**Anand, Mulk Raj (1905-2004)**

Sharon Pillai

Mulk Raj Anand, together with Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, made up a distinguished trio in the vanguard of twentieth century Indian writing in English. His roles as essayist, short story writer, playwright, art critic, food critic, editor, activist and social commentator over a near century-long life attest to his versatile genius and varied interests. However, Anand’s foremost claim to fame today is as a novelist whose commitment to artistic verisimilitude and social justice compellingly redrew the ambit of literary representation in India to include marginalised subjectivities and subaltern realities.

**TIMELINE**

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| 1905 | 1925 | 1929 | 1935 | 1938 | 1945 | 1946 | 1950 | 2004 |
| Born in Peshawar | Leaves for England | Completes his PhD | Publishes first novel, *Untouchable* | Marries Kathleen Van Gelder | Returns to India | Founds art journal *Marg* | Marries Shirin Vajifdar | Dies in Pune |

Mulk Raj Anand was born to a provincial Kshatriya Punjabi family in Peshawar. His father, Lal Chand, being a subordinate functionary in the colonial army, Anand’s formative years were spent in the cantonments of Nowshera and Mian Mir. During his years at Khalsa College in Amritsar, Anand got to know the poet Mohammad Iqbal. He also got involved briefly in anti-colonial activities. Faced with familial strife and emotional tangles, Anand, with Iqbal’s encouragement, set sail to do a PhD in England in 1925. He won a scholarship to University College, London, where he worked on a dissertation on British philosophy, and was awarded a doctorate in 1929.

His years in Britain brought Anand into contact with many leading intellectuals of the West, including the Bloomsbury group (among them, Forster, Eliot, Woolf), Orwell, Lawrence, Russell, Neruda, and Malraux. It also exposed him to Marxist thought, which was to become a key shaper of his socialist commitments and growing conviction that literature and politics are ever intertwined. Anand became increasingly active in left wing political circles, and took a keen interest in India’s struggle for independence, especially Gandhi’s leadership. Refusing an offer from Cambridge University, he worked at various jobs to support himself, ranging from editor at Hogarth Press and *Criterion*, to lecturing at Adult Educational Schools and Workers Educational Association. He was one of the founding members of the Progressive Writers Association in London, 1935. In 1945, at the cessation of the War, Anand returned to India. He started and edited the art journal, *Marg*, and taught at several institutions, including the universities of Punjab and Rajasthan. In 1965, Anand was appointed Fine Art Chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi. He was awarded the World Peace Council prize in1952 and the Padma Bhushan in1968. Anand died of pneumonia in Pune on 25th Sept 2004.

Anand’s first novel, *Untouchable*, was rejected 19 times before it was published through Forster’s recommendation in 1935. Many of his novels centre around categories of the socially underprivileged and dispossessed: *Untouchable* highlights the problem of caste discrimination, *Coolie* the poor under industrial capitalism, *Two Leaves and a Bud* the economic travails of the Indian peasantry, and *Gauri* the plight of a poor woman in a class stratified, patriarchal society. At the time of his death Anand was working on his magnum opus, a seven-volume autobiographical novel, *Seven Ages of Man*, of which five volumes, beginning with *Seven Summers* (1951), have been published.

**MAJOR WORKS (Selected List):**

*Persian Painting* (1930)

*Curries and Other Indian Dishes* (1932)

*The Hindu View of Art* (1933)

*The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934)

*The Untouchable* (1935)

*Coolie* (1936)

*Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937)

*Marx and Engels on India* (1937)

*The Sword and the Sickle* (1942)

*Big Heart: A Novel* (1945)

*Apology for Heroism: An Essay in Search of Faith* (1946)

*Seven Summers: The Story of an Indian Childhood* (1951)

*The Story of Man* (1952)

*Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953)

*The Dancing Foot* (1957)

*The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960)

*The Road* (1961)

*Confessions of a Lover* (1976)

*Gauri* (1976)

*Conversations in Bloomsbury* (1981)

*Autobiography* (1985)

**Further Reading**

Berry, Margaret. *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist*. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971.

Cowasjee, Saros, ed. and introd. *The Letters of Mulk Raj Anand*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1974.

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Fisher, Marlene. *The Wisdom of the Heart: A Study of the Works of Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.

Naik, M. K. *Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi, and London: Arnold-Heinemann, and New York, Humanities Press, 1973.

Pacham, G. *Mulk Raj Anand: A Check-List*. Mysore: Centre for Commonwealth Literature and Research, Univ. of Mysore, 1983.

Rajan, P. K. Mulk Raj Anand: A Revaluation. New Delhi: Arnold Associates, 1995.

Vijayasree, C., Mulk Raj Anand: The Raj and the Writer. New Delhi: B. R., 1998.