Chapter-VI
Social Realism
Though the themes of *Big Heart* and *Death of a Hero* are apparently different, they invite thematic grouping since both of them are about men who struggle for social harmony, peace, and prosperity, and, in the process, sacrifice their lives rather than give up their struggle in the face of odds and dangers.

Anand's predilection for the machine, just hinted at in *Untouchable*, finds a stronger and more definite expression in *Big Heart*, a little powerful novel in which Anand emphasises his plea for the acceptance and mastery of the machine by man for his prosperity.

An Indian village in transition is again the locale of this novel which has Man and the Machine as its central theme. Billimaran in Amritsar is changing with the changing times not only outwardly, as indicated by the tall Clock Tower built by the British, electric bulbs, Japanese bicycles, and other such things, but its very economic pattern is fast changing under the impact of industrialism. The comparatively well-off Kaseras have managed to open a factory with huge machines in the village. As a consequence, most of the Thathiars fail to get piece-work for making utensils. Nor are they absorbed by the new factory, and so most
of the Thathiars are thrown out of their hereditary profession and rendered jobless. This means starvation for the poor copper-smiths, and the resultant frustration brings them into direct conflict with the capitalists. Ananta who has just returned from Bombay and Ahmedabad where he has had glimpses of labour movements and trade unionist activities is also refused a job and this readily makes him identify himself with his dispossessed brothers, and he makes it his life's mission to help them out of their predicament. He decides on concerted action and tries to gather all the jobless copper-smiths into a union so that they can effectively demand justice from the capitalists. But his efforts are foiled not only by men like Satyapal, an angry young student leader who preaches violent methods for the emancipation of the copper-smiths, and Mahasha Hans Raj, an anti-machine Arya Samajist, but also by his own men who are stuck up in the mire of abject fear and fatalism and suspect the intentions of Ananta, for he lives openly with a young widow. Meanwhile, driven by despair and incited by fiery speeches, Ralia, one of the unemployed group, joins Satyapal and his company in breaking open the factory gates and knocking down the machines of the plant in a fit of frenzy. When all others are helplessly witnessing the spectacle of
demoniac destruction Ralia is carrying on, Ananta tries to reason him out of this disastrous action. In the scuffle that follows, Ralia batters Ananta's head against a broken machine and kills him. In the very process of helping his brothers Ananta becomes a martyr.

Thus, we find that Big Heart is mainly an effective dramatisation of the effects of industrialisation on the traditional make-up and values of Indian rural communities. Anand suggests that the machine is a gift from the West, a gift which needs to be assimilated into the Indian soil and mastered by man, not for the exclusive benefit of any single section of society, but for the well-being of all.

The Big Heart seems to be one of the most important of Anand's novels, so far as the present inquiry is concerned, since it is most pronouncedly humanistic. Almost all the principles of Anand's humanism find suggestive vindication in this novel-his belief that pain and cruelty are exterminable social evils, his ideal of service to mankind, his trust in the here and now, his disbelief in God, his firm faith that what man needs most is pity and compassion, and more importantly here, his deep-seated
conviction that man is capable of mastering the machine for his prosperity, and his plea for the recognition of the dignity of man.

Anand's humanism believes that pain is a fundamental fact of the universe, but not an unavoidable fact. Like Anand, his hero Ananta too believes that most of the sufferings of the poor are caused by the pain and cruelty that some men take pleasure in inflicting on other less-privileged members of the society. Referring to the conditions obtaining in his own village he tells Janki:

"I tell you there is famine in this land, and there are wars raging on the edge of the farthest horizons, and yet my friends here will not stop extracting pain out of each other. Pain, pain, pain—there is such an orgy of suffering in the world today! And yet how they torture each other!"

Ananta knows that all this cruelty is unnecessary, and avoidable. Deeply pained to see the Thathiars endlessly suffering at the hands of the rich, relentless Kasears, he says:
"Why, indeed, are the dealers torturing the thathiars at all? I know full well that we suffer from the day we are born till the day we die, but this cruelty is unnecessary. A little reason could settle this difficulty between the Kasears and us."

Ananta’s realisation of pain being a constant undertone of life is so deep that he resolves to devote his entire life to the cause of its removal. In fact, he is so sensitive to the sufferings of his brothers that his very concept of happiness undergoes a thorough change and comes to mean devoted service to mankind. As Anand writes during the course of the novel:

"... the quality of happiness itself had altered, because it had become for him (Ananta) the service of others and the realization of one-self through such devotion."

Again and again he feels that his life can have any meaning at all only if it is used to serve the noble cause of making his fellow-men happy:
"And I know there will be no more happiness in this darkening world for anyone for long times to come. And I feel I ought to do something good before I die, so that the others who come after call be a little happier."  

After all, Ananta does succeed in doing this; he literally sacrifices his life for his gospel of concord and amity.

Though he is not learned enough to profess and follow any well-defined philosophy of life, Ananta is a humanist par excellence without being aware of it. With his immense capacity for happiness, he believes, like a humanist, in the here and the now, and in serving his fellow-men. This is how he voices his faith:

"All of us have the gift of this short life, for I do not think there is any hereafter; and ... if only I could give it to the service of others rather than keep it for my own selfish enjoyment, I should feel happier ..."  

Ananta again reflects Anand's humanistic disbelief in God and His benevolence. He believes that men require pity and compassion rather
than belief in God. When Janki exhorts him to have faith in God who, she
piously believes, will set all things right, Ananta bursts forth, somewhat
histrionically, in a harangue which is a mixture of rage and pain:

"O misery of the parched, sighing earth: O hissing
agony of damp dwellings on the narrow alleys that
swell like vipers in the braziers of men's hearts: ... O
Put some pity in the souls of the people! Pity, not
'faith in God.'"^6

Ananta has seen too much of misery and poverty on this troubled earth to
believe that God will ever answer the prayers of the poor. He tells Janki
sarcastically:

"God works in a mysterious way, in such a heartless
way that the ominous owl alone has so far taken pains
to answer the peasants in the night ... God seems to
have deserted the world—if ever He were there, helping
it along!"^7
Machine is Anand’s new myth. He believes it is possible to build a new world of plenty and prosperity with its help. This faith of Anand in the machine reverberates in the refrain of the song which Ananta sings often:

“This is the machine age, sons, This is the machine age. We are the men who will master it...”

Anand believes that the machine is an unalterable fact and it is unwise to discard it simply because it has come from the West. The saner thing to do would be to accept it and master it and enjoy its benefits. Ananta echoes this faith and believes that his fellowmen are capable of mastering the machine which is already in their midst. He says:

“When the thathiars begin to handle the machine, we shall soon show them ! ... We need not become slaves to the profiteers or the machine. We are men. We will make a Revolution.”

He repeats the idea more than once:

“I tell you the machine is in our midst already, there ! And we have got to decide to go and work it rather than sulk...”
But Ananta is let down by his own men, and it is significant that he meets his end by his head hit against a machine, as though to show that he does not mind even his death, if only his people were to realise the immense utility of the machine in ending their poverty.

Anand gives expression to some of his basic humanist beliefs through another important character, Purun Singh Bhagat, a scholar-poet who helps him to resolve his doubts and points out to him the right course of action, though the poet is not capable of much direct action. In fact, we feel as though Anand is himself speaking when Bhagat speaks of some of his views and convictions. For instance, the poet is unmistakably his creator's mouthpiece when he says:

"Speaking for myself, a great deal of my belief in truth arises from my love and respect for man as such."

The very essence of Anand's humanism—its inalienable faith in the dignity of man and the need for the uplift of the lost and the lowly—is contained in what the poet says further:

"I believe, in fact, if we can have any religious faith, morality or code at all today, it must arise from the
reassertion of man's dignity, reverence for his name, 
and a pure lore for man in all his strength and weakness, a limitless compassion for man, an unbounded lore especially for the poor and the down-trodden, so that those who have been left to rot On the dusty roads can be raised from their dreaded position and given the izzat which is theirs by the miracle of their birth in this world, so that the lost and the damned of every Country, religion, and creed can stand erect in the knowledge of their own self-respect, and in the enjoyment of bread, Water and free air”

Again, the poet voices his as well as Anand’s firm faith in man and brotherhood of men when he says:

“I believe that some faith is necessary, though There is no need for a belief in God, if men trust in themselves, and in the other men with whom they live together, and they are dedicated to building and creating something new by breaking down dead habits
and evil customs and shams, I think there can emerge
a new kind of brotherhood, a new sense of devotion
like the BHAKTI which our saint, Kabir preached and
practised. ¹³

Like Anand, his spokesman Bhagat believes that a revolution, an
upturning of the old order and a complete removal of the cobwebs of
dead customs alone can bring some happiness to the much-troubled
modern man:

"So here in this country only an overturning of the old
social order will bring the healing balm of lore among
mankind, only a revolution will complete the reformation
and the renaissance that is going on among us and
produce the new community with a new morality
in which, and through which, men can live
creatively." ¹⁴

Bhagat is wise and learned and his love for the downtrodden is genuine.
But he too fails, and his failure is to be attributed to the fact that he knows
perhaps too much to plunge into action. He is a dreamer and a planner,
and a scholar; and as he himself admits, action is difficult to a scholar. But he is no counterfeit 'guru'; he readily gathers his counsel and guidance to Ananta, and when Ananta dies, he leads his mistress to the right path of service. Thus he successfully gains our admiration.

It is the clash between one class and another—the capitalists and the dispossessed coppersmiths—that forms the central theme of the novel. However, caste-consciousness, which is the principal evil discussed in *Untouchable*, is shown here also as an element that persistently determines social behaviour, though it is markedly affected by money-values. This is evident from the scenes of Nikka's betrothal ceremony wherein Lalla Murli Dhar and his son Sadanand deem it detrimental to their social status to invite to the ceremony their own craft-brothers, for most of them are poor and wretched.

Man's quest for self-realization and his struggle to attain the overall theme of Anand's fiction. In fact, it is Anand's humanistic concern for man that links all his novels together of the heroes try to achieve their goal by rebelling against social stice.
But, while Bakha (in *Untouchable*) is allowed only a glimpse of emancipation from the cruel clutches of social injustice, Munoo, (in *Coolie*) and' Gangu (in *Two Leaves and a Bud*) succumb to it. Lalu also fails in a way because his activities are brought to a stand-still by his untimely incarceration. New Ananta, mature than any of these previous heroes, comes to grips with the problem, knows the method of salving it, but apparently fails because, unable to get his men to see the urgency for concerted action, gets killed. But his failure is only apparent since his death is suggestive of further action that will possibly be taken up by men like him for eventual freedom of the oppressed' brethren. Ananta's failure is, in fact, natural and understandable, for it would be incorrect to think that one man could educate the masses in a brief span of time.

The conflict between the capitalists and labourers is a theme which could have easily produced a propagandist novel. But *Big Heart* escapes this criticism not only because of Anand's intimate knowledge of the problems he writes about—he is himself a descendant of copper-smiths—but also because there is perfect naturalness in what the various characters do or say.
Anand has created in the figure of Ananta a life-like character no paragon of virtues, but a lovable, living individual with his own foibles, but with intense zeal for struggle to combine ideas and action in order to achieve prosperity and happiness for all his brethren as much as for his own self. Thus, Ananta does not seem to be an automation fabricated to mouth the author's views. There is perfect harmony between what he says and does. If he denounces pain and cruelty, he also acts to remove them from the lives of his fellow-men. His is really a ‘big heart’, believing in service to mankind and generosity to the poor and the lowly. His views on the machine and his insistence on collective action for controlling it ring perfectly true because these are lessons he has learnt at Bombay and Ahmedabad as a trade-unionist. He fails, and his failure is natural too. It would have been unrealistic if Anand had conceded Ananta a facile success, for in day-to-day life success is not an easy game, particularly when it concerned changing the thought processes of men like Ralia steeped in ignorance and superstition. Though the hero is killed, his mission lives on through Janki who dedicates her life to the cause dear to her deceased master’s heart, and also through Ananta’s own men who seem to realise the genuineness of the ‘big heart’ after it has been bled
clean of life. They would all now carry on their friend's struggle to success.

It is not possible to detect any flaw in the poet's character too. No doubt, most of his statements are identical with Anand's own philosophy. But he is saved from being untrue to life since he is clearly depicted more as a man of thought than of action, though he successfully guides Ananta and gives direction to Janki's life after her master's death.

Anand has thus once again achieved a commendable consonance between art and philosophy in *Big Heart*, as in *Untouchable*.

*Death of a Hero* bears similarity to *Big Heart* in so far as both the novels have the broad theme of man's fulfilment in devotion to the significant cause of human happiness.

Anand describes, in *Death of a Hero*, how Maqbool Sherwani, a young poet of the National Conference, hurries back from Srinagar to his home town Baramula in order to raise the morale of the people caught in the grip of terror caused by Pakistani aggression, witnesses the savage atrocities perpetrated by the invaders, finds that most of his friends have joined the aggressors, is soon himself captured and imprisoned by the
invaders, and ultimately shot dead in cold blood after a ridiculous summary trial.

Maqbool’s resemblance to Ananta in *Big Heart* is easily discernible. Both love their people genuinely, dedicate their lives for the cause of their brothers’ happiness, and die a heroic death. The only difference between them is that Maqbool is conscious of his coming death from the very beginning, whereas Ananta’s end comes suddenly and unexpectedly. But they are again similar for another important reason. Though they die with no apparent or total victory of their mission, their very death proves to be the harbinger of real triumph, an era of happiness for the people whom they so dearly love. They are both men ‘who find their happiness in the happiness of others.

*Death of a Hero* is inspired primarily by Anand’s well-settled belief in liberty and secularism. Therefore, the two important evils that form the target of his criticism in this novel are religious fanaticism and nationalism based on it. Fatalism is another. Anand insists on the need for the practice of pity and compassion, as against war, violence, and barbarity.
Anand's humanism is inspired by broad, democratic ideals, such as liberty, secularism, and religious tolerance. It is natural, therefore, that it cannot stand the evil of communal fanaticism or the ideal of nationality based on religion. Anand points out, in *Death of a Hero*, how zealous can become a force utterly detrimental to human freedom, cause unbridled violence and plunge men into desolation, misery, and grief. The horrors that the Pakistani intruders commit in Baramula are an obvious instance. It is in the name of religion, Islam, that they indulge in all manner of violence: they loot, they kill, they molest women and destroy even holy places like chapels. Ahmed Shah, one of the pro-Pakistanis, unabashedly admits that he cares more for religion—the religion of the prophet and of the holy Koran—than Kashmir, and justifies his violence saying that it is a holy war, a war of liberation. He explains his wild intentions and ambitions to Sherwani:

"In order to destroy anarchy, we will also resort to anarchy and violence. I want union with Pakistan... I believe in a Central Muslim state, which will be a counter to Communism in the north, and to the Bania Hindu Raj in the Sowh... And we can connect up with
our brethren in the middle east and revive the glory of ancient Islamic democracy in a world ridden with unbelief.\textsuperscript{15}

Obviously, it is a purely theocratic state based on violence that this fanatic wants and not any democracy. Sherwani also wants to fight, but for a different reason. His fight is directed against the Muslim invaders, the destroyers of peace and life. It is a fight against violence, and for freedom, freedom in its true sense, because he, unlike Ahmed Shah, does not want to force any government on the people of Kashmir. He makes his stand clear to Ishaq another pro-Pakistani:

"... I am for Kashmir. Not for its usurpation by force, but for its freedom to choose where it wants to go."\textsuperscript{16}

Religion loses its significance when it is devoid of tolerance and pity and reduced to mere rituals. The half a dozen tribesmen hired to commit violence in Kashmir illustrate this. Maqbool catches a glimpse of them preparing for evening prayers and feels surprised that these barbarians, who only the previous night were engaged in looting and murdering, should now be thinking of prayers, which are "merely automatic gestures,
repeated without any understanding of the Arabic words. Anand detests religiosity wherever it may be found, in Hindus or Muslims.

Anand deplores fatalism, a deep-seated malady of Indian minds. The Pakistani aggressors are ruthlessly carrying on their terrorist activities, disturbing and destroying the quiet life of Baramula and several other villages of Kashmir. But strangely enough, most of the villagers fail to think of possible ways of resistance or counter offensive. On the contrary, they docilely acquiesce in their fate and suffer all tribulations as a God-sent punishment for some misdeeds they must have committed. This is how Begum Jilani philosophises on the situation:

"Life is cruel. As a woman I have known this truth, we have to accept, because, in the eyes of Allah, we deserve the punishment. The only way, son, in which this cruelty can be offset is by obedience to destiny. What is written in one's fate will be."

Maqbool is surprised that people should attribute the devil's destruction to Allah and fate. He finds out soon that his father himself is a fatalist
hardly different from Begum Jilani in his ideas about their critical plight.

The father tells his son in a desperate tone:

"What can we do against such odds, I ask you! The salvation of our souls lies in the hands of Allah and his prophets. If we pray, perhaps Allah will hear our prayers..." 19

But Maqbool is more rational in his outlook, and so thinks differently. As Anand says, "he (Maqbool) knew that this sudden descent of murder on his land was not an act of God, but a planned brutality to cow people down to submit, and resistance to it was the only virtue." 20

He has actually seen too much of misery and destruction to believe in God or fate. He is all for resisting the aggressors and fighting violence. Even in the face of death he hopes for a new morning for Kashmir.

The novel is an eloquent plea for the necessity of the practice of pity and compassion, the paucity of which is shown to be responsible for the woes and tears of the inhabitants of Baramula. It is Maqbool's inherent sense of pity for the suffering that impels him to get back to his home town, though he knows it is in the grips of the Muslim marauders.
He knows he is probably walking straight into the jaws of death. But he is chivalrous enough to risk even death. Maqbaal’s enemies are capable of anything but compassion, and callously kill him after an absurd interrogation. Then they write the word Kafir on the dead man’s shirt with his own blood and parade the corpse. But Anand comments that Maqbool’s dead body somehow resembled Jesus on the cross, thus suggesting that Maqbool, far from being a ‘Kafir’, is a compassionate soul who died for the noble cause of his country and his men, a true martyr. Maqbool is essentially a poet, whose actions are dictated by his conscience. To him poetry and pity are synonymous. He explains his conviction in his letter to his sister:

"... here, in our country, the most splendid deeds have been done by people, not because they were great in spirit, but because they could not suffer the tyrant’s yoke, and they learnt to obey their consciences. And conscience, howsoever dim, is a great force, and is the real source of poetry. For, from the obedience to one’s conscience, to pity, is but a small step. And pity is poetry and poetry is pity."
Implied in the novel is also Anand's strong plea for the avoidance of war and establishment of international peace and amity. *Death of a Hero* is, of course, different from *Across the Black Waters*, in that whereas the latter directly presents the horrors of the battle-field and the hardships of the soldiers in action, in the former novel most of the action is reported. But, all the same, the effects and after-effects of war or rioting are always bitter and disastrous—the heavy toll of human life and impairment of peace and harmony.

*Death of a Hero* is a successful novel, particularly from the point of view of the present study. Communal hatred and violence which Anand fervently deprecates here are inherent in the historical situation around which the story is built, and so, Anand cannot be accused of concocting a plot to air his beliefs. Religious fanaticism and communal hatred are subjects which could easily make a novel partial and sentimental. But Anand saves himself from falling into these pitfalls. The passages describing the atrocities of fanatic Muslims are brief, devoid of exaggeration, and historically factual. None the less, what Anand presents is no mere history, but an imaginative re-enactment of the drama of a
courageous soul resisting brute violence through sheer love and compassion for his land and men.

Nor can Anand be arraigned of having constructed a hero for the purpose of ventilating his humanist views. Maqbool Sherwani is a historical character who, in the course of just a hundred pages or so, grows before our eyes from an ordinary man into heroic proportions, through strong will power and forbearance. He is rightly depicted as not a born hero, but a common individual with his moments of doubt and conflict, hesitation and indecision. But his convictions triumph over all odds, and prepare him for his sacrifice: he embraces the death of a hero like, say, Bhagat Singh, another popular hero of the Indian Freedom Movement.

Riemenschneider hails *Death of a Hero* as "the most satisfying artistic achievement." It is a short novel like *Untouchable* and *Big Heart*, and the very briefness of his canvas seems to aid Anand in rendering his art more perfect and satisfying (*The Road*, as already seen, is somewhat of an exception). The novel also achieves an effortless abridgment of a possible schism between propaganda and art through the
letter which the hero writes before his death. The critic just now quoted rightly points out:

"The novel ends with the letter Maqbool had written to his sister. And now Anand succeeds in expressing what he means by his idea of man. There is no break between the life and death of the main character and the message he has to communicate. Anand has used a simple device, which does not destroy the unity of tile novel. Thus the artist and the propagandist finally find a way to put forward their different approaches without interfering with each other ..."23

Big Heart and Death of a Hero are two of Anand's short novels, both significant achievements; they emphasise the need for discarding traditional orthodoxy and religious or communal chauvinism; also, they are examples of fiction in which the author's philosophy is kept subordinate to artistic canons.

Anand turns his attention, in Private Life of an Indian Prince, to the Indian princes who are proverbially known for their pomp and
pleasure, sloth and luxury, amours and intrigues, and their deep commitment to feudalistic ideas and practices, and are hence inconsistent with the humanistic principles of liberty and equality. This is perhaps the most debated of Anand's novels.

*Private Life of an Indian Prince* is the story of an eccentric Indian prince, Victor, wallowing in sloth and sex, squandering the state money, sucking the life-blood of his subjects by inflicting varieties of illegal taxes on them, and stubbornly refusing to merge his state into the Indian Union after Independence. Victor neglects his good wife and children and indulges in a series of affairs with several women. Caught in the compelling grips of an infatuating, dishonest enchantress, Ganga Dasi, he gradually loses control of his mind. Meanwhile, there is a sure growth among the harassed masses of an awareness of their denied rights, and they form a Praja Mandal and demand justice from the oppressive prince, who is eventually compelled by Sardar Patel to sign the Instrument of Accession. Even when away in London, peace of mind becomes only a phantom for Victor who cannot escape his mistress' memories. After some time he is summoned back to India, for he is found implicated in a murder. The dissolution of the prince is now complete. Unable to stand
the strain of frustration, loss of power and friends, he turns totally insane and ends up in a lunatic asylum.

Feudalism is the main target of Anand’s criticism in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. The ideals of liberty and democratic socialism are upheld, and the evil of cruelty reproved. In this novel too Anand insists on the practice of love even for the weak and the failing. Anand’s disbelief in God, trust in man and belief in the concept of ‘body-soul’ are the subsidiary tenets of Anand’s humanism that are implied in the novel.

Anand’s humanism is an inveterate adversary of feudalism, and so, it is small wonder that throughout the novel we find Anand exposing and denouncing all feudal values, and censuring princes whom he elsewhere describes as ‘barbarous remnants from India’s feudal past.’

Prince Victor is a dissolute and egotistical ruler whose sanctions lie in his own whims and fancies rather than in the good of his subjects. Rightly described as the tyrant of Sham Pur, he has no concern, whatever for his people. He subjects them to all possible kinds of oppressions and cruelties—exaction of heavy and arbitrary taxes, confiscation of property, and exaction of forced labour. Beneath all show of his pomp and
pageantry, and all the pleasures of himself as well as others in his employ, lie the sweat and misery of Sham Pur peasantry, perpetually harassed and exploited, suppressed and persecuted.

Indulging for ever in his own fancies and pleasures, the Maharaja is not even aware of the privations of the public. When they rise in revolt, unable to stand his excesses, he tries to repress them through violent mass-arrests and detentions. The letter that one of the detenues writes to Dr. Shankar describing the wretched conditions of the prison is a conclusive proof of his callous indifference to his subjects. The jail, no way better than a Nazi concentration camp, is a small black hole, a veritable hell in which the detenues slog and stink, and court colic or pneumonia or some other dreadful disease and die by degrees. But, despite all oppression, the Indian masses do ultimately succeed in wiping out the putrescent feudal oligarchy.

Committed to the principle of equality of all men as Anand’s humanism is, it believes in democratic socialism and the liberty of all men. The very cruelties that the Maharaja perpetrates on his subjects succeed in whipping up these docile peasants into an awareness of their
despicable plight and sow in their souls the seeds of discontent and revolt. They form a Praja Mandal and lead processions demanding the recognition of their fundamental rights. They are not to be cowed down for ever by the bluff and violence of Victor. Anand deftly hints at the change in the temperament of the people from obsequiousness to revolt through the character of Buta. The hunter boldly demands his rightful 'bakshish' for arranging the hunt and shooting the panthers for the king. When His Highness, furious at this impertinence, raves and slaps and kicks him, he does not bear this humiliation silently as before. He shouts back fouler abuses and declares that he would do no more 'begar' hereafter. The gathering dissatisfaction of the people at Victor's misrule unites them and they come out with their bid for justice. But Victor is so much bent upon retaining the state of Sham Pur for himself that he even tries to enter into a league with some important officers of the American Embassy in order to trap them by offering some sites in his state for American airfields. But he is no adept at statecraft and all his manoeuvres fail. He cannot escape his eventual defiance and defeat at the hands of the people who are the ultimate masters of the state.
Reproval of cruelty as a factor responsible for the misery of millions is a vital part of Anand's humanism, and it forms an under-current of the entire novel. The hysterical prince is notorious for the cruel treatment he metes out to his men. An irresponsible ruler with no thought for the welfare of the ruled, he is known for his mal-administration, high-handedness, and lust. While he fancifully thinks that his state enjoys the ideal conditions of Ram Raj, he squanders his privy purse as well as state money and forces his people into abysmal poverty and utter degradation. As Dr. Shankar says, "Not a virgin or a rupee was safe in his (Voctor's) realms." Sham Pur becomes a sizzling cauldron of distress and discontentment. This, consequently, leads to the overthrow of His Highness, the reckless autocrat.

Man, Anand believes, needs to be loved in spite of his weaknesses and shortcomings. This is one of the tenets of his humanism vindicated in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. The Maharaja is a character with hardly any points of excellence to his credit. He is a weak-willed megalomaniac, given to posturing and exhibitionism. He is the very picture of profligacy and his entire career is marked by a series of desperate and demented sexual adventures. As a ruler, he is cruel and indifferent. He is, in a way,
a murderer too, as he is involved in Bool Chand’s murder. Anand knows all this. But he brings to bear such profound sympathy for his hero that when we see him lead a very unhappy life, tormented day in and day out, now by his mistress’ memories and then by his general position, which he aptly describes as that of a rat in a hole, we feel like sympathising with him. Anand pities Victor, and attributes most of his truculence and profligacy to his precocious childhood in the zenana, wretched education in Chief’s College, and the flattery of his hangers-on. It is with the skill of an expert psychologist and the compassionate heart of a humanist that Anand tries to sketch the character of Victor. The Maharaja is viewed as an ill-adjusted personality, an unsettled, incongruous conglomeration of illassorted fantasies and facts. He is cruel because he is a weak neurotic, and cruelty is a common characteristic of a neurotic. Viewed in this light, Victor perhaps deserves some sympathy.

Anand tries, here and there, to present Ganga Dasi also in a similar light, but does not succeed much. A product of a misalliance, she grows up in a wretched environment, becomes an onanist even as a girl of fourteen, and shows all the signs of growing into a professional whore. Once she gets Victor into the orbit of her influence, she gains rapid
control over him and tries to make her future secure, for she cannot trust
her fickle Jover. However, she fails to evoke much sympathy in the hearts
of the readers-Anand cannot help, it seems-since she is, besides being no
less promiscuous than Victor, is a viper relentlessly malignant and
unremittingly wicked.

Despite Anand's formal warning to his readers (given in Author's
Note of the novel) against indentifying him with Dr. Shankar, we know
the identity is not quite incorrect, and so it is not surprising that the doctor
should hold humanistic views, particularly with reference to man and
God. This becomes evident from his remarks in a conversation with
Victor who, at one stage of his life, wants to become a sanyasi. Sensing
that Dr. Shankar does not believe in God, Victor asks him what else he
believes in. Dr. Shankar says that he believes in man rather than God:

"I think that in spite of man's bewilderment and
confusion about such questions as to what he is, how
he ought to act and where he is going, he is the final
fact of the universe. There is nothing higher and more
dignified than human existence ... If he (man) gets to
knoll' himself a little better, he will know' how' to live
and act. Because he has in him an instinctive
awareness of decency: which is more or less derived
from his idea of his own and other people's welfare:
he is both nor giver and subject to such norms. This
kind of conscience I am speaking of is the voice of our
love for ourselves and others ...

A little further, he expresses his disbelief in any supernatural fate or
transcendental reality, and his faith that man is his own sanction:

"I don't believe that there is any power transcending
man, who can decide things for him !"  

In consonance with his faith, Dr. Shankar realises, though rather late, his
responsibilities as a doctor to the common man and resolves to seek his
happiness in their service.

Anand's humanism, like Julian Huxley's, considers man as being
'body-soul', and disapproves of the idea of separate existence of body
and soul. Nor is a dichotomy between matter and spirit admissible. Anand
amplifies this belief through Dr. Shankar who tells Mr. Gibbon, a casual acquaintance:

"The bifurcation of soul and body is a vulgar heresy of conversational speech. The emphasis on the first leads to idealistic views of life and to passive acceptance, isolation, agony and death; while the emphasis on the other leads to its own excesses. The truth is that man is both body and soul and a great many other things besides. And the whole man cannot admit of the stupid dualism between 'spirit' and 'matter.'" 28

Despite the importance of Private Life of an Indian Prince as an imaginative reconstruction of a critical situation in the history of Indian politics, the total effect of the novel is one of a nightmare. In his eagerness to paint all the details of the subtle though sure and gradual disintegration of Victor, Anand indulges in lengthy descriptions of the hero's constant and inescapable obsession with Ganga Dasi and his memories of her, and this surely has an unpleasant effect on the minds of
the readers. Also, the catalogue that Anand tirelessly gives of her
numberless flirtations with all sorts of men—all meant just to drive home
to the readers that she is the very picture of promiscuity, is embarrassing
to the readers. The description of the lunch competition of eating eggs in
the presence of Americans is absurd, to say the least about it. As a whole,
the novel is a perplexing medley of sex, intrigue, and politics, and is
definitely not Anand at his best. It would probably have enriched the
quality of the novel if Anand had enlarged the description of the gradual
growth of the Praja Mandal rather than elaborating the nearly nauseating
'sexual ventures of Victor and Ganga Dasi.

One of the main reasons for the novel's failure is the ambiguity
which marks the depiction of the central character, Victor. It appears as
though Anand is not sure of his attitude to him. In other words, we do not
know whether the author ridicules and scoffs at Victor or sympathises
with him. In fact, he does both, alternately. Naturally, this makes for
unnecessary ambiguity, which curtails our full appreciation of this
enigmatic character. Dr. Iyengar aptly points out the main cause of the
novel's failure thus:
"... the book rather leaves an impression of cram, like the memory of a nightmare one has been through. Anand does not seem to know his Victor as he seems to know his Bakha, Munoo and Lalu. There is a failure of understanding, and therefore a failure of compassion as well." 29

In general, the novel seems to suffer from a congestion of speeches. Dr. Shankar's lectures to the prince on various subjects like Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, O'Casey's conception of state of chassis and on the status of woman in Europe are only a few glaring instances. The novel is not a place for long-winding lectures which actually turn out to be the novelist's beliefs and ideas. Further, Dr. Shankar has been made to impersonate the author so manifestly that his speeches on man and God, body and soul (quoted earlier), and so on, ring hopelessly hollow, concepts not lived by a character, but just aired by him. The obvious result is that Anand's art and humanist ideas, at best, co-exist, but hardly coalesce. Therefore, the novel is a failure, particularly in so far as there is no close integration between its artistic texture and the author's philosophy of humanism. Some critics claim that Private Life of
Indian Prince is one of Anand’s best novels-in fact, a work which by itself could have made Anand’s name secure in the history of the novel. But, in view of the serious limitations from which the novel seems to suffer, it appears to be too tall a claim to be valid. It is not by *Private Life of all Indian Prince* that Anand’s name is remembered or shall ever be cherished, but by others, say, *Untouchable* or *Coolie* or *Village*. 
References


2. Ibid., p. 136.

3. Ibid., p. 131.

4. Ibid., p. 136.

5. Ibid., p. 167.

6. Ibid., p. 165.

7. Ibid., p. 166.

8. Ibid., p. 11.

9. Ibid., p. 77.

10. Ibid., p. 81.

11. Ibid., p. 142.

12. Ibid., pp. 142-43.

13. Ibid., p. 149.

14. Ibid., pp. 143-44.


16. Ibid., p. 12.

17. Ibid., p. 32.

18. Ibid., p. 57.

19. Ibid., p. 63.

20. Ibid., p. 19.

21. Ibid., p. 92.

23. Ibid., p.23.


26. Ibid., p. 283.

27. Ibid., p.331.

28. Ibid., p. 331.