

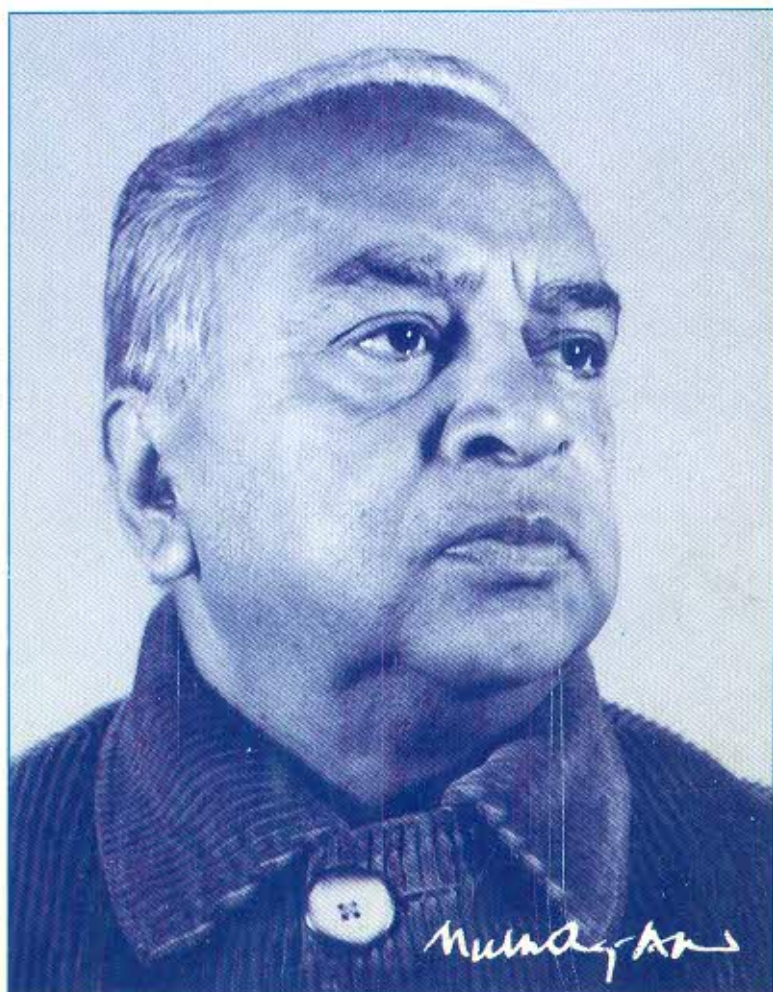
20 December 1991



Sahitya Akademi

meet the author

Mulk Raj Anand





With Indira Gandhi :
The first Triennale

I believe that creating literature is the true medium of humanism as against systematic philosophies...The broken bundle of mirrors of the human personality in our time can become the enchanted mirror only if the sensibility is touched in its utmost pain, and sheer pleasure, in tenderest moments."

Mulk Raj Anand was born in Peshawar, in 1905, in a family of traditional copper and silver craftsmen; his father who had educated himself worked in the Dogra regiment, and his mother though unlettered was well-versed in folklore and was "a born revolutionary" who had a deep influence on her son. He was educated in cantonment schools and Khalsa College, Amritsar, where, influenced by Gandhiji's writings, he participated in the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1921. He was jailed for a brief spell, and fled to Bombay to escape his father's wrath. Here he made his living writing notes and reviews for the *Bombay Chronicle*. Persuaded to return to Amritsar to take his exams, he became further involved with the nationalist struggle, and was again jailed; a

scandal about a Muslim girl with whom he fell in love was the last straw, and the young man, barely twenty now, fled to Britain.

The years in England were as rich and as dramatic. Mulk Raj Anand took a Ph.D in the philosophy of Locke, Hume, Berkeley and Russell at University College, London, and he was taught by G. Dawes Hicks, G.E. Moore, C.D. Broad, and S. Radhakrishnan. Other fruitful interactions were with such leading literary figures as T.S.Eliot, Herbert Read, E.M. Foster, Aldous Huxley, Stephen Spender, George Orwell, the writers of the Bloomsbury group, Lawrence Durrell, Andre Malraux and Bonamy Dobree. The writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Morris, and Gandhi had led him to socialism, and he took an active part in the coal-miner's strike in Britain, and later the antifascist struggle in Spain.

Dr. Anand returned to India in early 1946, to carry on his crusade for social change; he started the art magazine, *Marg* soon after his return, and has since put himself out tirelessly to protect and promote the liberal, humanistic values so dear to his heart. He lives in Bombay, but travels extensively throughout India to take a leading role in all movements meant to enhance the quality and integrity of Indian



In a seminar



At study

life. If his early experiences and creative life are inextricably intertwined with India's Freedom Struggle, his present concerns are equally inextricably intertwined in working for the cultural, social, and political emancipation of the people. He continues to inspire a large number of young people to whom he is affectionately known as "Uncle Mulk".

Mulk Raj Anand's first five books suffice to provide some indication of his wide range of interests, and his extraordinary scholarship. His first book is on Persian paintings, the second on Indian cooking, the third is a work of literary criticism, that attracted considerable attention overseas, the fourth a study of the Hindu view of art, and the fifth, the well-known literary classic *Untouchable* (1935).

The story of *Untouchable* is itself as dramatic as anything from the author's life: it was written over a long weekend, pouring out, as the author describes it "like hot lava from the volcano of my crazed imagination"; it was given new direction in Sabarmati Ashram by Gandhi, rejected for over four years by nineteen publishers, and the author was so dejected that he even considered suicide; it was finally accepted by a small publisher, only because E.M Foster agreed to write an introduction to it. Now, over five decades later, it is an acknow-

ledged modern world classic of literature, and has been translated into scores of languages.

The Coolie which shares with *Untouchable* the author's fierce anger at social inequity was published the following year. *Two Leaves and a Bud*, set in a tea-estate in Assam, explores the plight of indentured labourers.

Next came the famous trilogy which exemplifies Dr. Anand's belief that Man's destiny is shaped by the Society against which he struggles. *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters*, and *The Sword and the Sickle* tell the story of Lal Singh, as he flees from his farm and joins the army, and returns after the Second World War to political struggle in his homeland.

The Big Heart and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* are markedly different in theme. The first explores the conflict between man and machine, the traditional and the modern, integrating also the wide range of Dr. Anand's social, economic and political concerns; the second, is a tale of a Maharaja's obsessive passion for an illiterate and promiscuous hill-woman.

The Old Woman and the Cow, *The Road*, and the *The Death of a Hero*, were written in the sixties, and while they retain the author's fierce and passionate concern for the marginalised, also display a greater stylistic virtuosity.

Four of the seven autobiographical novels which Dr. Anand has proposed to write, have now been published. They are: *Seven Summers*, *Morning Face* (which won the Sahitya Akademi award), *Confessions of a Lover* (winner of the E.M. Foster Award), and *The Bubble*. These works are significant not only for the quality of the writing, nor only because they contain portraits and narratives about the writer, but also because they reflect one of the most exciting periods of our history.

Dr. Anand has also published eight volumes of short stories and forty-three other books, including books for children. The subjects range from Erotic sculpture, Indian theatre, Tagore's aesthetics, to Education, and the role of English in Free India. He has edited 18 books, also on a

variety of subjects.

Mulk Raj Anand has received several honours and recognition from different quarters for the quality and wide range of contributions he has made. He has received, apart from the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Leverhulme Fellowship, the World Peace Council Prize, and the Padma Bhushan. The Fellowship of the Sahitya Akademi, the nation's highest literary honour was conferred on him in 1989.

What most distinguishes Mulk Raj Anand, however, is his enormous accessibility to those in need, his generosity of spirit, the immediacy with which he responds to public issues which bear upon humanistic values, and his commitment to the unity of India, and global peace. Of him it might truly be said that he is a citizen of the world.

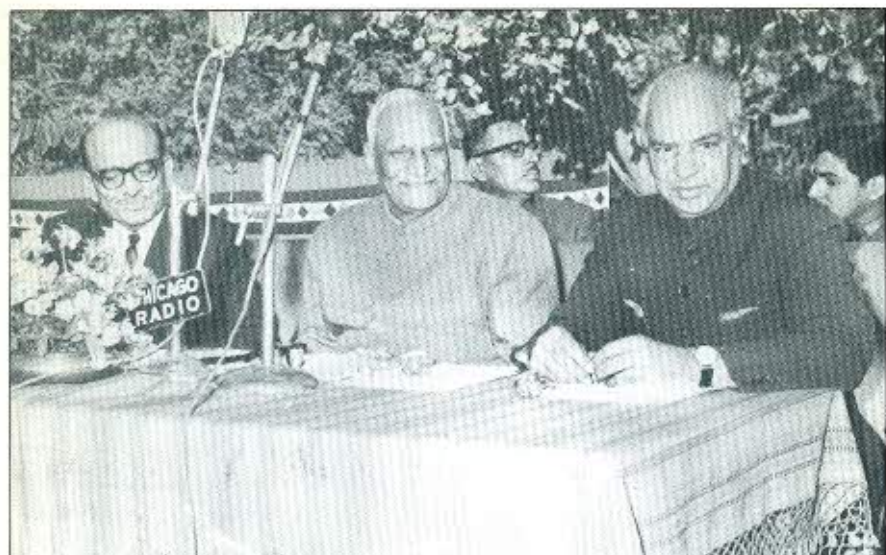
A Chronology

- 1905: Born Peshawar
- 1924: B.A. (Honours) Khalsa College, Amritsar, Punjab University
- 1929: Ph.D. from University of London
- 1930: At Cambridge University
- 1931: Lecturer League of Nations School of Intellectual Co-operation, Geneva
- 1932: Lecturer Workers Educational Association, London
- 1939: Married Kathleen Van Gelder (divorced 1948)
- 1940: Leverhulme Fellowship
- 1946: Editor *MARG* magazine
- 1948: Taught at Universities of Punjab, Benares Rajasthan and Jaipur
- 1950: Married Shirin Vajidar
- 1952: World Peace Council Prize
- 1963: Tagore Professor of Literature and Fine Art, University of Punjab
- 1965: Chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi (National

- Academy of Art)
- 1967: Visiting Professor, Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla
- 1968: Padma Bhushan, India
- 1970: President, Lokayata Trust, Hauz Khas, New Delhi
- 1971: Sahitya Akademi Award for *Morning Face* novel
- 1989: Fellow, Sahitya Akademi



Anand shooting picture :
Lost Child



With R. Chatterji & V.V. Giri : National Exhibition of Arts 1970

A Select Bibliography

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With B.K. Bhattacharyya & I.N. Choudhuri