was a lecture which Ambedkar wrote in 1936 when he was invited to deliver a public talk in Lahore by an organisation called the *Jat Pat Torak Mandal*—Organisation for the Annihilation of Caste.

This organisation, as the name signifies, was opposed to caste discrimination and Ambedkar was invited to present his point of view in a lecture. In a piece of detailed and insightful analysis, Ambedkar projected his point of view in a forthright manner. When the organisers read the lecture, they were taken aback by the uncompromising manner in which Ambedkar had put forward his views. He had not only rejected caste discrimination, he had also demolished the whole theory of caste differentiation. That is why he chose the title of the lecture.

As an outcome of the controversy which developed at that time, the lecture was called off and remained undelivered. It came to be published as a part of the complete writings of Ambedkar. What Anand did was to republish it as a separate piece of writing on the occasion of Ambedkar's birthday in 1980 along with a new introduction by him. It should not have been necessary to reprint it but Anand chose to do so. He had always opposed caste discrimination and missed no opportunity of saying that he wanted it removed. Instead, it had become more and more complicated.

For instance, at the end of the Round Table Conference which had held three sessions in London, the British government gave what came to be called the 'Communal Award'. In terms of it, the Scheduled Castes were recognised as a distinct category of the Hindu society. Gandhi did not accept this decision of the British government, According to him; it amounted to splitting the Hindu community into two parts. Gandhi was prepared to accept the distinctiveness of the scheduled castes but was not prepared to go so far as to recognise them as a separate unit.

Since he knew that the Communal Award had been given in view of the inability of those who participated in the Round Table to evolve a common formula, Gandhi could not blame the British government beyond a point. In order to get over the problem, Gandhi decided to go on an indefinite fast. This led to considerable public concern and there was immense pressure upon Ambedkar to work out a compromise.

There were series of meetings between Ambedkar and Gandhi, eventually a compromise was worked out and it came to be called the Poona Pact. Ambedkar was not too happy about it but since his point of view had not won widespread approval, it was the best that could be done.

Two things may be added here. When Anand first met Ambedkar in the late 20s, Ambedkar explained to him his point of view in detail. He underlined the point that what Gandhi wanted was not the annihilation of caste but some kind of a working arrangement which did not change the fundamental situation.

When Anand met Ambedkar as a young man, he had felt quite impressed by how the latter had argued. It more or less was at tandem with his own thinking. He went to the extent of arguing with Gandhi to modify his stance when he saw him next. But Gandhi did not do so and the matter was left at that. In other words, it was not a question of influencing the publicly professed points of view of two known public men who had adopted different unambiguous stands. Rather he recognised the fact that public postures, having been adopted, it was not possible for either of them to give up their respective points of view.

Secondly, when Ambedkar and Anand met in May 1950 that was after the Indian Constitution had been adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The Indian Constitution, as most people agree, is a remarkable document and was the outcome of what a dozen or so capable and committed people came to terms with one another. Each one was steeped in British law and tradition. If India took over the basic practices of the British constitutional law, this was logical rather than illogical. As a matter of fact, there is much more to it.

Over the centuries, the British had been evolving a constitutional system for themselves. By the time they came to India, what the British had done was impressive in a variety of ways. The most commonly used term for what had got evolved and was widely accepted was liberalism.

Gandhi had encountered it when he went for his legal study to Britain. Nehru accepted it during the years that he was studying in UK. Not only that, Fabianism was the current fashionable version of British liberalism in those years and Nehru imbibed it fully as also sincerely, and he remained committed to it till the very end.

When Anand was growing up and saw caste discrimination at its most vulgar, his mind consistently revolted against it. When he went to UK for study, he had occasion to see it from many points of view. Whether he grasped those details fully or not, he imbibed the whole ethos so readily that

both in his interaction with Irene and his explanation of it in his *Apology for Heroism*, all this comes through unambiguously as well as eloquently.

While Anand looked upon Gandhi as his anchor and had learned a great deal from him, ultimately he felt closer to Nehru than to Gandhi. His 1957 edition of *Apology for Heroism* is dedicated to Nehru. Both his views on *sati* and the annihilation of caste discussed above point in this direction unambiguously.

Perhaps one of the more telling things that Ambedkar said to Anand in 1950 was when Ambedkar described Nehru as “the only non-Brahmin in the government of Pandits”. Nehru fought hard against the right to treat private property as a fundamental right but the one man who consistently opposed him was Babu Rajender Prasad. As a matter of fact, Rajender Prasad went to the extent of saying that “Nehru wants to make India into Russia”

No description about those years of wary uncertainty speaks more eloquently than this formulation of Ambedkar about Nehru which he volunteered to share with Anand in 1950.

10. THE ACHIEVEMENT of MULK RAJ ANAND

Having surveyed the life and career of Mulk Raj Anand, it is time to assess his overall achievement. As made out repeatedly in the-course of the book, Anand led three parallel careers. He started as a novelist and short story writer and laid the foundation for bringing out the innovative journal *Marg*. After three decades, he ceased to be its editor. But throughout his career, he continued to live up to the role of an Indian intellectual as he perceived for himself. Each aspect of these careers have been referred to and discussed in the previous chapters.

Those who are connected with creative writing do not know much, except in general terms, about what he accomplished as a critic of art; and those who admire his work as an art critic are not knowledgeable enough about his role and standing as a writer. In regard to his role as an Indian intellectual, no one is all that committed to it.

In brief, it is his first two roles—a creative writer and an art critic—to which most attention has to be given. As a novelist, he has received considerable attention as a pioneer in Indo-Anglian fiction. Apart from him, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan were the two other known figures who constituted a kind of trinity and were looked up to with admiration. As far as Anand is concerned, he had written about Indian life with genuine passion and commitment. Most of his early novels focused upon the theme of

exploitation and social justice. This role of his as a writer of novels has received considerable application. But, his short stories have not received as much attention as they deserved.

It would not be too rash a statement to make that while he will continue to be admired as a pioneering novelist, his standing as a short story writer is likely to receive greater and better informed appreciation with the passage of time.

In 1973, M.K. Naik, one of his better known critics in the sphere of Indo-Anglian writing, brought out a book on Anand. Even after three decades, the book continues to be referred to. He was one of the early Indian critics to analyse Anand's work and evaluate it more or less objectively. In his last chapter dealing with Anand's achievement as a novelist, he sums up his standing. After having discussed his work from the various points of view, he concludes by saying:

But, it is useless to cavil at a writer for what the critics think he has not been able to do. What Anand can do and has done is meaningful enough. In spite of his doctrinaire convictions, he has, at his best, appreciated the finest aspects of both tradition and modernity. His humanitarian compassion which gives an unmistakable ring of sincerity to narrative after narrative; his *Saeva indignatio* against social wrongs, and his ruthless realism in exposing the exploitation of the bottom dogs of Indian society; the vast range of his work; the wealth of characters from different strata of Indian life in it; his significant experiments in form in novels like *Untouchable* and *The Big Heart* and stories like 'The Lost Child', his daring attempt to float 'Pigeon Indian' in the firmament of Indian Writing in English; his narrative and descriptive talent and the lyricism that enlivens his prose, when occasion demands—all these stamp him as a major Indian novelist and short story writer in English, his many limitations notwithstanding. Take him all in all; he would appear to stand like a banyan, august and many-branched, in the field of Indo-Anglian writing. One might complain of the rugged unevenness of the banyan, of its gnarled and twisted branches and its uneven growth; one might notice a hole in the big trunk where an owl has made its nest—and yet one cannot, after all, but admire and respect the impressive stature of this 'green-robed senator of mighty woods'.

Before he came up with this almost masterly summing up, Naik had quite a few critical things to say about him. At one stage, he argued that the post-independent India should have provided an exciting artistic challenge to him, but somehow Anand failed to meet this challenge. In the first phase of his career, he had given evidence of genuine social indignation and gave his

projection of Indian reality as he saw it with no holds barred. These aspects of his work have been covered in the earlier chapters of this book and it should not be necessary to repeat those things except to once again ask the question which Naik has asked: What went wrong? He pointedly asks:

Why was Anand's art unable to develop new dimensions after Independence? An artist's mind and development are a sphinx's riddle and a critic can at best only hazard a guess (with due apologies). Did Anand find the social wrongs which formed the central subject of his fiction completely eradicated after Independence? Certainly not. An objective observer will have to concede that though a certain amount of progress has been achieved, many of the pre-Independence problems either still remain unsolved or have developed fresh ramifications (as Anand himself tried unsuccessfully to show in *The Road*).

No one can answer these questions. Anand himself told Naik that he planned to write something about Bangladesh. Apart from that meaningful theme, there was the whole drama of the partition of India which he had witnessed at first hand. He had not been involved in it personally except from a distance. He had decided to settle down in Bombay, and Lahore soon became a part of the days gone by. He did attempt to write something about the tribal attack on Kashmir. But the novel which he wrote on this theme, *The Death of a Hero*, turned out to be unbelievably poor.

It is possible to go on with many more details of this kind but two things have to be acknowledged. The first one was that it was the impact of his childhood memories and the strong humanist outlook which he had developed and which led him to write the first two novels in the way he did so. Once that phase of his life was over, he gradually discovered a kind of emptiness within himself. The decision to come back to India soon after the war provided him an occasion to deal with this problem.

Secondly, the fact that he could arrange to bring out a journal of art criticism like *Marg* was the fulfilment of a dream which gave him the kind of opening that he had been waiting for. In other words, his involvement in *Marg* was both a logical extension of his earlier interests and an act of providential intervention, if one may put it that way.

It requires no effort to show that the first few years of his editorship of *Marg* were uncommonly demanding in terms of time and attention. That *Marg* went on from strength to strength and the kind of impact it had have already been discussed. A constructive way of looking at the whole issue would be to recognise the fact that whether there was an emotional or

intellectual upheaval in his thinking or not, he developed a whole new career for himself as an art critic. Which of these two careers will eventually give him the kind of standing to which he is entitled remains to be seen.

To say anything more about his role as a creative writer would be to unbalance this book. A good deal of it has been devoted to his writing craft and the ups and downs that accompanied the various changes in his career. Something about his work as an art critic has also been said but mainly in the two chapters devoted to *Marg*. It is, however, time to turn to what he did in the field of art criticism in addition to his work in the *Marg*.

II

Even before he joined Punjab University, Chandigarh, Anand had always remained intellectually preoccupied with one question: What was the difference between ‘look’ and ‘see’? Most of us when we look at a painting or a piece of sculpture, and if we look long and deeply enough, graduate into the act of ‘seeing’. This is the issue with which Anand had been grappling for a long time. When he took over his new assignment at Chandigarh, he felt it was time to carry forward his investigations further. He did this in his book *Seven Little-Known Birds of the Inner Eye*. What he did in this book was to seek to work out a methodology of ‘seeing’.

As he says in its preface, even as a young student of philosophy, he was deeply involved with the problem of perception. He discovered that the psychology of perception was undergoing revolutionary changes and most of the 19th century concepts had got outdated in the 20th century. He acknowledges it clearly that he ‘felt that most people, including myself, *looked* at the paintings and sculptures but did not *see* them’.

Under the guidance of his teachers, he carried out investigations in the psychology laboratory of his college. What was done was to investigate the reaction of 200 ordinary men, women and some intellectuals in watching the projection of a classical work of art. And he came to the conclusion that most people saw pictures either as illustrations or decorations but very little is said about examples of perception-apperception.

In addition to what was discussed, Anand also went into the issue of the Hindu view of art and this in turn led him to the conclusion that, due to imperfect understanding, many people built up an aesthetic theory merely as a coherent philosophy of beauty without much relevance to art. When he started talking to students at the Punjab University, he found that they had hardly any background of how to ‘see’. What he did therefore was to give

them the background of the scientific investigations undertaken by several people in the recent past.

But, more important than that, he was now located in Chandigarh, the city which had been planned in the best sense of the word. What Anand did was to illustrate his ideas with the help of what had been done in Chandigarh. Also, the argument went beyond painting and sculpture and included the obvious features of the new architecture which were being unfolded before the eyes of the students. While formulating his ideas, he harked back to his contact with craftsmen and thinkers like Eric Gill, William Rothenstein and Herbert Read. When he showed an early draft to Herbert Read, he encouraged him to go ahead with his formulations and the result was this book which was published in 1978 by an American publisher with an active presence in the US, Japan and several other countries. Its availability in India has been nominal. According to my enquiries, only a few copies are available. It is therefore difficult to gauge the subsequent reaction to his formulations.

III

In his Introduction to the book, Anand says:

I contend that if you look at a picture, even for a second, many more things happen to you than you may have cared to find out. But if you are not an impatient or a superficial person, and stand to look at a work of art for longer than a second, you begin to experience certain striking phenomena, such as colours, lines, structures, tones and stirrings. These are only revealed, at first sight, in a general perception or sensation or intuition. The structural parts of the composition are allied with the various parts of your body-soul, so that you become aware of the whole picture or a portion of it.

He goes on to develop this argument further and then explains his formulations at length. According to him if we see a work of art long enough.

We make certain voluntary and involuntary choices of colours, and we distinguish structures, emphasising certain elements and leaving out others. I will use a metaphorical method in describing what happens, since the response is more poetical in its nature than scientific, and since art experience is delight, deep sensitive awareness, a flight into the inner realm of a work, rather than the casual appeasement of an appetite for vulgar sensationalism or for precise intellectual understanding.

He has therefore referred to the responses of the body and soul; in other words, the *Seven Little-Known Birds of the Inner Eye*. Then he goes on to explain this perception of his in detail. It is best to quote him:

The process of contemplation, or total *darshana*, is something like this. The first bird flies off impetuously, propelled by curiosity, and communicates to the memory its discrimination of the lines, colours and forms beyond the light in the retina. The second, the memory bird, recognises the likeness of image or lines to what has been experienced before. The third bird flies off from the thalamus (the survival of the anthropoid ape in all of us) underneath the cerebral cortex. Vibrating with questions (“What?” and “How?” and “Why?”) this third bird transmits violent currents above and below, since the thalamus is connected with the brain as well as the spinal cord. The currents are transmitted downwards to the lumbar ganglion and to the mysterious *kundalini* or the dormant serpent power, which may be the ultimate repository of all the rhythmic wavelengths. The fourth, the rhythm bird, follows the seminal possibilities, such as those from the various past and present rhythms. This fourth bird allies itself to or dissociates the body-soul from the organised pattern.

The fifth, the heart bird, is already filling the personality with the excitement of the gestalt. If its energies have been aroused by the art experience, the blood flow quickens. The sixth, the brain bird, always hovering over the personality from the field-station of the head, makes the image an autonomous reality, and at this point what began as a message from outside, “reading from,” may turn into a “reading into.” The seventh, the king bird, takes in the whole. Seeing everything by intuition, as it were, it makes the suggestions produced by the composition of colours, forms and other visual elements into integral projections of the inner world of the faculties. It transforms the outer experience, with sympathy, empathy or insight, into a total vision of the possibilities of expression and into the delectation which may ensue from a work of art.

Actually it is rarely that the “third eye” of the imagination opens up and enables the body-soul to see, absorb, “savour: or taste the work of art. Only in the gifted *rasika* can the body-soul achieve that release of incipient energies, vibrations and urges which is the condition of seeing all. This opening up of the third eye and release of energies unites the inner life of a work of art—its vibrations and stirrings—with the human centre, making possible the connection between looking and seeing.

I have called the last bird the king bird, or the Phoenix Bird of Paradise, because it is the bird of imagination, which ever renews and “connects.” I

define imagination in the poet Baudelaire's sense, as the faculty which rouses all the others, or in the sense of Shakespeare's words in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown."

If it sounds too technical, let it be added that, in the next 100 odd pages, each one of these concepts is explained further in less technical detail. At the end of the book which is a medium size analysis of the problem of perception, a non-technical person feels somewhat enlightened. What Anand did was to formulate a certain scheme of explanation which, for those interested, becomes a guideline for further investigation and enquiry.

IV

What kind of a person was Mulk Raj Anand? It is difficult to return an acceptable answer to this question. To say that he was a complex person would not be appropriate. A large number of people are complex in any case. What one needs to explain is how, if complex, in what ways are they complex. Are they complex in the positive or the negative sense? And if it is in the positive sense, as one would like to believe about Anand, the next question that needs to be answered is what exactly do we mean when we say that he is complex but in a positive sense.

Two qualities of his that make up and character are too obvious to be overlooked. One is his quality of humanism and the second is his sense of compassion. These two qualities of his sensibility come through clearly and unambiguously. As a matter of fact, both of them come through in his writing as also in his personal conduct.

He flirted with the Communist ideology at one time. He had a strong distaste for what is called 'organised' religion. As to his sense of treating everyone as being equal to the other person, the source of it is his incorrigible sense of humanism. From whichever point of view his writing and career are analysed, his sense of humanism and his respect for each individual, particularly a positive view of the status of women, come across as being basic to his mode of thinking and perception. If he possessed an exceptionally keen sense of justice, it was due to his unwavering sense of equality for all human beings.

Mulk Raj Anand was primarily friendly and amiable. Due to this exceptional trait he could figure out a well formulated philosophy of life. This reflects in his writings and life. As a result, he was a little preoccupied with describing how he made it big. In several of his writings, and those

have been referred to many times over, he analyses the process of his thinking in remarkable detail. The second noteworthy feature was that he by and large incorporated his thinking in his creative efforts. Therefore, he is remembered for both his humanism and his sense of compassion.

V

Another dimension of his personality which has not received as much attention as it deserves is that he was a thinker as well as a doer. This combination is unusual. Most people either think or act. Anand was a rare combination of both these qualities. This is something which needs to be recognised and appreciated.

After finishing his education in London, when the war got under way and when he was in a sense trapped in UK from 1939 to 1945, he did not sit idle. Apart from his daily writing (and there was seldom a day when he did not write) and the publication of several books during that period, he was very much a part of the anti-fascist front. During this period he interacted with artists, writers and architects that he worked out the outline of what finally got incarnated as *Marg*.

If one may venture to say so, it was with the publication of *Marg* that his personality began to bloom. The publication of a journal like that required consistent planning and ceaseless activity. No one other than Anand with his unique combination of qualities could have conceived and executed the job that he had undertaken. That he received help and cooperation from a number of sources, including Nehru and JRD Tata, was no doubt a favourable factor. But how did all this become possible? The obvious answer is that Anand showed imagination and enterprise of an exceptional order. Above all, he operated at such a high level of excellence that everyone with a sense of commitment to quality could not but take notice of what he was doing.

Anand had the ability to conceptualise the project at a time and in the context of the emerging new situation in India which was changing rapidly. The transfer of power to Indian hands in 1947 was a positive development. It opened up enormous possibilities of cultural discovery, diversification and enrichment. It was a challenge and Anand lived up to it.

His urge to travel, his ability to enthuse people at the right time and the right manner and his inaugurating a new chapter of cultural renaissance strengthened his hands. With each new issue, the dream came nearer and dearer its realisation. Nothing like this had been done on the cultural plane

till that time and Anand was just the right man to do it both professionally and with a sense of commitment. What is more, he had all those qualities of head and heart which were required to live up to the ideal that he had visualised.

When he took charge of the Lalit Kala Akademi, he worked with equal vigour and zeal. As a cultural administrator, he might have rubbed some people on the wrong side. But he was clear in his mind about what he wanted to do and he did it. This is something which cannot be said about most people.

It was in this phase of his career that he also began to use his own limited resources towards the promotion of art and culture. What he did in Delhi has caught on to some extent, but what he wanted to do in Khandala has remained a dream. What needs to be underlined is that in addition to being a writer, he had the talent of being a doer as well. All his life and in the course of his countless contacts with hundreds of people, he encouraged them to do something. This quality of his character needs to be recognised and commended.

Having said all this, how does one react to the following summing up of Anand by one of his more perceptive critics. In her piece, 'Partisan Modernity', Gita Kapur writing for *Mulk Raj Anand: Shaping the Indian Modern*, says towards the end of her piece:

Mulk was an eccentric, an archetypal bohemian, an inveterate traveller. He cultivated a nomadic worldview from the caravan serai of the imaginary, and yet was ever concerned with the ethics of everyday life. Stylishly simple-dressed in winter in his thick-tan English corduroys, and in white kurta-churidar-bandi in the summer—he chose his aesthetic carefully and privileged always a modernist design for the few objects with which he furnished his many “little” homes in Delhi, Chandigarh, Bombay, Khandala. The homes were all-verandahs, made (Corbusier-like) with an open-work brick structure; there were thousands of books in bare rooms livened by brightly painted, rudimentary shelves, tables—with always a couple of low, jute-strung armchairs designed by Pierre Jeanneret in Chandigarh as markers of economy and comfort.

Almost a hippie before the hippies came along in the early 1960s, Mulk promoted permissiveness in love as a propitious sign for the romance of life. He was something of an enfant terrible as well. After the fashion of Dylan Thomas, he declared in his own manner how he wouldn't “go gentle into that good night” but go when he would gesticulating, talking, protesting,

until the angels took him into their fold and quieted him down to the silence of their infinite melancholy.

A large number of persons who knew Anand or had dealings with him would for the most part agree with this analysis of Anand. Would they also agree with what follows?

I can imagine Mulk among the angels ruing the “loss of innocence” in humankind, an innocence measured in terms of deep knowledge, not ignorance; knowledge in favour of a greater humanity in the face of the barbarism of power that the protagonists of 20th-century Utopias have repeatedly witnessed. With the re-establishment of Empire in the 21st century—in the present phase of capitalist globalisation, to be more precise—Mulk might indeed have wanted to withdraw, to wander in the mind like an untethered poet, like the betrayed Lear. There was something of Shakespeare’s Lear in Mulk, shrewd and trusting, King and Fool, raving and wise at the same time.,.,^a “renaissance figure” surviving to almost a hundred in an age of accelerated negotiations that he tried to handle with his strangely pragmatic skills.

For someone who knew him since 1938, I would say that there is a considerable amount of truth in what Gita Kapur says but it is not the whole truth. He was, to some extent, an archetypal Bohemian no doubt but he was more than that. He was, if one may say so, also the voice of an impatient India which wants to modernise herself but is neither fully clear about how to go about it nor has been able to generate that kind of social discipline which refuses to compromise with things that are shoddy or unjust. He may not have said anything specific about these issues but the general thrust of his thinking lay in that direction. As long as this fact is recognised, Anand can be said to have lived a purposeful and creative life.

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