

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Stuart Blackburn, Ph.D.

MULK RAJ ANAND

Born 1905 in Peshawar, India (now Pakistan)

Died 2004 in Pune, India

Biography

Mulk Raj Anand was an influential writer and thinker during the 1930s and 1940s in Indian progressive circles and is considered a founder of the English-language Indian novel. The son of a coppersmith, he graduated from a college in Amritsar, India, in 1924, studied at University College, London, and earned a PhD in philosophy at Cambridge in 1928. While in London, he became friends with the Bloomsbury Group (Virginia Woolf and others) and published books reviews and essays in *Criterion*, edited by T S Eliot. Anand was influenced by the leftist politics of the period and made friends with Bertrand Russell, Michael Foot and George Orwell. In 1939, he met and married Kathleen Gelder, an English actress, with whom he had a daughter, although they divorced in 1948. During this period, Anand was active in campaigns against fascism in Europe, but he turned his literary attention to India when he wrote his first novel, *Untouchable* (1935). As simple, straightforward documentation of the degradation of a toilet-cleaner, it won wide acclaim as the first realistic account of the caste system in English. Ananda also supported the cause of Indian independence and helped to set up the Progressive Writers Association in London. He divided his time between London, where he supported the Labour Party, and India, where he worked with Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. During World War II, he was employed at the BBC as a script writer. In 1946, he returned to India and began *Marg*, a high-quality magazine of culture and the arts. In the 1950s and 1960s, he taught English literature at various universities in India. During the final decades of his long life, he worked on a projected seven-volume autobiographical novel and completed four volumes. He also published almost sixty short stories, the best of which are collected in later publications.

Achievements Anand was honoured with the Padma Bhushan (given by the government of India) in 1967 for his contribution to literature and the arts. In 1968, he won an award from the Sahitya Akademi (India's Academy of Literature) for his autobiographical novel *The Morning Face*.

Works

Novels

Untouchable (1935)
Coolie (1936)
Two Leaves and a Bud (1937)
The Village (1939)
Across the Black Waters (1939)
The Sword and the Sickle (1942)
The Big Heart (1945)
The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953)
The Road (1961)
Seven Summers (1951)
Morning Face (1968)
Confession of a Lover (1976)
The Bubble (1984)

Short story collections

Greatest Short Stories (1999)

Selected Short Stories (2006)