

Mulk Raj Anand

1905-2004



a dramatised celebration
of his life and writing

presented by

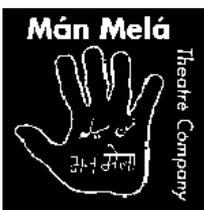
Mán Melá Theatre Company

at the

NEHRU CENTRE

8 South Audley Street, London W1Y 5DQ

7pm, Tuesday, 7 December 2004



The father of modern Indian literature in English



MULK RAJ ANAND 1905-2004:

a dramatised celebration of his life and writing with live music

Programme

Welcome by **Pavan Varma**, Director, The Nehru Centre

Tim Bennett-Goodman, Chair of Mán Melá Theatre Company

The Rt Hon Oona King, MP, Bethnal Green & Bow

Honorary Patron of Mán Melá Theatre Company

Film – Mulk at Home in Bombay, January 2001 by Prafulla Mohanti

Alastair Niven, OBE,

author of *Yoke of Pity*, a critique of the writings of Mulk Raj Anand

Reading from **Conversations in Bloomsbury** by **Souad Faress**

Dominic Rai, Artistic Director, Mán Melá Theatre Company

For the Fallen in Hindi and English

recited by **McQuinn Gumus & Tanjia Syed** (Bangabandhu School, Bethnal Green)

Music by Baluji Shrivastav

Excerpts from **Across the Black Waters**, adapted by Gerald Wells and Dominic Rai (1998)

Performed by **Vincent Ebrahim, Raj Ghatak and Sarah Platt**

Including Films - ***Indian Hospital, Brighton, 1915*** (South East Film & Video Archive)

- ***Lost Pavilions*** by **Said Adrus**, 2004

Bakha's speech in Hindi from **Untouchable** performed by **Radhakrishna Urala**

Reading from **Seven Summers** by **Souad Faress**

Excerpt from **Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi**

Performed by **Vincent Ebrahim and Raj Ghatak**

Reception

Mulk Raj Anand, an early British Asian

The term British Asian dates from the late 1980s and describes a generation who grew up in the UK, straddling both Asian and British cultures. Mulk Raj Anand, who came to London to do a PhD in philosophy in the 20s and stayed until the late 40s, could also be seen as an early British Asian.

While he was mixing with the Bloomsbury Set, he was writing novels about the people at the bottom of Indian society and visiting Mahatma Gandhi and Alama Iqbal. The people Anand describes in his novels – like the soldiers in *Across the Black Waters* – were the same country people who later migrated to Britain. His genius includes writing about rustic Indian characters – in English. That is why his writing is so relevant today.

The vibrancy of the current British Asian arts scene – including writing in South Asian languages has its origins in Anand and the All-India Progressive Writers, some of whom also lived in London. Today's UK bhangra musicians fuse traditional folk and cutting edge dance music, using the same poetic imagery of country people and the land as inspired Anand. When we translated the poem, For the Fallen, into Hindustani, the Undivided Indian Ex-Servicemen's Association told us it was the first time they had the lines in their own language – a moving moment. Mulk continues to be a great inspiration.

Dominic Rai, 2000

MULK RAJ ANAND 1905-2004:

described as the Indian “Charles Dickens”

UNTOUCHABLE

Bakha's Speech

BAKHA

Why did he do that? I didn't do anything but still he slapped me and then he ran off like a dog with his tail between his legs. Sala! Why was I so humble? - I could have struck him back bahn chodh. I was really excited about coming to town today. These people don't think we're human. That sanitary inspector was growling at Bapu the other day, the way no one would even growl at a stray dog. 'Mother-fucker, if you can't do your work you should stay at home' – as if he owned us. All Hindus behave like that. Not the Musalmans and the Sahibs – they've got humanity – they know how to treat us – they're educated – that's why. I too wanted to study. I still do. Then I could show off my English. And that jalebi – that was my one day's earning. Shit – if only I'd eaten it there and then. But why didn't I say something? To think that pandit hit me and no one stood up for me – they all joined in. 'Since the river is flowing – let's all wash our hands!' But why do we take it? Because we're sweepers – we touch shit, their shit, they hate shit – well I hate it too. For them I'm a sweeper, bhangi, chamar, untouchable – yes that's the word – untouchable – I am an untouchable. Hato Bhangi aaya! Bhangi aaya!

MULK RAJ ANAND 1905-2004:

Mulk Raj Anand – World Peace Movement

Marilyn Stafford

Mulk Raj Anand has been connected with the World Peace Movement since its beginnings in 1948 at a meeting of world intellectuals. He has often expressed the belief that he would be very much less a writer if he didn't devote himself almost 90% to the quest for Peace.

In collaboration with other Indian Writers he helped organise the first All India Progressive Writers Conference in Lucknow in 1936. The essence of their manifesto was the inclusion of social and political cause in the inspiration behind their fictions and facts.

By the end of the mid thirties his feelings, combined with the struggle against British Imperialism with which he was already involved, led him to join the fight against fascism. In London in 1936 he was on the platform of the Anti Fascist Writers Conference, alongside such writers as Malraux.

His wish to support the Spanish liberal cause sent him to Spain in 1937 for another conference with Stephen Spender, Pablo Neruda, Ernest Hemingway and others.

He returned to India in 1945 and worked with Nehru in The Indian Freedom Movement. About that time he explains:

“To me the idea of political freedom in India was always only a stepping stone towards that larger freedom of the whole world. As Gandhi used to say, “Let all the winds of the world blow in; let us open our doors and windows and only see that we are not swept off our feet by these winds.” There is so much knowledge...coming from all parts of the world that so much more interchange, a new consciousness, must take place...this means that prejudices against other ways of thought must stop. My idea of co-existence is co-discovery.”

He returned to England in 1948 where he received the invitation to attend that first conference of intellectuals in Warsaw, out of which was born the World Peace Movement...for which he was Nehru's representative.

In 1952 he received the International Peace Award and became for a time the head of the cultural division of the World Peace Council.

Across Black Waters

Tina Cockett, Education and Community Outreach Manager, Woking Galleries

I came across Mulk Raj Anand while researching Woking's neglected heritage site, the Muslim Burial Ground on Horsell Common. It was here that WW1 Indian Army Muslim soldiers were buried, having died of their wounds while in hospitals along the South Coast. Information about the site and the soldiers was scarce and always from an official standpoint. There was very little about the real experiences of these men fighting on the Western Front for their King Emperor. I learnt about Mulk Raj Anand's book 'Across Black Waters' and when I finally got a copy, reading it was a seminal moment.

Mulk's soldiers jumped out from the page at me. The experiences, thoughts and feelings of Lok Nath, Daddy Dhanoo, and Uncle Kirpu etc came to life to tell the story of Indian troops in France. Mulk's words made me determined to tell the story of the Woking soldiers buried so far away from home and families. It became very important to give these men a voice, to tell their story, and to raise people's awareness of the importance of their sacrifice. Woking Galleries has now worked with artist **Said Adrus** to produce small touring exhibition telling the story of the soldiers and the site. Said Adrus' short film acts as a memorial to the men, using both contemporary and archival images. None of this would have come into being without Mulk Raj Anand's inspiration.

MULK RAJ ANAND 1905-2004:

the father of modern Indian literature in English

Anand belongs to the group of novelists who established modern Indian writing in English. As one critic put it: 'With Mulk, English became one of the languages of India' and his work paved the way for contemporary figures like Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth.

Conversations in Bloomsbury (1992)

Mulk Raj Anand lived in Britain for the best part of two decades, initially as a philosophy student, but afterwards working at the Hogarth Press with Leonard and Virginia Woolf. He conversed extensively with the Bloomsbury Group in the 1930s and 40s. This book records his lively discussions with some of Britain's foremost 20th-century writers and artists.

Across the Black Waters (1940)

India provided the largest volunteer army of over one million that took part in the First World War, uprooting themselves to fight in an alien land. Half a million young men – over 20% of the eligible population – came from the northern State of Panjab. On September 2, 1914 a platoon of Indian soldiers arrived in Marseilles to fight for the British Empire. By October, they were in Belgium and had fought the Germans in bloody hand to hand combat in dreadful conditions of rain, cold and mud. By December they had suffered more than 10,000 casualties.

Former Labour leader Michael Foot describes *Across the Black Waters* as one of the 'great books' about the war with one of its most poignant moments coming when the Indian sepoy cannot distinguish between the German Kaiser and King George VI.

Untouchable (1935)

'It recalled to me very vividly the occasions I have walked "the wrong way" in an Indian city, and it is a way down which no novelist has yet taken me...' E M Forster, 1934.

Seven Summers (1952)

The first part of an autobiographical novel entitled Seven Ages of Man.

Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi (1991)

Mulk Raj Anand visited Gandhi before *Untouchable* was published in 1935 and wrote about this meeting in the *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi* (1991) a more recent autobiographical work.

Mán Melá Theatre Company celebrates the life and work of Mulk Raj Anand

- 1998 ***Across the Black Waters*** staged (Hackney Empire Studio)
Launch and Symposium at Imperial War Museum, London
Performances, Acts of Remembrance, Workshops,
including residency at National Army Museum
- 1999 ***The Untouchable Century*** – multi media show with live music and drama
National Tour giving an overview of Mulk Raj Anand's career
Tour to World War One sites of Flanders for young people
- 2001-3 ***Descendants of Soldiers*** at London's South Bank
Indian Soldiers' on Western Front – Workshops, British Empire & Commonwealth Museum
- 2003 11 November - ***Across the Black Waters*** – extracts – National Archives

Future Plans: To develop a production based on the writings of Mulk Raj Anand for touring in 2005

Tribute to Mulk Raj Anand, 28 October 2004, by Mukti Jain Campion, Culture Wise

Producer/Presenter *An Indian in Bloomsbury* BBC Radio 4

I first came across Mulk Raj Anand through Man Mela's stage production of *Across the Black Waters* when I was making a BBC Radio 4 documentary about the experiences of Indian soldiers in the First World War. I began to read more of Anand's work and gradually discovered what an extraordinary life he had led. He had been involved in some of the most radical political and artistic movements in the first few decades of the 20th century, most notably with the Indian freedom fighters, the Bloomsbury group and the Spanish Civil War – what a creative crucible for any aspiring novelist!

Having persuaded BBC Radio 4 that this was a writer whose life and work should be celebrated, I decided to focus my programme on those formative years Anand spent in Britain - as *An Indian in Bloomsbury*. The programme received a wonderful response when it was first broadcast and I am delighted that Radio 4 is repeating it as a tribute to mark his death.



With thanks to

Performers: Vincent Ebrahim, Souad Faress, Raj Ghatak, Sarah Platt, Radhakrishna Urala
 Musician: Baluji Shrivastav
 Technicians: Dan Abrahams & Ravichandran Poongavanam
 Administrator: Caroline Goffin

Pavan K Varma, Divya Mathur & staff of the Nehru Centre
 Arts Council of England:
 - Olu Alake, Central
 - Hilary Davidson, London
 - Abid Hussain, West Midlands
 - Sean Risdale, London

Mukti Jain Campion, Culture Wise
 Tina Cockett, Woking Galleries
 Cathy Phillips, Head, Bangabandhu School
 Marilyn Stafford
 Thomas Rai
 Esteban Uyarra

Frank Gray, Director, SE Film & Video Archive, Brighton

Costumes by Angels

Tamasha Theatre Company (use of Untouchable speech in English) original in Hindi by National School of Drama, India

Mán Melá Management: Tim Bennett-Goodman, Jerry Deeks, Harpreet Kaur, Ajay Pamneja, Jarman Parmar

Further information on Events:

ASIANGIGS.COM

**Books by Mulk Raj Anand available from
 SOMA Books
www.somabooks.co.uk Tel: 020 7735 2101**

Photos: Marilyn Stafford, Stewart Fraser, Alastair Niven, Imperial War Museum & Mán Melá Theatre Company

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