CHAPTER III

“THE VILLAGE” TRILOGY: CHOOSING ONE’S OWN DESTINY

The Village, Across the Black Waters and The Sword and the Sickle are the three novels written as a continuous story and yet each of these in itself is a unitary whole. Together, they constitute a Trilogy. The three novels depict in three parts of the life, adventures, escapades and struggles of the same hero, whose magnetic personality binds the three works together, though each novel explores different and unrelated themes. The illuminating cynosure in these novels is a dynamic and amiable hero Lal Singh, a young man from the village of Nandpur in Punjab whose progressive views in an ultra-conservative society, where religious fanaticism, superstitions, meaningless rituals and landlordism have reigned, make it impossible for him to survive and compels him to take refuge under the soldier’s uniform only to pine at the end that the uniform and the hardships it has enveloped would not help him to hold even his own plot of land after his return from the army.

Lal Singh, as presented in these novels is an existential figure. He is condemned to the liberty of choosing his own destiny in a single handed manner, in a society which is unwilling to grant individual freedom. He stands alone and struggles alone with great concern for man’s being, in a world where superstitious practices and rituals have replaced the real
God. It is his existential drift that accounts for his escape from home into the army.

The three novels together in Paperback edition run into 960 pages and Mulk Raj Anand’s three-dimensional achievements are admired by most of the critics. S. Menon Marath calls the Trilogy “the finest and the most balanced of Anand’s works” (190). It is also worth remembering the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee:

Anand’s achievement in the first two volumes of the trilogy has not yet been surpassed by an Indo-Anglican novelist…(195)

This chapter focuses the pilgrims progress of Lal Singh from his village to the cantonment and from there to Festubert in France and back to Uttar Pradesh as presented in *The Village, Across the Black Waters*, and *The Sword and the Sickle* is essential to the understanding of Anand’s art and his social concerns:

Anand had spent some of the happiest days of his childhood, boyhood and youth in his mother’s village in Central Punjab, among the tribesmen of the North-Western Frontier, and in the Kangra Valley. The Punjabi poetry he had heard, specially the ’Baramasa’ poem of Guru Nanak had filled him with images of the beauty of the Northern earth. The proverbs, the folk tales, and the epic poems had been distilled into his
consciousness through the recitals of his three maternal uncles. His fellow students at the Khalsa College, Amritsar, who came mostly from the villages, talked of harvest and drinking lassi and sugarcane juice. These pleasant thoughts mixed up with his disgust with the ritual-ridden social life, religious fanaticism and superstitious belief of the villagers and his awareness of their painful life of toil from dawn to dusk only to pay back the claims of the money-lenders, the absentee landlords and the revenue hunting sarkar. Anand found such a social situation a spontaneous, striking and excellent background to present the lonely struggle of his hero, Lal Singh, to liberate himself from the malice and manipulations of the society.

When Nihal Singh reaches Nandpur station after selling cotton and maize at the town of Manabad, his youngest son Lal Singh is there to welcome and accompany him in his homeward journey. The seventy year old Lal Singh curses the devil-like-train, considers it as the sign of the arrival of the age of darkness and speaks of the advantages of going by bullock carts. He is sad that the cotton and maize he sold did not earn enough even to pay the rent that was due. As the old man does not want his son to carry the luggage, Lalu takes a pathway to collect the mended hoe from the power house.

As Lalu strikes the earth hard with the newly mended hoe, his mind is preoccupied with the thought of how to go to the Fair at Manabad. He
wipes the perspiration pouring down his forehead, and expresses his annoyance with his religion which demands its followers to wear long hair.

In the evening, when he returns home after a day of hard labour, his eldest brother asks him to go to the Mahant taking a parcel of gift his father (Bapu) has bought for him. So taking the parcel Lalu goes towards the monastery. After reaching the Mahant's chamber, he goes up to the 'holy man', kneels before him, touches his feet with the right hand, and lays the things he has brought before him. Then, after putting up a show of reverence to the Mahant, he goes out of the chamber and soon finds himself in the company of his two friends, Gughi, son of the yekka driver Jhandu and Churanji, the moneylender's son. They go up to the top of a strawladen cart belonging to the landlord, Sardar Bahadur Harbans Singh. They start playing cards. The household of the Sardar have been travelling in the bullock cart ahead. But the landlord's little child and his sister Maya are travelling in the cart on top of which Lalu and his friends are playing cards. Lalu finds it a wonderful chance to come into contact with Maya, a maturing girl of fourteen.

When they reach the fair site, Lalu loses sight of his friends. He feels very hungry. He enters a Muhammadan shop from where a palatable smell is spreading. He orders an earthen saucer of curry and satisfies his hunger. Then unaware of the sacrilege he is committing he enters 'King George Vth Haircutting and Shaving Saloon' and has his hair shorn. When he
returns home, his eldest brother Sharm Singh notices that Lalu's turban descended lower than the usual position. He asks Lalu what has happened. Lalu coolly tells that he paid a visit to the 'King George Vth Hair Cutting Saloon' in the town and had an hair cut. The situation suddenly becomes tense:

Nihal Singh sprang forward and dealt him a resounding slap on the face. With the fury of an old tiger, he fell upon his son, digging his claws into the boy's neck, while Sharm Singh ground his teeth with an, 'ohe, rape-mother!' and struck him hard on his head, his neck and on his body…(Village, 91)

The news soon spreads around the village and a crowd gathers in front of the house. Hardit Singh, the elder son of the landlord rushes at Lalu and blackens his face. Then, Arjan Singh, the priest of the Sikh temple brings forward a donkey and Hardit Singh with great force lifts Lalu and puts him on the back of the animal. Without any delay, the donkey is sent forward among the shouting, bawling, hysterical, blood-thirsty men and women and children who have run ahead into the lane. Lalu struggles hard to free himself from the grip of his enemies and at a lucky moment manages to deal blows right and left, forward and backward and slips away. The crowd chases him but he has escaped.

After this shocking incident Lalu keeps up a low profile in his house. He hardly talks with anyone. However, he obeys his mother's request and
goes with his father and brother in their pursuit for loan to the shop of the money-lender Chaman Lal, as Chaman Lal's son Churanji is his friend.

Soon, Lal Singh's family is seen busy preparing for the marriage of his elder brother, Dayal Singh. The house is in a merry mood. One day a group of children come to play the dholki and sing. To Lalu's surprise Maya, the landlord's daughter with whom he came into contact during his travel by bullock-cart to the Fair, is among them. And he is astonished to find her there, so beautiful, soft and tender. They start playing. When their playful pandemonium is at its height, Maya falls upon Lalu “with a lovely helplessness, beating him, scratching him, digging her fists into his sides and he laughed and shook from side to side to ward her off” (154-55). Just then Sardar Bahadur appears in the hall. Seeing their play, the landlord becomes outrageous, abuses Lalu, takes hold of his daughter and drags her away.

The next day the police Havildar Napoo Singh comes to Lalu's house with a summon to arrest him on the charge of theft. Lalu realises that the charge was fabricated by the landlord to punish him for playing with his daughter. So he takes to his heels and reaches Manabad. There he hears an army Havildar bawling at the top of his voice, enumerating the advantages and asking young men to join the army. Lalu realises that by joining the army perhaps he could escape arrest and so he, without any hesitation, expresses his willingness to join the army.
Lalu and other recruits are taken in the evening by the Karachi Mail to the 68th Rifles of Ferozepur. Though a Sikh by birth, on account of his short hair, Lal Singh is enlisted as a Hindu Dogra as Recruit No.12444 to Platoon, B Company in the 68th Rifles. The new recruits have had intense training. The capricious, blood-thirsty drill instructor, Lance Naik Lok Nath dislikes Lalu from the very beginning. He slaps and abuses Lalu for every slight mistake during the drill. As against the cruelty of Lok Nath, Lalu receives compassionate treatment and affection from Kirpu, the orderly of the Subedar Major, who has been nick-named 'uncle' for his age and eccentricity, Daddy Dhanoo, older and even more fatalistic than uncle Kirpu and from Havildar Lachman Singh. He has been in the army for nearly five months when one day he receives a telegram informing that his father is seriously ill. He is allowed to go home. After a quick journey from Ferozepur by rail he reaches his home.

After reaching home, Lal Singh is drawn to his father with affection. His father has been receiving medical care from Muhammad Ali, the Mulah who has been practising a mixture of the indigenous and the Greek system of medicine.

On the day his leave has expired, Lalu packs his luggage and with reverence touches his father's feet. The old man blesses his son and asks him to be brave. His friends quarrel for the privilege of carrying his belongings. Almost the whole of the village follow him in a procession to
see him off. When Lalu reaches Ferozepur he is able to confirm the rumour he had heard earlier that a war has started between Germany and England. Soon orders arrive for the 68th Rifles to get ready as part of the Ferozepur Brigade to go for war. The only topic of conversation for Lalu and his friends is the exact date of departure and their destination. "But the sepoys had been left completely in the dark on both these counts and the range of conjecture had become limitless" (Village, 240). And finally the exact date of departure arrives and they march towards the sea-shore where their ship is anchored. While Lalu and his companions wait for their chance to enter the ship, Havildar Lachman hands Lalu a telegram which reads: "Baba Nihalu passed away. Harnam Singh". Tears, the silent language of grief appear on Lalu's face. Uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanoo and Havildar Lachman console him. "Then he shrugged his shoulders and ran along the decks towards the forming sepoys". (Village, 253)

Lalu, as presented in the novel is a non-conformist. His reason for cutting his hair is this:

The katch, kara, kirpan, kesh and kanga might well have been necessary when Guru Govind was fighting Aurangzeb. Then it was said he enjoined his men to wear shorts, because he couldn't get clothes, bangles and swords for symbols, and long hair because he couldn't get barbers to shave them, and combs to tidy their hair. Such provisions were dictated by necessity and commonsense. But as everyone with a grain of
intelligence said, what was the use of observing these conventions now that there was no further need for them? There was no religion in doing so…(Village, 28)

The non-conformist Laul's commonsense has clearly gone against the conscience of his community. So, the society looks upon him as a dissenter and pervertor of truth. His own affectionate family condemn his action: Ajit Kaur exclaims, "Oh. The Shame! It is the most shamefullest shame that could be for a Sikh to have a single hair of his body shorn", (Village, 92) and she further adds, “It is the most terrible insult to our religion of the five K's.” (Village, 93). Lalu's Brother Sharm Singh becomes uncontrollable. He shouts at Lalu, "You are a dirty contaminated dog, a pig.” (Village, 93). Lalu's mother turns deeply sad and deplores, "Oh, all is lost! We shall not be able to show our faces in the brotherhood." (Village, 93). Soon the news spreads around the village. The Priest of the Sikh temple becomes furious, as he is aware of the danger in allowing anyone within the faithful fold to exercise private judgement and conscience. He shouts, "Look, oh, people. This rogue has spoiled our religion, disgraced the village!” (Village, 95).

The sound and fury of the society does not alter Lalu's conviction. The priest's accusation that he 'disgraced the village' by his hair on his head shorn is something absolutely absurd for Lalu, the existential seeker of his own destiny. He firmly believes that all those who have persecuted him did him wrong for his doing the right thing of cutting the oppressive
long hair on his head. The question of hair as presented in the novel was something unacceptable to the staunch believers. They found the novel a book of sacrilege and in 1968, under their pressure, it was banned by the Punjab Government.

Closely connected with Anand's criticism of religious fanaticism is his laughter provoking presentation of religious parochialism. Muhammad Ali, the Mulah of Nandpur Mosque, who treats Lalu's father more by prayer than by medicine, though free from malice, is not prepared to see the manifestation of God in religions other than his own:

'According to my religion, you will soon have to stand before God on the Judgement Day', said the Maulvi. 'And since you are an infidel, the prophet cannot intercede on your behalf. The first Guru, Guru Nanak, was an admirer of Muhammad, however, and that may count in your favour'.

'But each day in life is judgement day', burst Lalu, impatient at the Maulvi's words. 'And surely there is no favouritism shown to men in heaven, if there be such a place, just because men belong to one religion or another.'... (Village, 218)

Lalu's protest seems to be Anand's own protest against religious intolerance to Anand. It makes Gujri indignant about, the Maulvi's entrance into the barn through the kitchen and makes her lift the shoes, which the Maulvi has discarded at the door, by means of a stick and
throw them into the courtyard. It is the same social attitude which provokes a Hindu merchant, who has a booth at the Fair next to the Mohammadan stall in which Lalu enters, to shout at him:

Sardarji, have you left your senses that you are eating at a Muhammadan shop? But probably they have left you, since the hour of twelve o'clock has struck. At this hot hour, I suppose it is impossible for your head loaded with hair to think at all... (Village, 80)

Intolerance is the root of religious fanaticism and mankind can destroy its root only through goodwill. Anand's humanism insists that religion should be humanised. This he illustrates through an incident in the novel. Lalu goes with the Maulvi to collect a potion he promises to give which will ease the pain on his father's back. On their way they hear from the mosque the deep musical cry: "Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!" and immediately "Maulvi Muhammad Ali lifted his hind feet like a duck out of water and rushed through the gateway without a word to Lalu, as if he would miss his chance of entering the kingdom of God if he tarried". (205). Lalu has to wait there, till the Maulvi ends his prayer to collect the promised potion, leaving his dying father, in the meanwhile, to continue to suffer the pain. Piety is good but piety at the expense of an urgently required help to fellow human being is something contradictory in essence. Anand insists that God should not eat away one's common sense.
The life in the villages in India is afflicted with superstitious practices. Not only Lalu's old mother Gujri who is foolish enough to believe that it is a good omen to meet a sweeper or a black dog before one begin's one's journey, but also the entire village community is in the grip of superstition. Superstition is the religion of feeble minds, it retards progress; eclipses and spoils the true aspects of religion. Superstitious beliefs are continued to be honoured in India, as every new generation of Indian society submissively adjust themselves to the older generation and its irrational values and traditions. It is unfortunate that superstition is still an integral part of the general Indian set up. A person like Lalu who has the courage to challenge superstitious practices is treated as an outcast of the society. The risk involved in rebelling against superstition is enormous and so every one in this country dances to the old tune leaving India, a land of incorrigible superstition. People who justify superstition may justify anything and Anand through his character Lalu, ridicules such people. In the situation referred below, Lalu is getting ready to go with his eldest brother and father in search of a loan for his elder brother's marriage:

'Let us go then and see to the rent as well as the marriage', said Lalu sardonically, emphasizing his last words in halfmocking, half-serious manner.

'Wait, wait my son', Gujri cried. 'I will go to the well and meet you with a pitcher of water on my head so that your visit may be auspicious.'
'God suits the burden to the strength', said Lalu cryptically, and headed towards the door.

'Wait, wait my son', Gujri cried out impatiently.

But luckily Kesari was just entering with a brass jug full of Ganges water which was given to devotees at the monastery. 'Acha, now you can go' Gujri said.

Lalu stood near the hall waiting for his father and Sharm Singh to issue forth. He cast a glance at his mother who was mumbling prayers as the two men passed ahead, laughed and followed the elders submissively…(Village, 110)

Most of the farmers in Nandpur are poverty-stricken, miserable looking 'slave of the wheel of labour', like Lalu's uncle Harnam Singh who had to mortgage the whole of his six acres to the money-lender Chaman Lal to pay the land rent to the Sarkar and to have a little money on hand for seed. Most of what they grow goes to the moneylender as interest and there is no question of paying back the capital for years. Yet poverty never teaches the villagers to be frugal. Instead, the empty illusion of prestige induces them to spend money on feeding, ungrateful brotherhood and the 'holy men' who are embodiments of hypocrisy. Lalu is irritated with such a social attitude. Lalu's annoyance and anger with the Mahant of Nandpur who has indicated his desire for a dearer variety
of silk than that his father has bought for him from his meagre saving is in fact an anger with the whole society:

Lalu felt a violent revulsion against Nandgir now. That the wretch should make it a point to remind the old man about the cheapness of the cloth. And his father had said that the harvests were not fetching much. Why couldn't the family learn better than to waste money on gifts for these charlatans? Why? The man hadn't done anything for them for years, but came in at the end of every harvest for his share of the grain and the gift of clothes! The lecher! He ate sumptuous food, dressed in yellow silks, smoked charas and drank hemp, and, if reports were true, whored and fornicated. And he was a holy man, the Guru of the community…(Village, 45)

The main obstacle to the progress of a society is its unwillingness to accept modernization. The society's adherence to the old and the tried with an allergy to the new and the untried makes economic stagnation inevitable. Anand wants India to be modernized and he knows that the enemies of modernization are the people themselves who are unwilling to give up their old ways of life and who protest against anything new and more advantageous. The old dog's unwillingness to study new and more efficient tricks is presented in the very opening chapter of the novel where Lalu and his father enter into an argument on the modernity brought about by train. Nihal Singh's comment about the train, "This machine is like the Devil. How it made my heart jump! Wah Guru! Wah Guru! And
the smoke it emits is so bad for the fields" *(Village, 2)*, makes Lalu protest, which in turn creates an amusing clash of opinion between the father and the son, the conservative and the progressive:

And whatever you say, Bapu, you know you would not like to be carrying all those sacks of grain to Manabad and Sherkot on your back. The bullock-cart drivers stop twenty times, to smoke and to feed the bullocks, and they often get drunk and take two days and a night sometimes. But you can send anything to town in an hour by the goods train!

'You are a fool', snorted Nihal Singh impatiently. 'You don't think of the hire and the bribes you have to pay to the Babu at the godown each end, and the difficulty of smuggling anything past those fiends of the customs. You can take a bullock cart into town by a hundred devious ways...*(Village, 2)*

To Nihal Singh, "Men are their own devils, drinking *angrezi* wine and constructing evil machines". *(Village, 11)* It is his hatred for machine, borne out of dreadful anachronisms, that makes him prefer bullock cart to train. He is like some of the characters of Hardy or Dickens who are opposed to "the dark, satanic mills", the "iron-horse" - in short, the modernization. He fights to the very end of his life, in his own limited way, against the introduction of machines. In his conversation with Lalu during
the latter's home visit from the cantonment to see his dying father, the old man speaks, about thus:

“...the time when the seeds of their present misfortunes were sown, of when the fernngis came with their railgadis which took away the grain from the villages at the lower prices. The fernngis, the fernngis. He could never forgive the fernngis for alt-the new-fangled machines they had brought in, the heavy taxes they levied and their bad justice. Lalu told him of how kind the Ajitan Sahib of his regiment had been to him, and said that some of the machines he had seen were wonderful. But the old man was not interested in his son's praise of all these toys, regarding his words as the impetuous talk of a youngster who had been seduced by the superficial amenities of city life... (Village, 217)

The above passage clearly illustrates the generation gap between the father and the son, the adolescent and the adult world. Lalu, like Bakha in Untouchable or Munoo in Coolie, is an admirer of machine. Lalu's comment some of the machines he had seen were wonderful', implies that not all the machines he had seen were wonderful for the prosperity of the nation. Lalu's comment tallies with Anand's recommendation for the nation to have controlled introduction of machine which would produce a healthy balance between tradition and the amenities offered by industrial progress.
The novel could have had sharper focus if the evocation of the village life had not been marred by the lengthy description of the life in the cantonment and the troop movement for the war. It is true that the hero of \textit{The Village}, Lal Singh, is very much alive in the cantonment and is able to return in memory to his village and parents but that alone cannot satisfy the requirement of the title of the novel. Out of the 253 pages of the novel, 64 pages, that is, slightly more than one fourth of its length, deal exclusively with cantonment, quite away from the village. This shift in the direction of the novel is made to stand out further by the loquacity of Daddy Dhanoo and Uncle Kirpu and the vulgarity of \textit{Lance Naik} Lok Nath. But for this weakness in the plot, \textit{The Village} is a highly interesting novel, leaving the reader with an irresistible urge to know more about its hero, Lal Singh, who is seen at the end of the novel on board the ship to begin the voyage across the Black Waters.

Critics who accuse Anand of being a propagandist, will not find a chance to make such an accusation in \textit{The Village}. In this regard, G.S.Balarama Gupta comments in his famous book \textit{Mulk Raj Anand – A Study of his Fiction is Humanist Perspective}:

\begin{quote}
The entire novel bears the stamp of naturalness and authenticity, and Anand hints at the changes he wants in rural society by giving a convincing picture of the intelligent hero’s reactions to the status quo, and not by directly sermonizing about them. Thus the novel escapes
\end{quote}
from being stigmatized as a work of art marred by obtrusive propaganda…(58)

The descriptive passages in the novel are particularly possessed with a charm and melody. It is not difficult to discover poetry in passages like the one given below:

And walking along this road, Nihal Singh sensed a kinship with the familiar earth. He felt the invisible warmth of the sheltered lives in the village where he was respected. He sniffed the air as if it were nectar and gazed upon the landscape as if it were heaven full of the ineffable bliss of life, full of men and women and children and animals and fruits and flowers…(Village, 12)

*The Village* in fact depicts every village in India and Anand's rural roots certainly explain his robustness and sensibility in the novel. The extortionate government, unscrupulous landlords, greedy money-lenders, fleecing lawyers, orthodox religion ossify through years into mere rituals, social life saturated with superstitious practices as presented in *The Village* hold a mirror up to the situation of every Indian village. The novel is a panorama of the inner India, a work giving an imaginatively vivid picture of Indian rural life in pre-war days. As Alastair Niven wrote, "*The Village* is perhaps the most rounded portrait of village and rural life that the Indian novel in English offers us." (65) In the very opening chapter of the novel, the atmosphere is created with remarkable skill, for the reader
to feel that he is already in a village. The singing of robin, the twittering of sparrows, the chattering crows, the flowers of thorny bush, the paddy fields, the timorous breeze, movement of domesticated donkeys, the village black dog of name Kalu, the bullock-cart whose driver everyone knows and above all the typical way people talk adding blessing or cursing as presented in the opening scene of the novel fixes the reader's mind to feel that he is in a village. The novel is replete with lively description, as of the Fair in the town. The prose is of an easy spontaneous type, flowing flawlessly, adaptable and capable of fine suggestiveness. There is a blessed lack of exaggeration in style as in conception and above all the fine fusion of art and idea in the novel makes it an excellent and enduring work of art.

One year after the banning of The Village, the Punjab Government in 1969 banned the second novel of the trilogy, Across the Black Waters. In his letter to Saros Cowasjee, dated 22 Oct. 1969, Anand expresses his irritation with the Chief Minister who ordered the banning of it without even knowing its content: "It seems the Chief Minister rang up a friend of mine to ask her if she had a copy of the novel Across the Black Waters because he wished to read it. Of course, true Sardarji style it was after he had banned the book". (76)

The novel is' based on Anand's own experience in trench warfare in Spain. Anand says that the book was sketched in a rough draft in
Barcelona and Madrid during the Spanish Civil war between January and April of 1937, and entirely re-written at Chinnor and Oxford between July and December 1939. The scenario of the novel is the battlefields in France during World War I, When Indian troops landed in Marseilles, made their way by train and by road and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with the Germans. It is a book of great interest, since it is the first book written by an Indian about an Indian regiment in the First World War, and since it shows the Indian troops in action at Messines and Festubert in 1914 and 1915 from their own point of view.

Lalu's friends in the Ferozepur cantonment who appeared in *The Village*, re-appear in this novel in greater depth. Apart from Lal Singh, the rustic Indian adolescent reaching manhood in the school of suffering at the cold, wet trenches of France, one comes into contact in the novel with Falstaff like Uncle Kirpu, Hotspur like Lachman Singh, superstitious and eccentrically pious Daddy Dhanoo, power greedy and arrogant Lok Nath, the young Subedar Subah who got promotion through his father's influence and goes drunk on patrol, the considerate English officers and many others who originated in *The Village*.

The very opening of the novel tells that the soldiers, Lalu and his companions, have completed a long voyage and the ship which carried them has reached Marseilles. Even then, those poorly paid but highly esteemed soldiers meant for active participation in war are not told where
they have to fight. But suddenly they hear the thundering sounds of the gun from the land. They feel that they have arrived at the front. A Sikh N.C.O. tells the ignorant sepoys that they are "the guns of the Fracsici warships saluting us" (Across, 10). Then the news has gone round that the sepoys will enter the shore there, rest for a day or two and afterwards go by train to the front as soon as possible. As they have alighted from the deck, they see Pathans, Sikhs, Dogras, Gurkhas, Muhammadans in khaki, blue jacketed French seamen and porters and English Tommies. They hear a babal of voices, shouts, curses, salams and incomprehensible courtesies. Then, obeying the orders they march up the hill amidst the French people's greetings of 'Vievelesallies! Vive...'. The Indian regiments response by shouting 'Long Live the Francisis', 'Wah Guruji ka Khalsa!', 'Bolo Sri Ram Chander kijai!', 'Allah ho Akbar!' and so on. After the march past and short speech of the General of Lahore Division, the sepoys go to the newly erected tents.

After a few days, the Indian troops are transported to Orieans. At Orieans, the corps practise route-marching during the next few days. On the evening of October 17th, 1914, orders come for the Lahore Division to entrain the next day to go to Flanders. They get ready with "a strange sense of fellowship, as if they felt that they ought to hang together because they were going farther into the unknown" (Across, 62). Lalu in the company of Uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanoo and other sepoys gets inside
the unlit cattle truck, which is to be their compartment. The train starts. In the moving train next to Kirpu sits a French soldier. The sepoys talk with him using their heads and hands profusely. After some time, the song of shoot and fire which the train has been singing subsides. They reach Rouen. There, they are caught by a grim silence. They see a train standing in the opposite direction of their train with red crosses on them and full of wounded soldiers.

The unending tortuous journey into the unknown continues and the train reaches Calais. They see hordes of European soldiers standing by cattle-truck trains, who lift their hands and cheer the sepoys: 'Viveles Hindus!' The sepoys rush to the doors and cheer back in the only English greeting they have known: 'Hip Hip Hurrah!' The train shrieks and groans out of Calais. After some time it slows down and finally halts at Lillers. Havildar Lachman Singh asks the sepoys to form up on the platform for the roll call. Then the regiment is ordered by Colonel Green to march to the camp, in the village of Arques, a few miles away. After resting there for a day the 69th Rifles are taken by buses to Wulvergham near Ypres and from there, they are ordered to march to the trenches. They hardly pass the dugout when the bullets come whistling over their heads. Now each moment seems to Lalu to be his last. He suddenly gets frightened by seeing some corpses. There are eight in number, eight dead men. Lalu struggles eagerly through the ditches, keeping as close to Havildar
Lachman Singh as possible. The runner angrily tells the sepoys to go steady keeping their heads down. And when they reach the location, Havildar Lachman Singh, Uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanno, Lalu and others adjust their rifles into the hole in the sandbags. But the expected offensive has not come for many days. So they settle down grimly to routine, like repairing the barbed wire in the no man's land, fetching ration, bearing away the wounded to the ambulance and the like.

Then on a rainy day orders come for the sepoys to attack the enemy. At the instance of the order, they rush forward. A hail of bullets scatter them and Lachman Singh shouts at them to lie down and crawl. The smoke of the gun has mixed with the curtain of rain. The detonations seems to throw up great clouds of earth and limbs and smoke along the line. Lalu does not know what to do or where to go. He lies down and begins to crawl. Another crash and a whirlwind of earth and smoke fly up from an explosion near him, while rifle and machine gun fire pour down like rainstorm. No one is able to go forward in the face of that fire. And the orders come to 'turn back'. In this encounter many sepoys and many Tommies have fallen dead.

During the next three days the Germans have kept up a heavy bombardment to which the English guns, inferior in strength, have replied now and then. More orders arrive. Half the 69th Rifles are ordered to march with the 4th Calvary Brigade to new trenches. The sepoys 'did not
even complain about the inconvenience of changing trenches and this red-hot reception they were getting from the enemy as if after the hardships of the first attack they were now prepared to accept anything". (Across, 112) The enemy has been prodigal of lead for their artillery continues to fire without any break. In response, Lalu keeps firing round after round, as if he has been intoxicated with a passion for violence. After many days of restless attacks and counter-attacks, the No.2 Company of the 69th Rifles are allowed to be relieved and to go to billets. They are moved to a large dusty barn for rest. When their roll call is made they discover that out of the strength of seven hundred and fifty, only two hundred and fifty are left.

When the two days of rest given to the sepoys ends, though they still remain in billets, they are subjected to a succession of fatigues, parades and inspection. But Lalu is taken on to help in the office to write letters home for the illiterate sepoys.

On one occasion, Jamedar Subah Singh sees the attractive Marie showing affection to Lalu. The Jamedar gets excited. As he is not able to get an opportunity to come into contact with her, the Jamedar asks Lalu to bring her out on some pretext so that he can take her into a field. Lalu says that he will have to ask Babu Kushi Ram's permission to leave the office. Subah does not understand Lalu's position. So he leaves the place with great anger and the next day Lalu receives orders to attend parade.
After a few days, the sepoys are ordered to march to Festebert. It is an extremely cold place. In spite of their use of many blankets and warm clothes, they shiver and are not able to sleep in the trenches. Some of them have to be heaved out of the clay holes by means of ropes, as they were frozen at night.

At Festebert, along with Jamadar Subah and Lance Naik Ram, Lalu is given the hard and risky task of spying on the sap built by the enemy. The party is led by an young officer, Lieutenant Hobson. They crawl towards the German trenches. Jamadar Subah who was fully drunk, remains far behind the others. Suddenly the Jamadar comes running up, crunching the snow and throws himself down by the side of Lalu.

Just then a German machine-gun begins to speak the language of death and Lalu is pained to Lieutenant Hobson lying flat. Unable to succeed in the mission and with the shock of the lieutenant's death, they crawl back. Lance Naik Lok Nath, who had a grudge against Lalu since the Ferozepur days, does not tell the sentries to look out for the patrol party and they keep up an intermittent fire mistaking the patrol for the enemy. They are nearly cut off in no-man's land between the two fires, but sheer luck helps them to survive.

All day preparations for a final offensive has been going on in a quiet manner. Suddenly, the German machine guns spray the entire sector with
a deadly ferocity and sepoys fall headlong, or back over the parapet into their own trenches. Just then a bullet goes through the calf of Lalu's left leg and he falls face forward. Immediately a lion-moustached German drags him and two other sepoys into the trench. When he opens his eyes, he realises that he has become a captive. Thus the entire narration of *Across the Black Waters* artistically brings out the agonies of war. Thus Mulk Raj Anand’s social consciousness gradually enlarges from the evils of untouchability to that of war.

*Across the Black Waters* is Anand’s definitive statement on the evils of war. The readers are presented with the action scenes of war gives the impression that the novel celebrates the religion of death. The only reality in the novel is the reality of death. It is this sorrow that permeates the whole novel and one can’t help being affected by it. The soldiers in the novel are churned up in the war machine, in the bogs, mud and slush of France. They are drilled to commit organized violence for Rs.11 a month, plus uniform. The brutality expected from them is evident in the advice given to the sepoys by *Lance Naik* Lok Nath just before they are set to action.

Now you show them some of your savagery. All brave men like hand-to-hand fighting. And I have always tried to instill in you the fact that as brave sepoys you must charge the enemy without fear with your bayonets, wherever you find him, and hit him in a vital spot. Aim at
the heart, remember the belly or the testicles of the enemy! If he has the advantage in attack, swiftly fell him with a blow from the butt end of your rifle and trample upon him and drive the bayonet deep into the body and draw it out so that he bleeds and dies…(Across, 141-142)

Bravery at war is nothing but barbarism. It is beautifully expressed by Lalu in one of his chit-chat with Daddy Dhanoo:" if one who slays one is a murderer then he who slays a thousand is not a hero." (157). The cruelty of war is stressed throughout the novel. The sepoys are treated like yoked bullocks kicked and thrashed by the ploughman to make them go round the field making deep scratches on it. Orders to march or attack are the only words that the sepoys hear from their higher officers. They are merely food for the enemy's powder. No excuse is given to their inability to march. In a horrifying scene in the novel, a sepoy named Hanumant Singh suffering from fever is ordered to get up and march. He refuses to get up and the officers who gather around him shower abuses. Then come the horrible deal:

'I shall deal with him', said Suchet Singh, taking out his revolver. 'If you don't get up while I count three... one, two three'. And he shot at Hanumant so that the sepoy shrieked and doubled over with a 'Hai, hai, oh my...'

(Across, 178)

The cruelty of war re-bounding on themselves turns the sepoys dazed and wooden. Though they have admired the shrewdness and wealth of
the sahibs they cannot understand why the sahibs are killing each other and making a large graveyard of their land. Most of the sahibs think that they are in war with the Germans to save the cause of civilization. Whereas in reality, as stated by Captain Owen they are victims of civilization. To Lal Singh, war is a holocaust of men, beasts and houses and he wonders why the people of so-called high civilization involve in this:

...he (Lal Singh) could not believe that ordinary men and women of good sense, and the Government of France, England and Germany, which were saner and wiser than the ordinary people over whom they ruled, could be engaged in a war in which men were being wounded and houses shattered...(*Across*, 83)

The saddest aspect of the war described in the novel is the suppression of even the necessary information required to give the sepoys emotional involvement, and a sense of participation in war. The officers fail to realise that they are giving orders to human beings similar to them with emotion, feeling, anxiety and curiosity. So they never bother to explain the orders they give. As uncle Kirpu puts it: "The sarkar is like a bitch, son. It barks its orders and does not explain." (*Across*,78) As they are not told where they are to fight and why they have to fight, they feel that their thoughts and feelings are not fed with the right spirit required to fight and that they are only treated as mere instruments in the war and not as
human being. This makes them dull and indifferent. So they move about with a resigned attitude towards the whole business:

no one asked where the war was or why it was being fought and how it happened that they were going there. For there had been no answer to such queries in the past and now they took it for granted…(Across, 177)

Thus, the poor sons of Indian peasants who have joined the army to earn a little ready cash to payoff the interest on the mortgage of the few acres of their land or to solve their other pecuniary problems are caught by Fate and they are in France condemned to fight. Their only concern is to save five or six rupees out of the eleven rupees of their monthly pay and thereby relieve the suffering of their family. The following passage in the novel summarises why stoicism and militaristic tepidity has taken hold of the Indian soldiers during the war:

A passionate people, prone to sudden exaltations and depressions, more faithful than any other if they believe, they were neutral in this war, because this was not a war for any of the religions of their inheritance, nor for any ideal which could fire their blood and make their hair stand on end. Ordered about by the Sarkar, they were as ready to thrust their bayonets into the bellies of the Germans as they had been to disembowel the frontier tribesmen, or their own countrymen for the pound a month which the sahibs paid them. But they were like conscripts, brutalized and willing to fight like trained
bulls, but without a will of their own, soulless automations in the execution of the army code...

(Across, 133)

The much required tragic relief in the novel is provided by Uncle Kirpu’s sullen humour and citation of pain-petalled proverbs. As the author tells, "The reputation of Uncle Kirpu as a humourist made the very sound of his voice infectious with light-heartedness." (Across, 177) Though he is stubborn and independent every one has known him to be harmless. His words to Owen Sahib, "So, Sahib, we brave lions have come just in time to stop the enemy....", (Across, 177) reveal his natural disposition. He speaks to his friends casually calling them "watchdog of the Sarkar" "wooden owls", and "the son of land". (Across, 179) He speaks to them in fitting proverbs like, "A dog is a lion in his own street", (Across, 199) "The master asks the dogs to go hunting when they are dying and they must go", (Across, 198) "The dogs must bark early in the morning to show their master that they have been keeping watch all night", (Across, 209) "Make yourself a sheep and the wolf will eat you", (Across, 212) "Black clouds frighten, grey are the raingivers", (Across, 106) "A leper has got the itch, and when a man has got the itch, he wants a companion" (Across, 78) and "The angry man listens to no counsel". (Across, 107) His frequent comparing of sepoys with dogs is based on his understanding of the treatment they actually receive from their superiors. The laughter-provoking repartee between Lalu and Uncle Kirpu reduces
the scathing bitterness in the novel. In their visit to the farm of Papa Labusiere at Ypres, they see hefty, small horned, well polished cows raising their snozzles at them and staring. So Uncle Kirpu asks Lalu what they are saying:

Praying to God that they might be transported to Uncle Kirpu's village', mocked Lalu, 'so that they can roll about in the mud, eat grain out of their dung and be under no obligation to give milk… (Across, 195)

These humorous words of Lalu are not devoid of truth. Anand criticizes the way, people in India look after their domestic animals. Though they are willing to give a kind of 'divinity' to their cows, most of the people in India don't care much for the dignity of animals and the welfare they deserve.

Uncle Kirpu, after his promotion to Lance Naik, addresses the sepoys with a mockery of his best N.C.O. voice and manner, blowing an imaginary particle of dust off the stripe on his shoulder and pretending to be very respectful to himself. Behind his sardonic humour, Mulk Raj Anand is eloquently protestsies against the army code which provides a lot of comfort to the officers at the expense of the ordinary soldiers. Anand must have observed the dog-like treatment the ordinary soldiers receive from their officers and he, through the words of his mouth-piece Uncle Kirpu criticises the slavery to which the sepoys are subjected by the officers, without any official or moral sanction. Anand's intention here is
clear. He wants reformation in the army set-up which would permit even the lowest in rank to live with dignity:

A soldier must not question an order given by a superior', he (Uncle Kirpu) now began to fool with a hyperbolic exposition to the army code. 'He must obey promptly and willingly, if possible by crawling before the officer or by tying the officer's shoelaces. For an officer is like the king, father and mother, though he has no beard like Jarj Panjam if you are not still convinced of the importance of an officer's position, as issuing from the king's instructions, then you have only to look at me!' And he made a wry face, put on a scowl and began to twist his moustache at the tips with deliberately heroic efforts to make them stand… (Across, 230)

Lalu who has been enjoying the foolery of Uncle Kirpu interrupts his lecture by calling him 'Holdars!' with exaggerated politeness and says: "I have not been to a kit inspection and the sepoy who showed my clothes at parade for me when we came back to rest said that I shall have to have new socks". (Across, 231) Lance Naik Kirpu replies thus:

You will have to be polite to the quarter-master holdar and call him a subedar, even as you have called me a holdar, and go and complete any deficiency that there is in your kit today. If you get nothing but abuse from the quarter-master then that is what you deserve, for kit is meant to be kept in store or to be given to favourites and
not to the fighting sepoy. If you are told off at the next inspection parade by myself or another N.C.O. for not having made good the deficiency then don't grumble but regard it as a law of the army that a soldier is the donkey who must bear all the burden of the army on his back!... (*Across*, 231).

Denunciation of war is the central theme, the key element of social criticism in *Across the Black Waters*. In this connection, it is worth recalling the speech made by Bonar Law before World War I started as quoted in “there is no Best Quotations for all Occasions: as an inevitable war. If war comes it will be from failure of human wisdom”...(*Across*,243) In war people kill one another to win 'honour' and the greatest murderer is given the highest 'honour'. Uncle Kirpu's 'Falstaffism' towards honour and war appears in many parts of the novel. When *Havildar* Lachman praises the bravery of sepoy Usman Khan of Path and company, Uncle Kirpu's reaction is interesting:

'Bravery', said Lachman: 'What a bravery! Sepoy Usman Khan was hit by rifle fire. He was hit a second time but he stood like a Bahadur. A large piece of flesh was blown away from both his legs by a splinter and he had to be carried back. *Kamel* Sahib has recommended him for a medal...' 'He can hang it on his...', said Kirpu, 'now, that he has no body left to decorate'...(120)

The soldiers are encouraged to indulge in crime for the reward of medal and promotion. Uncle Kirpu's mockery of medal for bravery is clearly seen
in his words of ridicule to his friends who are discussing on the possibility of getting it:

'Boys, it is my duty as a Lance Naik to tell you that there are some gold medals being given by the women in the Red Lamp shops…'. (208)

The linking of *Across the Black Waters* with *The Village* is achieved not only by the role of the hero, Lalu, and his companions Uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanoo, and his superiors Subah, Lok Nath and Owen Sahib who figure in both the novels but also by the hero’s recurrent recollection of the trials, tribulations and happiness of his life in his village of Nandpur. When he sees in the distant France a few Sikhs of No.4 Company standing and combing their long hair, he "recalled the brutality with which the fanatics of his village had blackened his face and put him on a donkey when he had his hair cut. The humiliation had bitten deep into him. They must look odd to the Europeans, he thought". (19) His love for his parents and home makes him dream at night. In one of his dreams "his mother was crying over the body of his dead father, and his brother, Dayal Singh, was rebuking him for running away when they most needed him." He recalls his love for Maya and its consequence, the landlord and the police coming with a warrant for his arrest and his escape and so on. These flashbacks of the events in *The Village* to *Across the Black Waters* and the involvement of the same characters of importance in both the novels effectively knit together the first and second volume of the trilogy.
Just as *The Village, Across the Black Waters* too, is free from the elements of propaganda. The author’s criticism on the evils of war in this novel is not presented through any vehement, direct slogans against it but through a suggestive description of the agony and tension the soldiers suffer as they are fighting loyally and dying nobly for the Government. However, the novel suffers from the defect of having no conventional plot. It is made up of a series of passing incidents. Saros Cowasjee observes thus:

"Though this novel deals with trench warfare", "the soldiers do not go into action until we are through one-third of the book. Anand seems to be striving for effect; and the cliché’s such as 'the sepoys sat in the bottomless pit of misery', 'the black hell of the trenches', and 'the God of Death was about with his hosts', strike no terror in us…(106)

On artistic ground though the novel may not be appreciated by all critics alike, it does certainly possess a special significance as a novel of protest and both Englishmen and the Indian readers find the novel interesting. Meenakshi Mukherjee states thus:

It is a book of extreme interest to the Indian readers since it "captures certain aspects of the Punjabi spirit with remarkable success. Their extrovert fellow-feeling, their broad humour, their simplicity, their attachment to land rather than to country or nation, are all conveyed through the reactions and conversation of the sepoys who are all peasants at
heart"...(239) Another reason why it fascinates the Indian readers is the fact that it is perhaps the only major war novel under Indian writing in English. The best reason why it is interesting to the Englishmen can be found in Maurice Collin’s review of it in *Time and Tide*:

Every honest man will warm towards these poor fellows who came to England's help with such simple, open and brave hearts. They were rough, coarse, loving creatures; they spilt their blood far from home in another's quarrel. Too uncouth for us to understand, we treated them coldly when their hearts were full of affection…(1167)

The original plan of Mulk Raj Anand was to give the third volume of the trilogy the title "All Men are Brothers", based on a slogan Lal Singh asks the peasants to repeat. George Orwell who made one of his characters in his fable *Animal Farm* says, "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades", advised Anand to give a more direct and forceful title than the ironical one he intended to give and suggested to him the title *The Sword and the Sickle*, taking his cue from the lines of William Blake:

Anand accepted Orwell's suggestion and the third volume of the trilogy was published in 1942 as *The Sword and the Sickle*. The title of the novel is quite apt as it depicts the struggle of the sickle force of India, namely the peasants, not to yield to the song of death sung by the holders of sword, namely the landlords and their agents.
The Sword and the Sickle is the continuation of the story of Lal Singh. When World War I ended in 1919, Lal Singh, a prisoner of war in Germany is set free. He returns to India. As he proceeds to the Lahore cantonment by Bombay-Peshawar Mail, he is full of hope that he will be given a medal, promotion and some land for his meritorious service to the Sarkar. Hope envelops him with happiness. But after his meeting with Peacock Sahib at the cantonment, Lalu's hope and happiness evaporates as he is accused of seditious behaviour in the German prison camp and is demobilized without the promised gift of land. He returns to his village. There, he is shocked to know about the death of his mother two years ago and the auctioning of his home and land by the machiavellion machinations of the money-lender Chaman Lal. As he has nowhere to go, he accepts the hospitality of his friend Gughi, now a bus driver, and stays with him. One evening, when Lalu is alone in Gughi's apartment, the landlord's daughter Maya, now a widow, visits him and narrates how she has been waiting for him. She promises Lalu that she is prepared to go anywhere with him.

A few hours later, Gughi returns to his room with a Professor named Verma whom Lalu had noticed the previous day going with the Jatha of landless agitators led by his uncle, Harnam Singh. Prof. Verma tells Lalu that he has come to fetch him, to offer him the job of organizing Kisan Samas, on behalf of the Count of Rajgarh, Kanwar Rampal Singh, whom Lalu had heard of in Berlin.
Lalu agrees to go with the Professor to Rajgarh if he would be permitted to take with him his beloved, Maya. The Professor agrees and after a hectic elopement and the rush to catch the train, Professor Verma, Lalu and Maya are in Rajgarh. At Rajgarh, Lalu and Maya are given a room well equipped in English-Indian style in an old house, overlooking the river.

The revolutionary forces of Rajgarh are only a handful in number. They are gathered in the Count's diwan. The Count introduces his secretary Ram Din, hunter Nandu, Comrade Gupta and Pandit Ram Kumar Misra, Manager of the printing works of Rajgarb estate to Lalu. Then they start discussing their plan to start the paper called 'Naya Hind' for propaganda among the peasants.

On the day of eclipse festival, the comrades arrange a function to make the peasants aware of their rights. Lalu winds up his speech thus:

   Today, the gates of a new life will begin to open to you. For, in far land called Roos, too, the peasants once suffered as you do, and then they set up their own Raj. And now the peasants and workers are ruling there, and all men there live like brothers So give a shout: 'All men are brothers!' The peasants answered... (Sword, 133)

The other comrades also give speeches. As the gathering grows in strength, there starts a disturbance, and a group of policemen appears on the scene and scatters the crowd.
One day, the Count and the comrades happen to meet a group of men standing by a corpse ready to be borne away by a boat into the Ganga. They come to know that the deceased is the son of a tenant of the Nawab of Nasirabad who was ordered to do forced labour. The deceased boy suffers thus:

Chandra, bad refused to get up from the bed, where he lay ill, to go and do forced labour, whereupon he had been fetched before the Manager of the estate, and flogged till he collapsed. But he had been dragged out and forced to cut wood. He had hardly climbed the tree when he had fallen and died…

(Sword, 169)

Lalu, seeing the brutality, suggests that they carry the dead body in a procession to Allahabad, in order to open the eyes of the national leaders on the cruelty of landlordism. Ram Din, Nandu and Gupta support Lalu’s suggestion. The Count agrees. He donates the price of several pitchers of ‘Tari’ to enliven the procession on its way to Allahabad.

Comrades Lal Singh, Ram Din, Nandu, Gupta and One-eyed Sukhua along with twenty evicted peasants including the father of the deceased, Bhupendra, begin their procession carrying the dead body of Chandra in a coffin to Allahabad. On their way, they successfully face the challenge of the Nasirabad Estate watchman Bhoori Singh and his two bull-dogs, George and Mary, and they proceed only to face the gun shots of Sheikh Hadayat Ullah, the Manager of the estate. One of the bullets hits Nandu's
head and his history tragically ends. The panic-stricken peasants and comrades rush along the river side carrying the dead bodies of Chandra and Nandu, and they spot an unoccupied boat. They jump into it. As the body of Chandra starts to give out foul smell, they realise that they cannot carry the body upto Allahabad and so they offer it and Nandu's body to the Mother Ganga. Soon a police party chase them. They row the boat with all their strength and finally reach the "ancient Prayag, outside Allahabad, where the snow white Ganga meets her darker sister, the Jamuna". (192) They steer the boat to the banks of Prayag.

Then comrades Lal Singh and Ram Din go to contact Kanwar Rampal Singh, Verma Sahib and the leaders of the Congress. They come to know from Ganga, the personal servant of the Count, that Mahatma Gandhi, the great Congress leader is in Allahabad to attend a feast given to untouchables at the house of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, and that Kanwar Sahib and Verma Sahib have gone there. So they go to Anand Bhavan in search of them.

Though it was difficult, somehow the Count manages to arrange for Lalu an audience with the Mahatma so as to present the grievances of the peasants of Partapgarh district and to invite him to visit their district. In that solemn meeting Gandhi preaches nonviolence and the merit of suffering to Lalu. The meeting ends with the Mahatma asking Lalu to invite the peasants on his behalf to come and join in the feast at night
when their untouchable brothers will dine with the caste Hindus. Lalu leads the peasants to the feast. After the feast, on the same night itself the peasants and the comrades return to Rajgarh by train.

Lalu collects all the evicted kisans, who have nowhere to go but the charity houses attached to the Rajgarh temple, and tells them of the plan to build a new house for the victims of the landlordism which is also to serve as the headquarters of the Kisan Sabha. They are happy with the plan. The work is started earnestly. When the headquarters is about to be ready, a wire from Jawaharlal Nehru arrives informing that the next day he will be at Rajgarh. The rumour of the expected arrival of Panditji spreads from shop to shop and house to house. Apart from the evicted tenants at Kisan Nagar, even, the gentry of the estate and other 'big men' of the place are at the station to welcome the great young leader.

The Count plans Panditji’s itinerary of tour to the villages. On hearing the rumour that Panditji is to speak at Kisan Nagar, peasants in big numbers rush to the location. Unfortunately, a telegram which has summoned him to urgent business in Allahabad, prevents his programme at Kisan Nagar.

After this terrible disappointment, the Count and the comrades continue their revolutionary activities. One evening, the Sub- Inspector of the local police station meets the Count and hands over a paper. It is an order
asking the Count and his comrades to leave Rajgarh and remain interned in Kisan Nagar where the police can have a watch on them. The Count, Ram Din and the student leader Razwi immediately go to see some high officials at Rae Bareilly to get the Court of Wards’ Order cancelled. But they cannot get any help from the officials, and instead they are arrested. When Lalu comes to know this, he rushes to meet the Count in the jail at Rae Bareilly.

Meanwhile the news of the arrest of the Count and others spreads far and wide and thousands of Kisans begin to move towards Rae Bareilly to protest against the arrest. When Lalu reaches Rae Bareilly, he finds it under curfew. He sees police pickets at every corner of the streets. Soon Lalu gets the information that multitudes of peasants have been gathering beyond the river, outside Rae Bareilly as police have not allowed them to enter the town. So he struggles through the curfew bound streets of Rae Bareilly to reach the spot. After escaping through the streets of the town, he rushes through a cornfield and then crawls like a giant snake through the last stems on the field and jumps across the road. He has been panting. As he raises his head, the peasants notice him and shout, 'Comrade Lal Singh! Comrade Lal Singh!' Hearing the noise made by the peasants, the soldiers shout, 'Silence' And then a volley of shots rings out. The peasants shrieking with pain and terror run towards Lalu. Lalu realises that in order to stop the soldiers from further shooting, the only
way is to show himself up and surrender. So he gets out of the cornfield and surrenders to the soldiers. (*Sword*, 386)

Lal Singh and the peasants who have been arrested, are crowded into the barrack cells. One day, after the evening roll call, one of the assistant jailers informs Lalu that a son is born to Musamat Maya. Devil Lalu eagerly waits in that mosquito filled, unhygienic prison cell for the day to break open so that he can send "a message to Maya to ask her how their new-born son was getting on, though from her answer to his previous inquiries during her pregnancy, he knew what she would say: Sardar Lal Singh, your child is alive and kicking!" (*Sword*, 382)

In *The Sword and the Sickle* the writer uses the novel form to express his views on political matters. Hence, for proper understanding of this outright political novel, it is necessary to know the National movements of the 1930s. In the 30s there was an ideological clash between Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, the most prominent leaders of Indian National Congress and freedom movement. If Gandhi could be called the leader of the right wing faction of the Indian National Congress, Nehru could be identified as the leader of its left wing faction. The Indian National Congress was mainly dominated by the middle class of the Indian society who had no sympathy for the poor peasants and the proletariat. Nehru wanted the Congress to become the true representative of the masses of India by ensuring the active participation of the basic organizations of
workers, peasants, trade unions and *Kisan Sabhas* to the Congress. He criticised the then dominant tendency to subordinate completely the social struggle to the political struggle, or, much worse to postpone the social struggle to a future period in order to focus attention on national unity and national struggle.

The reason usually offered was that the national issue must be settled first. But there could be no honest struggle which did not incorporate the social struggle of the masses. In December 1933, in the speech made at the All India Trade Union Congress, Pandit Nehru assured the workers that "if they participated whole heartedly in the national struggle as well as in their own social struggle, they would help bring about not only political freedom in India but social freedom also". (*Sword*, 282) In his letter of 13 August 1934 to Gandhi, Nehru spoke with deep disgust on the triumph of opportunism in the Congress and put part of the blame on the Working Committee which had "deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives". (*Sword*, 115) He was angry with the Working Committee particularly because it had passed a resolution on 18 June 1934, while he was in jail, indirectly condemning socialism and socialists for practising "the necessity of class war". (*Sword*, 172)

It is interesting to note that several pages of the *Autobiography*, written during 1934-35 and published in 1936, were an open challenge to Gandhian ideology though they were presented in a gentle, amicable,
even reverential tone. There could be no doubt that they were intended
to give Indian nationalism a new ideological direction.

Thus it seemed by the middle of 1936 that Nehru was formulating a left
political alternative to the Gandhian leadership - an alternative that would
challenge the latter in all basic aspects programme and ideology, social
nature of the movement and of its leadership, and the strategy of its
struggle. He was moreover beginning to emerge as the leader of a broad
socialist bloc, which was as yet loose and even incoherent, but the same
has getting formed around his personality. Nor did Nehru limit his new
orientation to his diary or debates in the Working Committee. He wrote
extensively for journals and newspapers, both in English and Hindi and
toured every part of the country spreading his message and attracting
students and youth to himself.

In this ideological conflict between Gandhi and Nehru, Mulk Raj Anand is
clearly with Nehru, whom he reverentially calls 'Panditji' and the novel,
*The Sword and the Sickle* is an open propaganda in support of Nehru's
approach to the predicament the nation faced in the final one and a half
decades of British Imperialism in India. A comparison of Nehru's ideas
and views scattered in his writings with Mulk Raj Anand's *Apology for
Heroism: A brief Autobiography of Ideas*, shows their similarity of
approach to many national problems.
Nehru's desire to affiliate the *Kisan Sabhas* to the Congress movement in contrast to Gandhi's relative lack of concern for the hardship of the evicted peasants is dramatically illustrated in the novel. At the end of Lalu's audience with Gandhi, the Mahatma invited the peasants to come and dine at the feast hosted by Motilal Nehru, intended to bring together the untouchables and the caste Hindus. In his short speech after a prayer at the party, Gandhi does not utter a word to console the evicted, miserable farmers. Lalu is in a state of panic as the Mahatma has not spoken a word about the peasants:

>'He came as an autumn cloud, rained a few blessings and went away!' Lalu said, unable to repress his dismay.

>'But we have the ardour of spring in store for you there', said the Count. 'Look! Jawaharlal, there, is going to speak to the peasants'.

Lalu veered round and saw the solemn young son of the host, who was known to be a 'revolutionary', standing on the second step and speaking:

>'Brothers, go on eating!'

There was laughter at this interruption. 'All I want to say is that we have a number of oppressed peasants from Pratapgarh district here, who have come to be our
The peasants under the leadership of Lalu request both Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi to visit their villages. Nehru as quoted above accepts the invitation, but Gandhi’s plan to postpone the social struggle in favour of National struggle prevents him from accepting the invitation. Alastair Niven rightly comments on this novel in his book *The Yoke of Pity*:

Gandhi is portrayed as the supreme egoist, smug in his own self-righteousness and bound in by the narrowest Hindu Orthodoxy. As Lalu is received into the 'sacred' presence, Gandhi is dictating an article for the poor of India on the sanctity of the cow…(78)

He preaches to Lalu, something totally rejected by Anand in all his novels, that suffering is the mark of human tribe, an eternal law, an indispensable condition of our being. According to Gandhi, progress has to be measured by the amount of suffering endured by each man. He defines non-violence as the conscious acceptance of suffering. The Gandhi as presented in the novel is seen through the eyes of revolutionaries who have accused him of compromising with the Imperialists. Anand
deliberately exposes through the 'Gandhi-scene' in the novel, the hypocrisy, subterfuges, "the bluff of moral grander and the egoistical concern for the self which he sees residing at the core of the ethos of many Gandhians". (*Sword*, 99)

As the Count and other revolutionaries have not got support from Gandhi for the cause of the evicted peasants, they become disappointed and begin to expose their annoyance with him:

'The spinning-wheel! The spinning-wheel!', the Count parodied the Mahatma's voice with indifferent skill, 'I say unto you... The spinning-wheel is the cure of all our ills in this destructive machine age...As if the Charkha, itself were not a machine...

After this abortive expedition to Allahabad, as the comrades and peasants travel by train back to Rajgarh along with the Count, they join him in the criticism of Gandhi. They especially criticise Gandhi's rejection of the machine, his propaganda for *charkha* and condemnation of 'destructive machine age', which sounds similar to Lalu's father Nihal Singh's preference of bullock-cart over train. The sharpest attack comes from Professor Verma and Lalu:

Professor Verma added: 'The Mahatma knows that the spinning wheel is a good slogan, though he knows that all the yarn necessary for the needs of the country cannot be provided by hand spinning. So he shuts a
corner of his left eye behind his glasses and winks at the factory-wallahs to go ahead with their plans. All that is necessary to cover up the double-dealing is a mystical phrase!...So to speak his right hand, the giver of blessing does not see what his left hand, with the bags of gold, is doing!

The man is talking religion when we want food!' shouted Lalu, thrusting another dagger into the remoteness of the Mahatma which he had not been able to penetrate during his interview. And then he set about to chop up the carcase like a butcher: 'His right hand is much longer than his left, his eyes dip inwards and are blind to what he doesn't want to see...(Sword, 212)

Though the novel has nothing much to say in praise of Gandhi, the left wing leader of the Congress movements Jawaharlal Nehru is presented as an admirable personality. The novelist calls him 'the great young leader'. The characters in the novel are made to talk of him in unrestrained eulogy:

Panditji is a friend of the Prince of Wales', said Seth Wall Chand, the cloth merchant. 'I hear they were at the same college and played golf together.

Yes, it is a great sacrifice, indeed, for him to give up all his fine clothes and to wear home-spuns', said Mr. Sastri, the post-master...(Sword, 245)

The novel takes care to mention that Panditji has travelled in 'a third-class compartment'. Nehru's real concern for and interest in the affairs of the
peasants, unlike the hypocritical concerns of many nationalists, is excellently exposed in the scene describing the arrival of Nehru at Rajgarh station:

Panditji’s head showed up the window of a third-class compartment, a clear cut shy smiling image of ivory.

‘Bolo Pandit Jawaharlal ki jai!’ Ram Din the slogan shouter yelled.

And the evicted tenants, the gentry, the officials, even the other passengers travelling with Jawaharlal, echoed the call. And, in the flash of a moment, all the populace on the platform ran towards the compartment in which the leader had been sighted, the gentry struggling to get ahead of the rabble, and bringing out garlands of marigold and white motia from wet towels to put round Panditji’s neck, so that even stalwarts like Lalu were left behind...Panditji seemed to have noticed the cross-currents at a glance.

And he cut through the stampede of the exalted, up to Lal Singh and the peasants, and had himself garlanded by them first... (Sword, 246-47)

The novel stresses the need for a revolution against the growing polarisation of classes in agrarian areas and criticises the national leaders’ negligence of responsibility in coming to the aid of the agrarian proletariat. The urgency of the revolution is the 'money famine' caused by
the war described in *Across the Black Water*. Though the war did not take place in India, the hero finds out on his return from the prison camp in Germany that it had nevertheless wrought havoc in India. The opening chapters of the novel present the post-war effect on the villages. Apart from war, the Gorgon Medussa of drought and famine kills the people in thousands. Those who have money, mainly, the money-lenders and landlords rejoice at the swelling situation as it is a boon for them to expand their territory. The labourers become street beggars; the small land holders lose their land to the landlords and money-lenders end up as tenants, and many tenants are forced to become bonded labourers. Harnam Singh, a typical victim of war, cries out in fury and agony:

> They (the Sarkar) took away crores of rupees as free gifts and loans from the country to support their war and foodstuffs to help to stem the privations of the Memnies in *Vilayat*... They took our grain, our timber, our tea, why, even the skins of our buffaloes and the oil from the poor man’s saucer lamp! And there are some people in the villages around here to-day who hide their nakedness in the clothes discarded by those who have died of plague while their children go naked!... (*Sword*, 63)

The unbearable exploitation of the government and the cunning of landlords transform Harnam Singh, the patient sufferer in *The Village* into a fiery orator and leader of landless agitators in *The Sword and the
Sickle. His criticism of Imperial exploitation and fiendish landlordism is touching and picturesque:

Oh, Hindustan! Hindustan! This country is like a lean bullock that has been reduced to the bone by the Angrezi lion, son. Each day the lion awoke and gnawed a chunk of flesh off the bullock's body and left it weaker but still standing. And then, the other beasts of the jungle came, and set to - the local jackals and the forces took their toll!... There had been bad times before in this country, but surely no time so bad as the present. It is one of those ages during which all joy and hope seems to have fled and in their place remains only a pain, a disease, which you can't even diagnose... *(Sword, 64)*

Thus, the war and the 'money-famine' that followed make many people revolutionaries. But they are like boats without rudder. They eagerly wait for the Mahatma to come to their aid, as "he would do in a day or two what will take us years. He could form a Kisan Sabha in no time, because so many thousands of people would come to take a 'darshan' of him. And then he has a genius for joining issue with authority." *(Sword, 212)* But the Mahatma refuses to support their dream for revolution and he finds no time to visit the evicted peasants. The nationalists' disinterestedness towards these revolutionaries and a lack of efficient and widespread organization make the peasant revolt vulnerable to the Imperial force of police and the Count and his comrades end up in jail.

Though the main social concerns expressed in the novel are on war and
its devastating effect, the cruelty of landlordism, the hypocritical attitude of national leaders to the peasant revolt and the Gandhian attitude against the introduction of even useful machines, yet the novelist has also a significant criticism to make on the behaviour of peasants. One such criticism is the peasants’ strict adherence to the belief in untouchability. In the feast organised by Motilal Nehru at Anand Bhavan and inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi to bring together caste Hindus and untouchables with the intention of educating the masses on untouchability, some poorest of the poor peasants from Pratapgarh like Bhupendra and Raghu, who have not eaten a tasty meal for years, instead of enjoying the palatable meal freely provided, get up on seeing that they are actually dining with untouchables:

...not even the privations of the march, through which they had eaten only roasted gram, would make Bhupendra and Raghu touch the food, while others gobbled handfuls of the delicious rice mixed with gravies of different dishes, spiced with the tastiest condiments...

(Sword, 209)

Anand is obviously angry with the poor peasants who are brainwashed to such an orthodoxy that not even the example of rich and powerful persons partaking in the feast or the power and magnetism of Gandhiji can do anything to change their attitude, leaving them incorrigible, pathetic buffoons of their own foolish belief. Through this incident, Anand
laughs at the ridiculous caste consciousness of thousands of undernourished wretched people of India.

When Lalu returns to Nandpur, after his captivity in Germany, the villagers are already agitating against landlordism. For Lalu, Nandpur is an ideal place to organize the peasant revolt. But Anand shifts the locale of the novel to Rajgarh in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh for the sheer exigencies of the plot he planned. Anand wants to present in the novel the Kisan Sabha movement and the peasant revolt with historical realism. Since, they and Pandit Nehru's visit to the evicted farmers took place not in the Punjab but in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Anand was compelled to shift the locale. It may be noted that every major incident in the novel starting from the peasants' march to Allahabad is based on historical facts as presented in Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography*.

Apart from the historical necessity, there is also another important reason which has urged the author to shift the scene of the novel from Punjab. If the hero were to stay on in his native village, Nandpur, after his elopement with the landlord's daughter, he would have been either killed or imprisoned and the course of the novel ought to have taken a direction different from the author's plan of presenting the hero as leading the peasant revolt. So one can conclude that to give credibility to the peasant
revolt as well as to the love theme Anand shifts the scene from Punjab to Uttar Pradesh.

However, the novelist’s presentation of the hero as a lover as well as a political agitator puts the character to test. Lalu is made to oscillate from his role as a political agitator to a lover and again back to the political agitator, making him an interesting figure in both the roles. His revolutionary role often reminds him of his mistake of eloping with Maya and in his extreme moments, he is sorry that his role as an agitator is a hindrance to his happiness. But he has no other alternative. He is a paid agitator, bound to accommodate himself, sacrificing his own individuality to the fantastic Count’s comic aspirations. His dependence on the Count, no doubt, has pernicious effect on his strong appetite for existentialism, so eloquently displayed in the earlier volumes of the trilogy. Meenakshi Mukherjee who gave the highest praise among the Indo-Anglian novelists to Mulk Raj Anand for his achievement in the first two volumes of the trilogy has nothing to say in praise of the third volume. Her views on The Sword and the Sickle are generally shared by most critics. It runs thus:

This is the longest volume of the three, nearly as long as the other two put together and the total effect is diffused. The canvas is large, the characters numerous, some of the characters and incidents touch upon historical reality, a strand of love and sex hitherto absent is woven unsuccessfully into the narrative, and the authenticity of
the earlier volumes is dissipated beyond recall. Lalu is no longer an evolving individual, but becomes merely a mechanism for bringing together fresh situations and new characters. After having lost grip of the lifeline which held the first two volumes together, Anand has tried to make up for the loss by mere invention and aggression... As long as Lalu was in his own element, whether in the village or in his battalion, the novels rang true; but from the moment Rampal Singh and his entourage are introduced, the story develops numerous cracks in its structure...(Sword, 241-242)

According to the writer the Count certainly liked to hear his own voice and his talks with his friends, and had often been mere exhibitions of his own cleverness. His frequent repetition of the proverb, 'The scarcity of men made my father a judge' (Sword, 116) which the Count repeats seven times in the novel and his repetition of some Punjabi proverbs produced by Uncle Kirpu in the earlier volumes of the trilogy reveal the unconvincing role the Count plays and also the weakness of the novel. The novel has many loose threads. The Sub-Inspector Thanedar's visit to the Count's place with the intention of arresting Lalu under a warrant from the Punjab police for eloping with the landlord's daughter, the story of what had happened to Lalu's friends at Nandpur and the arrest of the Count and others are simply introduced and afterwards totally ignored without any consequence. Towards the end of the novel the author seems to realise that he had not sufficiently cemented together the third
volume with the first and second volumes of the trilogy and so he introduces the hero's reminiscences of *Across the Black Waters* and *The Village* days as a saving grace. In the final chapters, the novel becomes a series of speeches and orations on the evils of landlordism, British Imperialism, Communism and Gandhism. The digressions in the novel are uncontrolled and the author appears as if he is unable to shut the mouth of some of his characters like that of the comrade Sarshar, quarrelsome and toddy-thirsty, one-eyed Sakhua and the snake devotee Raghu who preaches on Vasuki, Luxmi, Devi and Shiva.

Though Anand does not always maintain in *The Sword and the Sickle*, the great artistic quality he has displayed in the first two volumes of the trilogy, the hero’s unifying role and the author’s dramatic exposition of *homo homini lupus est* (man is a wolf to man), through the experiences of the hero first in his native village in Punjab, and later in France and finally in Uttar Pradesh give to the three volumes the quality of a triumphant trilogy.