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# INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

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*By: Kshiyama Sagar Meher*



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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

B.E.G.C.-103

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

**Note:** There are **three** Sections in this paper, A, B, and C. Attempt questions from all the **three** Sections. In Section A attempt any **four**; Section B any **two** and in Section C attempt any **three**.

## SECTION-A

**Q. 1. Explain any four of the following passages with reference to the context, giving brief critical comments:**

- (a) Trying every curse and blessing,  
Powder, mixture herb and hybrid  
He even poured a little paraffin  
Upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.

**Ans. Context:** These lines are from Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Night of the Scorpion'.

**Explanation:** This passage highlights the father's desperate attempts to cure the mother after a scorpion sting. Though the father is a 'sceptic, rationalist,' he abandons his scientific mindset and turns to both rational and irrational remedies, symbolized by the 'curse and blessing,' as well as 'powder, mixture herb, and hybrid.' His desperation peaks when he resorts to the extreme act of pouring paraffin on the bitten toe and setting it on fire. This action demonstrates his helplessness in the face of suffering, revealing how even a rational mind can be overwhelmed by love and concern in a crisis. The juxtaposition of traditional remedies with scientific skepticism underscores the tension between superstition and rationality in Indian society. Ultimately, this passage emphasises the depth of the father's concern and mirrors the collective community's efforts to save the mother, albeit through different approaches.

- (b) Of the inches rising,  
Of the precise number of  
Cobbled steps  
Run over by the water, rising  
On the bathing places.....

**Context:** These lines are taken from the poem 'A River' by A.K. Ramanujan.

**Explanation:** The poem, 'A River', is about a river in the ancient city of Madurai in the heart of Tamil Nadu.

Madurai is a "City of temples and poets". In this city, the poets sing of cities and temples. The river Vaikai flows through Madurai, which has about two thousand years of Tamil culture.

The river is "A point of departure for ironically contrasting the relative attitudes of the old and new Tamil poets, both of whom are exposed for their callousness to suffering, when it is so obvious, as a result of the floods".

The succeeding lines tell about the loss and havoc wrought by the devastating floods. In summer when the river grows lean and dry, it bares to the sight the sand, ribs, straw and women's hair clogging the water gates, the bridges with patches of repair, and the wet and dry stones glistening in the sun. The ancient poets sang only of the floods, not of the ruins and ravages caused by them. Ruins and ravages are highlighted in the lines that follow.

- (c) How often I think of going  
There to peer through blind  
eyes of windows or  
Just listen to the frozen air .....

**Ans. Reference :** These lines are taken from 'My Grandmother's House' by Kamala Das.

**Context :** In these lines from 'My Grandmother's House', the poet thinks about the love she once used to get and wants to go there and look through the window. She is in despair to get that love. There is darkness all over, yet the poet is eager to go and bring "an armful of darkness". The imagery "darkeness" and "brooding

dog” have been used to express the poet’s melancholy and longing for love.

**(d) Some are purple a gold  
flocked grey,  
For her who has journeyed  
through life midway,  
Whose hands have cherished,  
Whose lore has blest.**

**Context:** These lines are taken from famous poem ‘Bangle Sellers’ composed by Sarojni Naidu.

**Explanation:** Chapter-9, Page No. 80, ‘Interpretation’.

**(e) In blowing forests and breaking tides  
In the happy laughter of new made brides,  
And the nests of the new-born spring.**

**Ans. Reference :** These lines are taken from ‘*The Bird of Time*’ by Sarojini Naidu.

**Context :** In the second stanza, ‘*The Bird of Time*’ has been asked to disclose the location where she learned the “changing measures” of her song. The reply given is that almost any situation has been able to evoke and inspire ‘*The Bird of Time*’ to sing. It may have been the forest or the waves at the sea side. It could have been the laughter and happiness of a new bride. It may have been the dawn of hope or the dawn of despair; or the emotions of pity, hate or pride. Any situation or emotion can inspire the Bird of Time to sing.

Sarojini Naidu’s poetry shows her bold defiance of fate. Eternal joy can be experienced only by those who have strength and courage to defeat the deceptive designs of fate. In this poem, when the poetess asks the bird about the sources of its profound joy its delightful music, it points to the precious possession emanating from the triumph over fate.

**(f) The snake-shrine is dark with weeds  
And all the snake-gods in the shrine  
Hare lichen on their hoods.**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are from Kamla Das’s poem ‘Blood’.

**Explanation:** The imagery of the snake-shrine, described as ‘dark with weeds’ and home to snake-gods covered in ‘lichen’, evokes a sense of neglect and decay, paralleling the speaker’s feelings of remorse for failing to uphold the values linked to her ancestral home and grandmother. The speaker reflects on her great-grandmother’s devout nature, who was proud of her family’s purity and the old house, now in disrepair. The once-vibrant spiritual significance of the shrine symbolises the deterioration of tradition and heritage,

mirroring the speaker’s personal sense of loss. The great-grandmother’s devotion contrasts sharply with the speaker’s realisation of defeat and disillusionment in adulthood, as she grapples with the consequences of her unfulfilled promise to restore the home. This intertwining of physical decay and emotional turmoil encapsulates the themes of nostalgia, identity, and the inevitable passage of time, emphasising a poignant connection between memory and loss.

#### SECTION-B

**Q. 2. (a) Theme of the poem ‘Night of the Scorpion’.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 89, Q. No. 1 (Check Your Progress).

**(b) Dina Mehta’s prose style.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 138, Q. No. 6.

**(c) Character of captain in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 25, Q. No. 5.

**(d) ‘The Binding Vine’ as a Stream of Consciousness novel.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 57, Q. No. 8.

#### SECTION-C

**Q. 3. Do you think the conclusion of ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ is “contrived and weak”? Substantiate your point of view by giving examples from the text.**

**Ans.** In ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’, R.K. Narayan creates a philosophical fable, using a tiger’s journey from wilderness to spiritual enlightenment as a vehicle for exploring themes of freedom, self-realisation, and the human-animal connection. Some readers and critics have found the novel’s conclusion ‘contrived and weak,’ as it culminates in an unexpected resolution where the tiger, Raja, renounces his predatory instincts and attains a higher understanding through his relationship with a human spiritual teacher, the Master. However, I argue that the conclusion, while unconventional, is consistent with the novel’s thematic trajectory and symbolic significance, and not contrived or weak when understood in its allegorical context.

Throughout the novel, Raja’s transformation from a fearsome predator to a calm, self-aware being is central to the narrative. Initially, Raja revels in his power as the king of the jungle, attacking and killing at will, confident in his natural superiority. His capture and subsequent domestication, however, introduce him to a new reality where his primal instincts no longer dominate his actions. Narayan uses Raja’s captivity to introduce the theme of self-control, suggesting that true power lies

# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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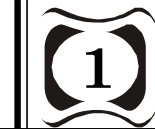


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# INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

## BLOCK-I : A TIGER FOR MALGUDI



## The Indian English Novel

### INTRODUCTION

The early Indian English novel started with Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), R. K. Narayan (1906-2001), and Raja Rao (1908-2006). Called the trinity, they started writing in the 1930s and all three saw the turn of the century. With Anand's *Untouchable*, Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, and Rao's *Kanthapura*, the Indian English novel found its place in the arena of Indian literatures. After English education was introduced in India in the early 19th century, Indians also started writing in English. In this chapter, we will know about these novelists.

### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

#### THE FIRST INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94) wrote his first novel, *Rajmohan's Wife*, in English. It was serialized as *Wife* in the Calcutta weekly, *The Indian Field*, in 1864, and published in book form in the 1930s. Influenced by Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, he wrote his novel *Rajmohan's Wife* which deals with social issues. The novel is about the effects of a bad marriage on a woman. It tells the story of the suffering of a middleclass housewife, Matangini, at the hands of her husband Rajmohan, in rural East Bengal. Bankim did not write another novel in English but his novels in Bengali influenced the course of novel writing in the country.

#### THREE SIGNIFICANT NOVELISTS

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao made the most significant contribution in Indian English fiction writing. Anand wrote sixteen novels, twelve collections of short stories, more than twenty-five books on art and other general subjects and a large number of articles. Influenced greatly by contemporary writers in

Indian languages, he wrote novels with a social commitment. He was also influenced by western thinkers of his time. Anand wrote about working people like sweepers, coolies and plantation workers. His characters – homeless Munoo in *Coolie*, an untouchable like Bakha or an indentured labourer like Gangu – are all victims of cruelty and exploitation and depict the grim working conditions of the people. *Untouchable* (1935) revolves around the argument for eradicating the caste system. It depicts a day in the life of Bakha, a young sweeper, who is an untouchable. The novel ends with Bakha, alone and very confused in his thoughts. *Coolie* (1936) revolves around a 14-year-old boy, Munoo, and his plight due to poverty and exploitation aided by the social and political structures in place. His other novels are: *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953).

R.K. Narayan, born in Madras in 1906, was a full-time writer. He wrote fifteen novels, five collections of short stories, two travel books, four collections of essays and a memoir. His novels capture life in its richness and variety and offer a blend of gentle irony and fellow feeling. His novels look simple but they conceal a certain complexity. Most of his novels and stories are set in the fictional town of Malgudi, his imaginary landscape inhabited by the characters of his novels. Malgudi is a reflection of an Indian society with a variety of cultures, superstitions and values with features of most of the towns of southern India. His novel *Swami and Friends* set in this small town, received recognition in India as well as publicity in England and the United States. His other novels include: *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath – The Printer of Malgudi* (1949), *The*



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*Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1962), *The Painter of Signs* (1976), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986), and *The World of Nagaraj* (1990).

Raja Rao, born in 1908 in a Brahmin family and educated in Mysore, Madras and Europe. His novels include *Kanthapura* (1938) and *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Killer* (1976) and *The Chess Master and His Moves* (1988). His first novel, *Kanthapura*, brings out the impact of Gandhi and his ideas on a small Mysore village. The narrator, an old woman, tells us about life in the village. She narrates the story in a garrulous and digressive style. It includes narration, description, religious discourses, poetry, folklore, history and legend together. *Kanthapura* is a work of realism in fiction, yet it is not purely realistic. It has myths, Gods and Goddesses, superstitions and mysterious insights. This novel is an excellent piece of work that includes a few significant events of history in contemporary India like the Salt March of Gandhi, his hunger strikes, his arrest and the brutal massacre of the people participating in the *Satyagraha*.

**POST INDEPENDENCE NOVELISTS**

Bhabhani Bhattacharya (1906-1988)'s first novel, *So Many Hungers*, was published in 1947. Later he wrote *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow From Ladakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawai* (1978). Bhattacharya's novels have a social purpose. Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010)'s first novel *Distant Drum* (1960) and *Bandicoot Run* (1982) have an army setting. He wrote a number of other novels. *Spy in Amber* (1971) is about espionage. *Combat of Shadows* (1962) focuses on passion and murder. *The Princes* (1963) gives a picture of the times when the princely states merged with India. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) is a novel on the partition. *The Devil's Wind* (1972) portrays the first war of Independence of 1857. *Cactus Country* (1992) is about the 1971 war.

Other novelists of the period include: Khushwant Singh, G.V. Dasani, Salman Rushdie, Boman Desai, Rohinton Mistry and Amitav Ghosh.

Khushwant Singh's (1915-2014) is known for his novel *A Train to Pakistan*, a partition novel. The novel portrays the horror and the violence during partition. Set in Punjab in the fictional village of Mano Majra on the border of Pakistan, Mano Majra is a microcosm of the communal temper during the days of partition. The novel narrates the life of the Muslim and Sikh

inhabitants disrupted by the communal massacres that occurred in the wake of the partition.

G. V. Desani (1909-2000), known as the master of the absurd, wrote *All About Hatter*, a comic farce that lampooned Anglo and Indian culture, spiritual traditions and an admixture of the two. Arun Joshi (1939-1993) became famous with his first novel *The Foreigner* (1968). His other novel notable is *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. Influenced by the French writer Camus, he wrote existentialist novels portraying the aimless existence of men who are indifferent to everybody and everything. He wrote on the problems of East and West encounter in the Post Independent Indian society. Chaman Nahal (1927- 2013) rose to fame with his novel on Partition, *Azadi* (1975), which won the *Sahitya Akademi Award* for the year 1977.

Salman Rushdie (b.1947), according to Richard Cronin in his article "India" says, "Modern Indian Literature was born in 1981, when Rushdie published *Midnight's Children*". Most of his novels are set in India. His narrative style has a blending of myth and fantasy with real life. His writing career started with a science fiction, *Grimus* (1975). His next novel *Shame* (1983) depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is allegorical novel. *The Moor's Last Singh* (1995) examines India's recent history through the life of a Jewish Christian family. His next novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) has both myth and reality. *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) and *The Golden House* attracted significant attention. His *Midnight's Children* (1981) is considered as his best work. The novel, awarded the *Booker Prize* in 1991 followed by the *Booker of Booker Prize* in 1993, portrays the history of India from 1910 to the Declaration of Emergency in 1975 through the eyes of Saleem Sinai, a telepath with a nasal defect. Rushdie uses the technique of magical realism. His *Midnight's Children* is written with a blend of comedy and tragedy.

Boman Desai (b.1950)'s novel *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) is tautological in nature. Protagonist Homi Seervai, a Parsi Scientist from Bombay, invents a machine that can scan his brain for memories of the good time. But the machine goes wrong and he experiences ancestral and racial memories. His other novels *The Memory of Elephants*, *Asylum*, *U.S.A* and *A Woman Madly in Love* are a re-enactment of his past experiences and deal with the Parsi community. He uses expostulatory technique, and contemporary dialogue to make the plots in his novels effective.

Shashi Tharoor (b.1956) uses the narrative and theme of the famous Indian epic *Mahabharata* in his novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* and weaves a satirical story of Indian life drawing his ideas by going back and forth in time.

Allan Sealy's (b.1951) first novel, *The Trotter-Nama* (1988), is the story of seven generations of an Anglo Indian Family 'The Trotters'. It depicts the experiences of the Anglo Indian community of being outsiders both in India and Britain. His other novel *The Everest Hotel: A Calendar* (1998) brought him international acclaim and he was short listed for the Booker Prize in 1998. His second novel *Hero* was published in 1991. His other works include: *Brainfever* (2003), *Wisdom Brings Success* (2011) and *Pearls of Wisdom* (2016).

Another fiction writer Rohinton Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952 and migrated to Canada in 1975 where he began his writing career. In his novels he writes about middle class Parsi households struggling to come to terms with the complex phenomenon of Indian modernity. His first novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is set in Mumbai in 1971 during the time of the India Pakistan war, when the city was engulfed by globalization on one hand and illiteracy, unemployment, exploitation and homelessness on the other. In his other novels, *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002) we find a poignant picture of the Parsi community struggling in pursuit of an identity for themselves.

Amitav Ghosh became popular for his novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988), for which he won the *Sahitya Akademi Award*. The novel is a narrative built out of an intricate, constantly crisscrossing web of memories of many people, it never pretends to tell a story. Instead, it invites the reader to invent one, out of the memories of those involved, memories that hold mirrors of differing shades to the same experience. The novel is set against the backdrop of historical events like the Swadeshi Movement, Second World War, Partition of India and Communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta. His other novels are: *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000) and *Hungry Tide* (2004).

Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* (1988) tells the story of a young civil servant, Agastya. An urbanite living in the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Calcutta, he experiences isolation and alienation in the small town of Madna. There is a sense of loss and nostalgia especially when he receives letters from friends or when

he sees passing trains. The novel is entertaining, funny and has a touching story to tell. His other novels *The Last Burden* and *The Memories of the Welfare State* are also characterised by a very sense of humour portraying the life of middle class Indians.

Vikram Seth is the author of *A Suitable Boy* (1994). His other novels include: *The Golden Gate* (1986), and *An Equal Music* (1999). *A Suitable Boy*, which sold over one million copies world-wide, made him famous. Set in the newly independent India in the 1950s when India was struggling through a time of crisis with communal disharmony, corruption and perpetual fights between modernity and the forces of tradition, the novel follows the story of four families over a period of 18 months, and centres on Mrs. Rupa Mehra's efforts to arrange the marriage of her younger daughter, Lata, to a "Suitable Boy". Lata is a 19-year-old university student who refuses to be influenced by her domineering mother or opinionated brother, Arun. Her story revolves around the choice she is forced to make between her suitors Kabir, Haresh, and Amit. The novel is well written, touching, humorous and widely panoramic. It truthfully portrays social and political events of the era.

Amit Chaudhuri's novella, *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), won the *Betty Trask Prize* and the *Commonwealth Writer's Prize* in 1991. His novel *Afternoon Raag* (1993) won the *Southern Art Literature Prize* and the *Encore Award* for second best novel of the year. His novel *Freedom Song* (1998) won the *Los Angeles Times Book Prize* in the year 2000. His other novel is *A New World* (2000). His novels examine Calcutta life using characters of different ages. *A Strange and Sublime Address* illuminates the life in Calcutta through the eyes of a ten-year-old Bombay bred boy Sandeep who is visiting his uncle's extended family during two summer vacations.

#### WOMEN NOVELISTS

Women novelists in the post-independence period are: Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy.

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004)'s novels reveal her preoccupation with the changing socio-economic scene in post independence period. Her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) gave her fame and success. The novel portrays the plight of women at large and their struggle with forces beyond their control in earlier times. It tells about an Indian peasant woman Rukmani, her love for her husband Nathan and her struggle. It also portrays conflicting western and eastern values.

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Her novels also deal with hunger and poverty, two major problems in India. Her other works include novels such as: *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1963) *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffey Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honey Cows* (1977) and *The Pleasure City* (1984).

Shashi Deshpande (b.1938), who started her career with short stories, wrote: *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Come up and be Dead* (1982) *If I Die Today* (1982), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). She won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for her novel *That Long Silence*, which revolves around a middle aged educated woman caught between modern trends and traditional practices. Her novels deal with themes of inner conflict of the female psyche, search for identity, man-woman relationship and parent-child relationship. In her novels, she projects the real dilemma of the middle class educated women.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala wrote eight novels, a collection of four short stories and a few screen-plays. She wrote *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *The House Holder* (1961), and *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *Esmond in India* (1958), *A Backward Place* (1965), *A New Dominion* (1973) and *Heat and Dust* (1975). In her novels, she explores the urban middle class Indian life and some novels deal with the east-west encounter. *Heat and Dust*, the most well acclaimed work of the writer, explores the east and west encounter through romance. Set in two different eras, Colonial India of the 1920 and independent India of the nineteen seventies, the novel tells the story of two women. It focuses on the emotions of women and their problems in two different eras in Indian history.

Nayantara Sehgal's (b.1927) began her literary career with her novels *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954) and later wrote *A Time to Be* (1958), *From Fear Set Free* (1962), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) and *The Day in Shadow* (1971). Nayantara Sehgal also published two autobiographies and a number of articles. *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), a well-acclaimed novel, novel presents both political bickering as well as the domestic turmoil. Her novels show the social and cultural changes happening in India. She portrays oppressed women who had to struggle to be free from male bondage.

Anita Desai, Born in 1937 in Mussoorie, started writing at a very young age and published her first story

at the age of nine. She has received numerous awards including the 1978 National Academy of Letters Award for the novel, *Fire on the Mountain* and the Guardian Award in 1983 for the children's fiction *The Village by the Sea*. Her first novel was *Cry the Peacock* (1963). Later she wrote *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye Bye, Blackbird* (1971), *The Peacock Garden* (1974), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baum Gartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1996), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *Diamond Dust* (2000) and *The Zigzag Way: A Novel* (2004). Her novels deal with various themes.

Manju Kapoor (b. 1948) wrote her first novel *Difficult Daughters*. Set in the time of partition, it tells the story of three generations of daughters beginning with the third generation daughter. The story is seen through the eyes of Ida who returns to Punjab to reconstruct her mother Virmati's past.

Arundhati Roy, born in 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya, completed her first novel *The God of Small Things*, in 1996. Arundhati Roy became the first Indian citizen to win the prestigious *Booker Prize* in 1997 for this novel. Set in Aymanam, Kerala (India) during the late 1960s, it tells the story of an Indian boy-and-girl-twins, Estha and Rahel, whose mother has left her violent husband to live with her blind mother and brother Chacko. The novel gives a vivid description of the life of abject poverty and sadness in a small Indian town.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q. 1. Name the three significant novelists writing in English in the 1930s.**

**Ans.** Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao were the significant novelists writing in English in the 1930s.

**Q. 2. What are the various themes that Mulk Raj Anand has dealt with, in his novels?**

**Ans.** He deals with the themes like the caste system, class-structure, religion, education and status of women in Indian society. He reveals his social humanism by protesting against social evils and the tradition ridden society. He hates and detests all types of exploitations and protests against anti-human forces. Paul Brians calls him as the "activist writer." The central theme of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand is human protest from all sides, "Protest ... and sympathy ... and compassion."