CHAPTER -2

Anand’s first novel *Untouchable* (1935) was written when he was only twenty seven, and yet it shows a maturity in the creative fusion of theme and structure. Mulk Raj Anand’s initial stance as a novelist was that of a champion of the underdog and his admiration of the school of realism made him better equipped to handle themes in which emotional appeal resulted from an overt sympathy for the section of the society which has been subjected to irrational denial. His fiction portrays the lower-middle and middle class life of the people, the life on the footpaths of Bombay, military life in the cantonment or the degenerated princely life.

In his portraits of the underprivileged there is not so much the luxury of upper class compassion but a deep and genuine concern for and a sense of commitment to that which has provoked readers to look upon Anand’s work.

*Untouchable* treats the theme of untouchability which is a peculiar Indian phenomenon with a long and varied history. It is found in several forms in various parts of India. Since the domain of untouchability is immediately human, it has engaged the attention of many social thinkers, reformers and creative writers. But it was Anand who took a revolutionary progressive step in writing novels on such a theme. Since then, many novels have appeared on this theme in Indo-Anglian literature as well as in regional Indian literatures.

Anand had developed sympathy for the poorest, the lowliest and the most exploited sections of humanity from his very childhood. He, therefore, went to the lowest sections of humanity to write about
because he knows them through and through rather than the rich and the exalted. The following extract reveals how Anand wrote under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.

At least so thought Bakha, a young man of eighteen, strong and able-bodied, the son of Lakha, the jamadar of all the sweepers in the town and the cantonment and officially in charge of the three rows of public latrines which lined the extremist end of the colony, by the brookside. But then he had been working in the barracks of a British regiment for some years on a sort of probation with a remote uncle and had been caught by the glamour of the ‘white man’s’ life. The Tommies had treated him as a human being and he had learnt to think of himself as superior to his fellow-outcasts.¹

From the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist Bakha suffers on account of his Professional work. He cleans the latrins of the British cantonment. He is neither satisfied with sepoys nor sahibs whose latrines he cleaned early in the morning because they always used abusive language for him. Owing to their rude behaviour, he is disgusted with his life along with his profession. In the above lines we see that Bakha is a sweeper boy. What he has to face during a day, characterises not only his own life but also the destiny of his entire community. But Bakha thinks that he looks like a Sahib and feels elated. Armed with his basket under one arm and his broom under the
other, he sets out for the town to receive some discarded food in exchange for sweeping the lanes. As he negotiates his way through the town, the gaiety and the panoramic view of the market place thrills him and he loses himself in his personal reverie of how he would arrange his English lesson with the sons of the Regimental Head clerk.

E.M. Forster has rightly thrown light on the pitiable condition of Bakha as well as his fellow sweepers:

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever born in to a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social inter course and the consolations of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others, when he touches them.

Bakha has anxious feelings of his father because he does not give him freedom. When he goes to play with his fellows, his father calls him in the middle of game and orders to sweep the dust from the courtyard of the British- barracks. He thinks that his father does not know anything. He fails to understand why his father treats him so harshly. Unlike his brother Rakha and sister Sohini who lay asleep quite late in the morning, his father would like him only to get up early in the morning for work. Bakha keeps on lying on ground awaiting his father’s call, awaiting to hear it again lying in expectation of the rude order to get up:
Get up, ohe you Bakhya, you son of a pig; came
his father’s voice, sure as a bullet to its target,
from the midst of a, broken, jarring,
interrupted snore. ‘Get up and attend to the
latrines or the sepoys will be angry.’

Oh, Bakhya! Oh, Bakhya! Oh, you scoundrel of
a sweeper’s son! Come and clear a latrine for
me! Someone shouted from without.

But his association with British soldiers has awakened him to a
consciousness of new realities. In his life of eighteen years he has been
treated like a human being only by them. Bakha stands confused and
hears all the abuses hurled at him. The latent indoctrination of
generation and centuries of subjugation convert the natural rage
smouldering in his soul into humility and he resumes his way, now
shouting “Posh, keep away, Posh, Posh, Sweeper coming Posh,
Posh, sweeper coming, Posh, Posh, sweeper coming.” The humility,
which subjugated him before the crowd, fails to stop the bleeding of his
heart. Anand observed compassion not merely a feeling of sentimental
pity, but the total understanding of a situation. Though Bakha is
composed outwardly, he treads with caution, contemplating the
disgrace he has been tasting all his life.

Bakha is highly impressed with Havildar Charat Singh, an
excellent hockey-player, who is far above the caste prejudices. He is
very generous and has good feelings. He is thus sketched:

A small, thin man, naked except for a loin-
cloth, stood outside with a small brass jug in
his left hand, a round white cotton skull-cap on
his head, a pair of wooden sandals on his feet,
and the apron of his loin-cloth lifted to his
nose."\(^6\)

Havildar Charat Singh sees the social system for Bakha and ordered:

*Why aren’t the latrines clean, you rogue of a
Bakhe! There is not one fit to go near! I have
walked all round! Do you know you are
responsible for my piles? I caught the contagion
sitting on one of those unclean latrines.\(^7\)*

Then Bakha says:

*All right, Havildar Ji, I will get one ready for
you at once’, Bakha said cautiously as he
proceeded to pick up his brush and basket from
the place where these tools decorated the front
wall of the house.\(^8\)*

Unlike the Brahmins, the kshatriyes, the two upper castes in
Hindu society, who justify their superiority by asserting that they have
earned their positions by the good deeds of multiple lives, Charat Singh
presents the compassionate feeling for Bakha:

*Charat Singh was feeling kind, though he did
not relax the grin which symbolised six
thousands years of racial and class superiority.
To express his good - will, however, he said
‘Come this afternoon, Bakhe, I shall give you a*
hockey stick.’ He knew the boy played that
game very well.9

Bakha’s day begins when his father, Lakha, shouts at him and
scolds him for being a lazy boy. Bakha rushes to clean a row of latrines
in the barracks and returns with a smile engineered by Havildar Charat
Singh’s promise that he would give him a new hockey stick in the after
noon.

Bakha, the 18 year old son of Lakha, the regiment’s sweeper, is
not really aware of deprivation until the consciousness is forced upon
him. The day, which the author chose to describe, is not an ordinary
day: it is a day when Bakha changes from an unquestioning being to a
questioning one. It is also a day when the feeling of retaliation and
revenge stir in his heart, when he becomes conscious of his approaching
adulthood and resents this little niche which society has carved for him
and wishes to force him into. Before taking the reader on Bakha’s
journey of self-discovery, Anand allows us to see him as he is young
with his opinions still unformed, a little discontented with ‘uncongenial
atmosphere of his home’ full of admiration for the Tommies; out living
entirely in the present. Bakha is used to devote long hours for his work,
which was a sort of intoxication which gave him a glowing health and
plenty of easy sleep.

The blood in Bakha’s veins tingled with the
heat as he stood before it. His dark face, round
and solid and exquisitely well defined, lit with
a queer sort of beauty. The toil of the body had
built up for him a very fine physique. It seemed
to suit him, to give a homogeneity, a wonderful
wholeness to his body, so that you could turn round and say: ‘Here is a man’. And it seemed to give him nobility, strangely in contrast with his filthy profession and with the sub-human status to which he was condemned from birth.  

Bakha, actually, lives in a state where there are two worlds; one that of the caste Hindus which subjects him to constant humiliation and treats him as a mere dirt, and the other, the world of those outside Hinduism, which is inhabited by Muslims, Christians and the soldiers who treat him as a human being.

As we know, the practice of untouchability in the Hindu system arose out of the Ideas of ceremonial purity first applied to the aboriginal Sudras in connection with the sacrificial ritual and expanded and extended to other groups because of the theoretical impurity of certain occupations. Gradually its domain expanded and became a curse for humanity.

The outcaste Bakha becomes socially segregated. He has to depend on the charity of the caste Hindus for the basic needs of life like food and water. Food is thrown to him like “a cricket ball”. The pitiable condition of untouchables is described in the following manner:

The outcasts were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the near-by brook as their use of it would
contaminate the stream. They had no well of their own because it cost at least a thousand rupees to dig a well in such a hilly town as Bulashah. Perforce they had to collect at the foot of the caste Hindus' well and depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers.\textsuperscript{12}

Considering the purifying quality of water, this is no doubt an ironical situation. Quite explicitly we witness an unmistakable hostility of society towards Bakha which forces him to realize:

\begin{quote}
I am a sweeper, sweeper untouchable!
Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word!
Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

The deep disparity and conflict between the world of the untouchables with its daily humiliations and the world of the caste Hindus with its abundance awaken the questioning self of Bakha. His bruised self-respect leads him to question whether this fear and servility is for always. It also awakens in him repulsion for his job and for his ownself. Humility gives way to the desire for revenge, horror, rage and indignation.

The basic necessities of life, like food and water, are used as powerful symbols to delineate the relationship between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. The caste Hindus uses them as weapons to humiliate the untouchables and erode their sense of self-respect.
Thus, the untouchables are deprived of some of the most essential needs of human life and through this deprivation are made abject and servile. The problems, which confront them, are economic as well as social, but the protagonist of the novel fails to find even these partial solutions. Bakha does not agree with his fellow untouchables who fail to understand that education is a means of escape from their hereditary profession. Moreover, their few and far between attempts to acquire education are opposed and hindered by the caste Hindus in a number of ways. When Bakha

"first expressed the wish to be a sahib that he would have to go to school if he wanted to be one. And he had wept and cried to be allowed to go to school. But then his father had told him that schools were meant for the babus, not for the lowly sweepers....He was a sweater's son and could never be a babu. Later still he realised that there was no school which would admit him because the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low "caste man's sons.""\(^{14}\)

Through Bakha wants to go to school and is keenly interested in education, he is hardly allowed to do so. He is undoubtedly willing to reach up the ladder and get freedom from his nasty job, but social constraints block and ultimately shatter his dreams. As we see from the beginning of the narrative till the end, his dream has to be like the Sahibs. On account of this desire, he wants to go to school. Lakha says
to Bakha that the school were meant for the Babu’s children, not for Bhangi’s children.

Gradually Bakha to realizes why his father had not sent him to school. He feels that there is no school which would admit him because the parents of his class mates would neither allow their children with him nor them to be touched by a sweeper’s son. He feels that he is a sweeper’s son and can never be a Sahib. Again he realizes his position:

The anxiety of going to school! How beautiful it felt! How nice it must be to be able to read and write! One could read the papers after having been to school. One could talk to the sahibs. One wouldn’t have to run to the scribe every time a letter came. And one wouldn’t have to pay him to have one’s letters written. He had often felt like reading Waris Shah’s *Hir and Ranjah. And he had felt a burning desire while he was in the British barracks, to speak the tish- mish, tish mish which the Tommies spoke.¹⁵

While Bakha was living in the British barracks, he wanted to speak tiss-miss. Having a desire for learning and getting education, he requests his father to permit him to join the school, but his father does not like him to attend the school; he rather forbids him to do so. Bakha thus reflects upon his pitiable lot:

These old Hindus were cruel. He was a sweeper, he knew, but he could not consciously
accept that fact. He had begun to work at the latrines at the age of six and resigned himself to the hereditary life of the craft, but he dreamed of becoming a sahib. Several times he had left the impulse to study on his own. Life at the Tommies’ barracks had fired his imagination. And he often sat in his spare time and tried to feel how it felt to read. Recently he had actually gone and bought a first primer of English. But his self-education hadn’t proceeded beyond the alphabet. Today as he stood in the sun looking at the eager little boy dragging his brother to school, a sudden impulse came on him to ask the Babu’s son to teach him.16

Owing to his bitter experiences, Bakha curses injustice and cruel system of society. He feels that those old Hindus were so cruel who made a boundary line between sweepers and high caste people. But he cannot consciously accept this injustice and inhuman behaviour of the society. Bakha does not want to give up his desire for education. Owing to this desire to get education, he requests Babu’s son, do you think it will be too much trouble for you to give me a lesson a day? “I will pay you an anna per lesson.”17

The untouchables are denied education - a denial which stupefies them and quells questioning of their status. They are also deprived of an access to the normal places of worship. Thus preventing them from a spiritual consolation and perhaps even growth. Bodily deprivation
comes to them in many forms- through lack of nutrition, through susceptibility to disease and finally through death; illness and death come to all- not by design of nature or of the friend of caste-but to the untouchable they do come in some what different ways:

From the reflection of his face in the looking glass, which he shyly noticed, Bakha’s eyes travelled to the cigarettes. He halted suddenly and facing the shopkeeper with great humility, joined his hands and begged to know where he could put a coin to pay for a packet of ‘Red-lamp. The shopkeeper pointed to a spot on the board near him. Bakha put his anna there. The betel-leaf -seller dashed some water over it from the jug with which he sprinkled the betel leaves now and again. Having thus purified it he picked up the nickel piece and threw it into the counter. Then he flung a packet of ‘Red-Lamp’ cigarettes at Bakha, as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing round the corner of his shop.¹⁸

Another chapter of untouchability is opened in Bakha’s life by shopkeepers. He reaches a betelshop to buy a packet of cigarettes. Joining his hands he wants to know where he should put the coin to pay for a packet of cigarettes. Hating sweeper, the shopkeeper indicates a spot on the earth. He puts a coin on that spot where the shopkeeper sprinkles some water from the jug. After purification of coin, he picks up the nickel coin and threw a packet of cigarettes to Bakha as a
butcher threw a piece of bones to an insistent dog. This shows his miserable condition in society. People hate him because he is untouchable boy.

The Muhammadan barber appears far from caste prejudices. He seems to believe in equality for all people. When Bakha asks for a piece of coal to light cigarettes, the barber replies:

**Bend down to it and light your cigarette, if that is what you want to do with the piece of coal.**¹⁹

In fact Bakha is highly impressed by the barber, because he helped him to light his cigarettes. The barber understands his plight and shows compassion on Bakha because he hardly had money to buy a matchbox. Gradually it becomes quite clear that untouchability is a system, which hedges in people with its rigidity and stranglehold of orthodoxy. No doubt the acceptance of their lot gives them contentment but reduces them to servile abject human beings, and a struggle against their lot destroys the. An escape from one kind of rigidity lands them into another.

Bakha is not highly impressed with anybody because nobody gave him unrestrained liberties and treated him on equal. Despite the fact that the Hindus consider the Mohamndons as outcasts, he finds them more near to him. Hating sweeper is the main problem of the novel and this is the root cause of Bakha’s sufferings. As we witness, Lalaji, touched by him on the road, loses his temper using abusive words.
Polluted, polluted, polluted shouted the Brahmin below. The crowd above him took the cue and shouted after him, waving their hands, some in fear, others in anger, but all in a terrible orgy of excitement. One of the crowds struck out an individual note. Get off the steps, you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service. You have defiled our temple! Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony. Get down, get away, you dog! 20

The same thing happens when Bakha reaches the silversmith’s alley. He shouts that the sweeper is coming for bread. But nobody cares for his requests. After sometime a Sadhu stops at the gate begging alms. A woman comes out from her house and gives some food to the Sadhu. Watching the sweeper’s son, standing at the wooden platform, she shouts at him to go away from that place. After that on reaching the top of her house, she calls Bakha while he was in the middle of his job. She flings pieces of bread on the ground from the top of her house. Having been insulted by the woman and other men of the society, Bakha complains to his father about their injustice and inhuman behaviour. In spite of his manual work, people always drop pieces of bread towards him as they do towards dogs. Hearing Bakha’s views about the society people, his father Lakha expresses a few compassionate words to Bakha who hates untouchability.

No, no, my son no’ said Lakha, ‘we can’t do that. They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient to overbalance at all that we
might say before the police. They are our masters. We must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind. 21

His father Lakha does not understand the feelings of his son much. He is too wise to encourage him for his traditional work. He tries to console him by referring to the story of Hakim Bhagwan Das. He tells him about his nasty experiences. When he was a child, he was caught by a fever and fell ill. He went to Hakim ji’s Dawakhana. On reaching there, Lakha and his wife shouted for their being ignored but nobody heard them. A babu was passing through the Dawakhana. Lakha made a merciful appeal to that Babu to convey his message to Hakimji that his child was suffering from fever since last night but the Babu was very cruel by nature. He did not listen to his appeal. With a great courage Lakha lifted the curtain of Dawakhana and fell upon the feet of Hakim ji and requested him to save his child’s life because he was unconscious since last night. With great respect Lakha requested the Hakim again and again but Hakim did not listen to him. On the contrary he began to shout at him:

Bhangi! Bhangi!" There was an uproar in the medicine house. People began to disperse hither and thither as the Hakim’s feet had become defiled. He was red and pale in turn and shouted at the highest pitch of his voice: ‘Chandal! By whose orders have you come here? And then you join hands and hold my feet and say you will become my slave forever. You have
polluted hundreds of rupees worth of medicine. Will you pay for it?^{22}

Lakha returned home without getting any medicine. But

"this is the time of kindness, be compassionate at this time, another time you can take even my life. In a little while there was a knock at the door. And what do you think? Your uncle goes out and finds the Hakim ji himself, come to grace our house. He was a good man. He felt your pulse and saved your life."^{23}

After some time some one knocked at the door of Lakha. When his uncle opened the door, he found that Hakim ji was rushing towards his side. He examined his pulse and treated him sympathetically to save his life. His dealing with Bakha was human and very sympathetic. By his treatment the Hakim saved the life of Bakha:

But among the trio they had banished all thought of distinction, except when the snobbery of caste feeling supplied the basis for putting on airs for a joke. They had eaten together, if not of things in the preparation of which water had been used, at least dry things, this being in imitation of the line drawn by the Hindus between themselves and the Mohammedans and Christians.^{24}
We must realise that it is the religion that prevents them from touching us. Despite the best efforts of his father, Bakha continued questioning the behaviour of the people of the upper caste and which was inhuman and hateful towards him. He points out how a priest of the temple tries to molest his sister; and then comes out shouting, "Polluted, Polluted;" How woman in the silver-smith's alley flings the piece of bread down at him from the top of her house. Hearing the views of Bakha, Chhota Babu tries to console him for what has happened in Bakha's life. During a Hockey match a small boy is injured. When Bakha helps and brings him to his house the boy's mother charges Bakha with both injuring her son and defiling her house by carrying him in his arms. Having a bitter experience, he does not want to remain an untouchable because of which, he always suffers.

Havildar Charat Singh a good person by heart and a cricket player helps and supports Bakha in some conditions. Quite often he brings emotional satisfaction to him. At one place he thus sympathises with him Havildar Charat Singh says to Bakha on one place:

**Drink it, Drink the tea, you work hard, It will relieve your fatigue.**

Bakha positively responds to kindness and merciful feelings of Havildar Charat Singh for himself. He tries to assume a grateful expression:

**What has happened to change my kismat (Fate) all of a sudden? He asked himself,"Such kindness from the Havildar, who is a Hindu,**
and one of the most important men about the regiment!\textsuperscript{26}

Bakha tells Charat Singh that he is very grateful and it is very kind of him to say so. Though like his fellow sufferers he does not understand many things, he resorts to his own interpretations:

The peasant didn’t understand that, nor did Bakha. But the mention of village menials by the peasant recalled to Bakha’s mind the fact that he had heard that Gandhi was very keen on uplifting the untouchables. Hadn’t it been rumoured in the outcasts’ colony, lately, that Gandhi was fasting for the sake of the bhangis and chamars? Bakha could not quite understand what fasting had to do with helping the low-caste. ‘Probably he thinks we are poor and can’t get food,’ he vaguely surmised. So he tries to show that even he doesn’t have food for days.\textsuperscript{27}

In the rally of Golbag, Bakha listened to Ghandi Ji whose views on scavenging and untouchability serve to be a ray of hope for him:

In his speech Gandhi Ji says:

I love scavenging. In my ashram an eighteen years old Brahmin lad is doing a scavenger’s work in order to teach the ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular
reader of the Gita, and faithfully says his prayers. When he conducts the prayers, his soft melodies melt one in love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he has also become a perfect sweeper. He felt that if he wanted the ashram sweeper to do his work well, he must do it himself and set an example.  

Giving an example of Uka, Gandhi Ji shows his commitment to a dignified position for such pitiables as scavengers. He says that in his Sabermati Ashram an eighteen years old Brahmin named Uka, cleaned latrines in order to show his love of scavenging. No doubt, Poet Iqbal Singh Sarsar's, suggestion of the installation of modern sanitary system, seems a possible solution of scavenging. Referring to the modern sanitary system he believes that when the sweepers change their profession, they will no longer remain untouchable. As an alternative, the poet suggests introducing the machine which cleans latrins without anyone having to handle it-the flush system. The sweeper can be free from the stigma of untouchablity and assume the dignity that is their right and regain equality as useful members of casteless and classless society.

Critically aware of his position, Bakha does not want to accept his status but he neither revolts nor encourages others to do so. In spite of all his rebellious feelings, he continues to compromise with his low caste status and dirty job. Sometimes he wants no doubt to get rid of his duty job, but his father does not want to do so. Bakha is definitely
stronger than Munoo. His fighting power is bound to decrease when all his attempts to better his lot fail. Even his surroundings contribute to compromise with his lot, but the vital question of getting on opportunity to become and behave like a Sahib remains unanswered. Though the novelist very well understands what sort of treatment these pitiable people deserve, he thus posits his observation:

All these heroes as the other men and women
... in my novels and short stories were clear to me because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth.29

At the end of the novel when Bakha walks back home at sunset and tells his father all the words of Gandhiji and what the poet has said about the machine. Again he walks in the morning time towards the town for dusting the roads. Thus, a great change happens in Bakha towards the end of the novel. He stands and reflects on the words and views of Gandhiji and the poet Iqbal Nath Sursar’s, solution to his introduction of machine for alleviating the sufferings. Tthis is definitiely a step forward and a sort of spiritual development over his life.

In spite of his dirty job and manual work, Bakha does not find any shelter in the society. His condition seems utterly hopeless and irrevocable. He is not satisfied with his dirty work, because he believes that he suffers due to his love for job. While he was in the British barracks, nobody cared for his position. There was only a Havildar Charat Singh who showed his pity for him. Having been an untouchable, he cannot catch a glimpse of God in the temple. Sometime
he wants to revolt against the cruel system of the society but he reconciles with the state of affairs and remains bound to his low caste status.

In Anand’s own words:

In *Untouchable* I meet to recreate the lives of the millions of untouchables through one single person. In only one incident the slap on the face of the hero... evoked all the human relations of the sixty-five million of people when the hero represents against the millions caste Hindus.\(^{30}\)

The upper caste people always torture him with abuses and insults. Even a small boy has complained his mother that Bakha had beaten him. Now Bakha is all alone and has bitter experiences of the society. Although he is not ordinary sweeper boy, yet he is far above his caste. He is willingly conscious of receiving education because he wants to raise his status in society. For the sake of his desire for education, he requests Babu’s son for learning a lesson everyday. He always gets a bad treatment from the upper caste people because they do not pay any attention to his miserable condition.

Thus a great change takes place in Bakha’s life at the end of the novel. In the whole novel time and again he gets bitter experiences of society. It is the system of society that the people curse and abuse him because he is a sweeper boy. As a commonman he has many good qualities, which are not in those people who curse and abuse him. Due to these qualities he is above all the characters of the novel and draws our heart-felt sympathy. Through his sufferings and longings, he emerges as a very powerful compassionate character who leaves a
lasting imprint on our head and heart. Not only dose the life of heroic social outcaste Bakha, but the entire novel makes us reflect on the predicaments of those people who from morning till late at night constantly struggle to discharge their assigned duties. Facing cumbersome social constraints, they harbour distant dreams of bettering their lot, but willingly compromise to go with the present.

II

The Road (1961) is a village tale about the split which arises in a community over attitudes to the untouchables engaged in constructing a road. The Road shows the capacity for sympathetic action among other sections of society and in a government officer. Bhikhu, the untouchable on whom the story focuses, has the good humour, the energy, the ability to work hard and the strong love for his mother which characterizes so many of Anand’s heroes.

The Road is the tale of the village of Thakur Singh, the landlord, and Sarpanch of the village. In our country there are no landlords now after Zamindari abolition. In the British-Government the landlords, the moneylenders, the capitalists and industrialists were agents of the white- sahibs. The poor and untouchables, Dalits and down- trodden were going through fire and water. They were the victims of social-injustice.

The novel shows how Bhikhu and the other untouchables are hired to build a road so that milk of Govardha Village could be easily transported to the city. The road would mean prosperity for the village
but the construction is opposed by the caste Hindus who refuse even to touch the stones quarried by the untouchables. There are two opposing sections one led by Lambardar Dhooli Singh who, though a caste Hindu himself, has aligned himself with the untouchables and the other led by sarpanch Thakur Singh- the landlord who owns most of the village and the land on which untouchables live. As the feud continues, Thakur Singh’s son, Sajnu, along with Dhooli Singh’s son, Lachman, burns down the huts of the untouchables, who now finds shelter in the Lambardar’s house. Lachman repents for his act of arson and goes to work with others to build the road. Sajnu, after a brief period of repentance, re-joins his father’s crusade against the families. Meanwhile Sajnu’s proposed engagement to Dhooli Singh’s daughter, Mala, also comes to an end. But the construction of the road continues. Finally when the road is built, Bhikhu walks out of the village

* towards Gurgaon: which was the way to Delhi town, the capital of Hindustan, where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste.*

The dignity of Bhikhu reduces his opponents into contemptible worms. He walks away as a king walks away from his kingdom, but he walks away to fresh field and pastures new, for he is sure of hand and confident in the heart.

*The Road* begins with a bitter description of Bhikhu and his mother Laxmi proceeding towards the temple. Sajnu comes on their way. He stops them, but Bhikhu does not stop and tries to proceed to the temple with his mother. His mother Laxmi says with folded hands:
Sons! I am only going to the temple to pray
Lord Krishna’, I never do magic. My worship is pure.32

But Sajnu pays no heed to Laxmi, the mother of Bhikhu, an untouchable, and thus shouts at her:

Go, witch!! You are allowed to go as far as the door of the temple. But no more. My ancestors built that shrine. Go back home.33

Here Anand expresses the narrowness of mind of high caste Hindus which is the root cause of all evils. But novelist’s eager desire is to remove the social injustice, caste and outcaste system of the society. He wants to flow the ‘stream of consciousness and the stream of compassion, the stream of kindness and the stream of mercy in every heart through his novels. That is why every main character of his novels though poor and on the edge of starvation is honest and laborious.

When Sajnu challenged Bhikhu to take her back if he valued his life, then Laxmi, the mother of Bhikhu, advises him:

God has not put pity in their hearts and they may hit you.34

But Bhikhu does not accept her advice and attacks Sajnu. This attack on an upper caste shocks and shakes the monopoly of the entire community. Despite his mother’s advice to pardon Sajnu and change his line of action, he finds no reason to do so. She thus entreats:
Son, We are at fault,’ Laxmi said, ‘join hands to them all and obey them. Don’t fight.’ And she turned to the superior ones,saying: ‘have pity on Bhikhu. He is a hot headed boy!...and we will not go to the temple if you think we will pollute it...!’

But Bhikhu fails to understand the cause of anger of the high castes and decides to complete his mission:

why should he suffer this humiliation now, Bhikhu felt, if he had never suffered it before. They had never disallowed him to walk on the village earth, even if he could never go into the temple. And why should his mother suffer because he had quarried the stone for the road. Now, he was determined to build the road whether they should help or not.

No doubt he is tortured by the hands of upper castes led Sajnu and his fellows. Thus the story moves round the young outcaste Bhikhu who is very conscious of building the road with the help of his fellows because he treats it a meaningful act of social welfare. The most important persons of the village landlord Thakur Singh, Sajnu, Lachman and others have their own axes to grind and hence hardly extend their helping hand construction of the road.

Thakur Singh is a man of false pride. His son Sajnu too hates the
Chamars. Bhikhu is a Chamar of the village. He is an open hearted person and loves all. His widowed mother, Laxmi, is a kind-hearted woman. Bhikhu is poor but upright. He seems to follow the poet-weaver-saint Kabir’s advice:

Work, work, devoted ones, for through work, all sins are washed away, by the earth and the sweat.\(^{37}\)

Even Laxmi tells her son Bhikhu that

Love them even if they hate you....through our good deeds shall we rise from our low caste and be born into higher caste.\(^{38}\)

The novelist has thus presented the social mind-set:

In the Kali-Yug, however, in this evil age, where the tenets of religion were being outraged, specially by the lower castes, one found oneself breaking the rules all the time. Unfortunately, the neglect of the precautions would not go without punishment, while the untouchables were accursed anyhow. The evil ones, Bhikhu and his cousins, knew of his meticulous regard for Dharma.\(^{39}\)

It is undoubtedly a very pitiable condition where the upper castes do not even touch stones because they believe that stones are contaminated by the touch of outcastes. In spite of his manual work and
the construction of the road, Sajnu and his fellows always torture Bhikhu. But Lambardar Dhooli Singh is ready to help Bhikhu at the cost of the alienation from his caste and even from his family.

Lambardar Dhooli Singh is a man of good nature. He gives seven hands width of land from his own lands for the road construction. When Sajnu and his son Lachman set fire on Bhikhu’s hut, he comes forward to help Bhikhu and others:

Come, come all my sons, to my field. We will all live there. And work...Come and fetch what we have in my home. And we will sleep on straw for the night.... And, tomorrow, I will go to Gurgaon and get enough money from the Sarkar for building new huts.40

Thus Lambardar Dhooli Singh though an upper caste man is virtually the lanyard of the liberation of the novel. It is he who gave a strong support to Bhikhu when Sajnu and his comrades attack him for the simple fault of trying to get entry to the temple with his mother. Again the leader of the outcastes is deeply moved when he sees the brutal burning huts of untouchables and their sufferings to give them shelter and clothes in his house.

Lambardar Dhooli Singh is a reformer figure. He teaches Bhikhu along with other untouchables the power of the hands with hammer, the value of the labour and gives physical and moral leadership in completing the construction of the road.

The upper class Hindus never like the handling and breaking of stones for road making by the untouchables. Bhikhu is fully aware that
the caste Hindus would not let them start the work of breaking stones. He is firm in his determination and understands well that through good work, all sins are washed away. Bhikhu is the leader of the untouchables and is a man of strong ideas. He hates none. He respects both Thakur Singh, the landlord and Dhooli Singh, the Lambardar. He follows with heart the teachings of his mother, Laxmi, who is an open-hearted widow. She is completely against the feelings of revenge. Pandit Suraj Mani, the priest of the village temple, is a man of hypocrisy. He has no sympathy with Bhikhu. Even Bhikhu always suspects him. He misguides all who comes in his touch in the name of religion. He never says that God has created all and all are equal. Anand portrays the inner feelings of Pandit Suraj Mani, who misguided Thakur Singh also against untouchables. Pandit Suraj Mani thus ventilates his feelings about pitiable and pathetic lives of the outcastes:

Those people are condemned by their Karma to work out their doom among the flies and the dust of their huts. The reek of their thatched roofs, and the stifling heat, is punishment enough for them.⁴¹

They are treated to be so polluting that their accidental touch to the bodies of the high caste people invites thrashings and abuses for the offence. Social exploitation exists in direct proportion to religious conservatism. As is clear from the following extract:

Ma, they have never allowed us to enter the temple, 'The boy said, 'and they will not let you do so today.'⁴²
Owing to their conservatism, the caste Hindus do not touch even the stones, touched by the untouchables which the following quote reveals:

And now they won't touch the stones because we untouchables fell them. We have earned wages! 43

Bhikhu and his companions are enthusiastic to build the road because it is essential for the well being of the villagers. By making the road they can serve the poor and the rich alike. Bhikhu has strong love for Lambardar Dhooli Singh, because he is ready to sacrifice his own family for the sake of untouchables whom he treats as his own sons. He is even prepared to be an outcaste out of his love for untouchables:

And I shall be an outcaste for ever...so the house is yours...come, my sons and daughters. 44

As Thakur Singh says to Dhooli Singh’s son:

To be sure, we will declare him outcaste anyhow....And there is only one thing leave him and come over to us with your mother and Mala. 45

The Hindus belonging to the superior caste hate the outcastes because of the filthy profession allotted to them by these hypocrite-caste Hindus themselves Saros Cowasjee reinforces this fact when he says:
Hindu religion is responsible for this fiendish segregation of humanity; the waste produces of the body are unclean, therefore, those who carry them are dirty and obnoxious.46

In The Road, the priest and other caste Hindus hate the untouchables, such as sweepers, Chamars and the rest of the community. They time and again cite the philosophy of Karma, fate and Varnashram as a cover for their hypocritical behaviours and to make then untouchables contented with their lot and to keep them in lower position.

Once in Thakur Singh’s house Bhikhu faces an awkward humiliating situation. It being a hot day, Bhikhu is thirsty and wants to drink water. Bhagwanti, the wife of Thakur Singh and Rukmani, the daughter of Thakur Singh, give him water in a brass cup. The following extract thus records the scene:

Rukmani moved towards the pitchers in the shade of the indoor kitchen and, filling a brass cup of water, brought it to the hall. Bhikhu had seldom dared to look at the face of the landlord’s daughter in recent months. He took the brass cup, unaware of what he was accepting, and gazed at her now, while she became conscious of him.47

As Bhikhu took the brass-cup in his hand, Sajnu, the son of Sarpanch, all of a sudden comes. Seeing the brass cup of water in his
hand, Sajnu starts abusing him and kicking him. Though he is physically stronger that Sajnu, he remains silent and goes away. The scene is thus presented:

Sajnu rushed up and kicked the brass cup out of Bhikhu’s hand, sending it flying into the hall, the water covering the face of the untouchable like the sweat of hard labour, How can you touch the brass cup and soil it for ever! Have you no thought of your status?48

Knowing no other way, he controls his anger. Instead of going to his home, he goes towards the road he had helped to build and takes the direction towards Gurgaon which was the way to Delhi where there would be no caste?

Instinctively he went in the direction of the road he had helped to build. And in his soul he took the direction, out of the village, towards Gurgaon, which was the way to Delhi town, capital of Hindustan, where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste. 49

This dramatization of the decadent feudal ethics also shows fear and anxieties of the upper caste, whose psychic condition is best expressed in the following words of Landlord Thakur Singh to Dhooli Singh.
And these Chamars worked for us! And now these chamar boys are earning wages and walking on the heart of our whole caste brotherhood...do you realise that you will have to marry your daughter to a chamar and your son to a sweeper woman if you persist in this course. 50

However, from the beginning to the end of the novel Bhikhu undergoes countless sufferings caused by the upper caste people. He always gets bad treatment from Sajnu and his comrades. We are quite often left with no options but to sympathize with these poor of suppressed community labelled as untouchables. Off and on, no doubt, we witness rays of hope in the form of persons like Dhooli Singh who give them moral and material support for which they invite the rancour of their own high caste community.

Through Bhikhu a poor and outcaste boy Anand lashes at many social evils. The ills of traditionbound high caste Hindu society are exposed to our view with an expectation to remedy them. Until it is done in the right earnest, the social welfare and progress of the village is not possible at all.

The novel holds a hope which did not quite blossom out in it. And still the way the symbol of the road is developed it fulfils a meaning in the consummation of the narrative. Intricate propositional relations provide irony by the actual mathematics of action. The vicissitudes of conditions are entirely the creation of characters. It is a short story, but still Anand has successfully conveyed the message. It
undoubtedly of serves as a symbol for liberation. The citation of Christ calling himself the ‘Path’ and the verse from Tagore quoted in the beginning of the book very well thus confirm the novelist’s humanistic realistic approach:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{He will pass by this road,} \\
\text{And I wait for him,} \\
\text{Many thorns prick his feet,} \\
\text{He is covered with dust,} \\
\text{And I die of shame,} \\
\text{Morn and Eve...}^{51}
\end{align*}
\]

III

The extra ordinary success of Anand’s novel \textit{The Coolie} (1936) was preceded by an equally interesting story of its publication and composition. As his autobiographical novels show, Anand developed sympathy for the poorest, lowest and the most exploited sections of humanity from his very childhood. He, therefore, went to the lowest range of humanity to write about because he knew them through and through rather than the rich and the exalted. He had written this novel when he was in England but it was rewritten under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.

\textbf{In Coolie} Anand allows his artist to intrude into his narrative. Despite being a realistic portrayal of life, it presents a more comprehensive vision of life. The fact of abject exploitation which is the theme of \textit{Coolie} is thus described by the author in the words of Munoo:
He had heard of how the landlord had seized his father's five acres land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and the harvest bad. And he knew how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless beggar, to support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms.\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Coolie} is Mulk Raj Anand's most representative work. For one thing, it explores multiple themes through the focus on the hero in his picaresque adventures. One finds in it most of the issues Anand raises in the rest of his novels. The creative urge in Mulk Raj Anand coincides in the novel with the stray feeling of compassion for the poor and downtrodden of India, Saros Cowasji has rightly observed:

\textit{Coolie} needs to be examined in some detail, not only because it received ecstatic praise from reviewers and Anand's literary friends and firmly established his position as one of the most interesting revolutionary writers of wartime, but also because it is his most representative work and has within it the germs of many of his strengths and weaknesses as a novelist.\textsuperscript{53}
**Coolie** is a narrative of life and death of a poor protagonist arranged over a period of two years. It has for its hero a young boy, Munoo, who hails from the Kangra hills. He is a fourteen year old orphan. He lived with his aunt, Gujari, who was very cruel to him. Impelled by a desire to move out of the village and see the world and earn an independent livelihood, he sets out with his cruel uncle, a peon of the Imperial Bank at Shamnagar, to work as a domestic servant in the house of Babu Nathu Ram, the sub-Accountant of the same Bank. His first encounter with reality gives a big jolt to his dreams. The life at Babu Nathu Ram’s house virtually becomes a hell for the young boy. With no sympathy from his uncle, Munoo is no longer able to bear the constant villainy of his mistress, her beatings and abuses.

One day he runs away from Shamnagar. He boards a train with no definite place to go to. In the train, he comes across Prabha, a godly soul, who was himself a coolie, but is now the owner of a pickle factory at Daulatpur, in partnership with Ganpat. Thus, Munoo becomes a labourer in Prabha Dayal’s. At Daulatpur he is treated affectionately by Prabha as well as by his wife. But too soon life for Munoo again becomes miserable because of Ganpat’s wicked behaviour. Once again Munoo is in the streets shelterless because Prabha is made insolvent by Ganpat’s forgery and treachery. For some time Munoo works as a coolie in a local Bazar and also at the railway station. Even there he faces desperate competition from other coolies for a chance to work as a beast of burden. From this struggle he is freed by a kind elephant driver of a circus with whose help Munoo reaches Bombay. Accidentally Munoo meets Hari a Bombay Textile Mill operative. He
attaches himself to the family of Hari and becomes a factory hand in the Cotton Mill owned by an English Baronet. He sweats to earn his bread in appalling working conditions, living in leaky straw hut. The Mill is virtually exploitation incarnate. Since the mill workers hardly get enough to survive, the declaration that the mill would go on a short time compels them to go on a strike. Instead of bringing relief and redressal to their grievances, many more problems crop up. The turmoil and tension, chaos and confusions give a way to communalism in the shape of Hindu-Muslim riot. As Hindus and Muslims run wild in the streets with stricks and knives, Munoo is caught in this drama of opposing forces and struck down. While walking down to the Mill next morning, he is knocked down by a speeding car of Mrs. Mainwaring, an Anglo-Indian Lady, who lives away from her husband at Simla. She takes him with her to Simla to employ as her servant-cum-Rickshaw puller. Here Munoo ultimately dies of tuberculosis at the age of sixteen. He dies watching the peaceful hills and valleys he had once abandoned. He who had come away from the hills to work and see the world goes back to the hills to embrace pre-mature death caused by overwork and exhaustion.

The sociological concern in Untouchable (1935) is limited to caste alone. But Coolie (1936) is marked by thematic diffusion. It tackles issues above caste and creed. Munoo contemplates his position:

I am a kshatriya and I am a poor, and Verma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the sahib logs, and all the servants look alike: there
must only be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor.\textsuperscript{54}

This shows his sufferings as a servant in the house of Babu Nathu Ram. According to a noted critic:

\textbf{Munoo is conceived as a romantic hero, and as such there is no incongruity in the delineation which is basic to the ironic portrayal. He is first and last, a victim rather than a rebel and therefore is capable of rising to a tragic stature.\textsuperscript{55}}

The above passage provides a clue to understand the thematic dimensions of the novel because poverty is the root-cause of Munoo’s tragedy. The novel opens on a dramatic note - in the form of an expedition which contains the seeds of the hero’s tragedy. Even before Munoo becomes aware of poverty exploitation and class-conflict, his tragedy started. As we see,

he had heard of how the landlord had seized his father’s five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and the harvests bad. And he knew how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless beggar, to support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms. The sight of his mother grinding grain between the scarred surfaces of mill-stones which she gyrated round
and round, round and round, by the wooden handle, now with her right hand, now with her left, day and night, had become indelibly imprinted on his mind. Also, the sight of her as she had lain dead on the ground with a horrible yet sad, set expression on her face, had sunk into his subconscious with all its weight of tragic dignity and utter resignation.⁵⁶

Munoo’s life in his village was not a bed of roses. He was ill treated by his aunt and hence he hoped to realise dreams in the city. There is a deliberate purpose in showing Munoo’s life in his village as harsh. Munoo, an orphan, is forced to run from pillar to post in order to eke out some means of his livelihood. Since his parents passed away in childhood, he depends upon aunt and uncle Daya Ram, a peon at Imperial bank at Shamnagar. The love of money has so powerfully acted upon the social consciousness of his uncle and aunt that Munoo is with-drawn from the school at the tender age of fourteen and coerced into becoming an earning hand. He can’t help going to work as a servant because his uncle and aunt are insistent that he should make a living. His aunt “wants him to begin earning money.”⁵⁷ And his uncle feels that he is “grown up and must fend of himself.”⁵⁸

In spite of his being maltreated by his aunt, Munoo is most reluctant to leave his ancestral home and its environs. If he went to the town, he would go when he had completed his education. But the dreams built up in his mind about career break up like castle of glass and he is made over to the house of Babu Nathu Ram. The family of
Nathu Ram is city bred and educated. Nathu Ram and his wife consider Munoo inferior and maltreat him because he is village bred rustic who is dependent upon them for his subsistence. Munoo sees contrast between his pitiable existence at Shamnagar with his happy childhood at his native village. He is mercilessly beaten up, abused and is kept under-fed. He is not offered food in utensils because he is considered too low in status to be allowed to eat in utensils.

Greed for money of his own uncle adds to Munoo’s plight at Shamnagar. Daya Ram, Munoo’s uncle, appropriates his pay of five rupees every month. He considers his nephew as a money earning commodity, without bothering whether he gets enough food to keep his body and soul together in the house of his employer nor does he himself provide him food and clothings. However, when Munoo requests him for some money out of his pay to get some food at cookshop in the market, Daya Ram beats him up. There upon, in order to arouse some sympathy and pity in his uncle about his plight, Munoo narrates to him how Bibi Uttam Kaur ill-treats him. Munoo’s own words thus convey his plight:

She wouldn’t have allowed me to come at all.
You don’t know how she beats me. You wouldn’t beat me if you knew. They had turnips today and I don’t like turnips. I like rice and dal.  

But his uncle does not show any sympathy for his pitiable condition. Such a cruel and inhuman behaviour of the masters for their servants is not uncommon. Many servants face such type of problems. In spite of their manual work, they donot get proper food and salary.
But his uncle’s turning a deaf ear to his touching story for his personal gains is quite painful.

Munoo’s sobbings and wailings fail to move him to pity as Daya Ram’s greed for money has taken him away from all feelings of human compassion and pity. The point is convincingly emphasized by the novelist.

The pitiful cries did not seem to have any effect on Daya Ram, however. He had been hardened into cruelty by his love of money. By the fear of poverty and by the sense of inferiority that his job as a peon in the bank gave him.  

The insults and sufferings which Munoo receives at the hands of his employers condition his social consciousness. Munoo was not at all happy. In the house of his employer he comes in direct contact with existential reality. He gains in experiences about conditions prevalent in a class divided society at Sharnagar. The class consciousness is the product of his present economic plight. In Munoo’s words:

Money is, indeed, every thing’, Munoo thought. And his mind dwelt for the first time on the difference between himself, the poor boy, and his masters, the rich people, between all the poor people in his village and Jay Singh’s father, the landlord. He saw the shrunken, shrivelled-up skeleton of old Gangu, the seventy-years-old grandfather of his school friend, little Bishan, who worked as a labourer on the fields of
anyone who could employ him. He recalled the lean face of Bishambar’s mother, who went charring in the house of the landlord. He remembered, vaguely, the hollow eyes of his own father looking down at him tenderly before he ‘fell asleep for the last time.’ He could, even now, feel the warmth of his mother’s lap as he had lain in it while she moved the mill- stone round and round, round and round till she had languished and expired. How empty he felt without that warmth now, as if that warmth were necessary clothing for his body. But there were so many people, and only one or two rich people in his village. He wondered whether all those poor people would die like his parents and leave a gap in his belly as the death of his father and mother had done. In the town, of course, there seemed many more rich people than poor people. But then, it occurred to him, there were hundreds of villages for one town, and if there were as many poor people in all the villages as there were in his, surely there were many more poor people in the world than rich.  

Munoo continues to analyse how class is taking the place of caste:

Whether there were more rich or more poor people, however, there seemed to be only two
kinds of people in the world. Caste did not matter.\textsuperscript{62}

Chhota Babu and Sheila are always kind and human towards Munoo. But Bibi Uttam Kaur always tortures and abuses him for his minor mistakes:

Vay, you eater of your masters! Vay, you shameless brute! You pig! You dog! The storm burst on his head as, hearing no response to her call, She appeared at the door, saw him, and unable to beat the sight, withdrew. Vay, you shameless, shameless, vulgar, stupid hillboy! May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you die! What have you done! Why didn’t you ask me where to go? May you fade away! May you burn! We didn’t know we were taking on an animal in our employ, an utter brute, a savage.\textsuperscript{63}

Chhota Babu, alias Dr. Prem Chand, the younger brother of Babu Nathu Ram is merciful to Munoo. He ignores many mistakes of Munoo and pardons him. He is very kindhearted man, because he is a doctor. To the novelist doctors have many tender, compassionate, merciful feelings for human beings,

One afternoon Sheila and her friends come from school and begin to dance in a room. When Munoo comes into the room, Sheila
asks him to go out of the room. She pulls his ears, which he does not mind:

The Babu's elder daughter, Sheila, walked up, a slim child of ten, with golden hair, an ivory complexion and light brown eyes which seemed to laugh as they twinkled with mischievous gaiety at this ridiculous incident.  

Munoo tries to amuse his master's little daughter by dancing and singing and jumping like a monkey. But the mistress of the house interferes and ruthlessly destroys his happiness. She makes him aware of the fact that he cannot mix up in her family. There is a sharp line between a coolie and family of the Bank clerk.

Sheila too likes Munoo and calls him for playing, dancing, singing and jumping with her. Sheila, the daughter of Nathu Ram, has compassionate feelings for Munoo. But soon Munoo leaves Nathu Ram's house as a domestic servant and finds himself at the railway station compound. He enters a railway compartment where he feels relieved a little as the train moves and cool breeze comes in. Though Munoo does not know where he is going, he feels a little relieved expecting something better to escape in.

In the train, Munoo hides himself under the wooden bench and soon falls asleep. A little later a kind passenger Prabha Dayal sees him and asks him, what he is doing under the berth, Munoo comes out and tells every thing that happened to him. Prabha Dayal is childless. He feels that he should take this orphan boy up and look after him as his
own child. He, then, does the same. Alighting from the train, Seth Prabha Dayal takes Munoo with him to his home where his wife Parbati greets Munoo motherly. She gives him tasty food. It is the most sumptuous meal he has taken since the feast on the death anniversary of his father and mother.

Parbati, the wife of Prabha Dayal, considers adopting him as their son. Munoo feels well on arrival and the author satirically remarks,

\[
\text{It was the most sumptuous meal he had eaten since the feast on the death anniversary of his mother and father, which his aunt had given three months before he left the hills.}^{65}
\]

Seth Prabha Dayal has a pickle- factory in Daulatpur; it is jointly owned by him with Ganpat, his partner. Although Prabha Dayal is kind and considerate, Ganpat is just the contrary. Ganpat ill-treats Munoo and other workers in the factory. The working state of Munoo is thus described which is quite touching:

\[
\text{It was a dark, evil life. He rose early at dawn before he had his full sleep out, having gone to bed long after midnight. He descended to work in the factory, tired, heavy- lidded, hot and limp, as if all the strength had gone out of his body and left him a spineless ghost of his former self.}^{66}
\]

Actually Munoo finds Nathu Ram’s counterpart in the goat faced Ganpat, a partner in the pickle factory with Prabha Dayal. He represents
the class of heartless, selfish, bourgeoisie. Once, Ganpat goes to collect dues from businessmen in different towns. Although he collects more than eight hundred rupees, he does not give any money to Prabha Dayal. As a result of it, Prabha Dayal becomes bankrupt. Soon, the creditors begin to assemble at Prabha Dayal’s to demand their money, which he is not able to pay them. Hence he is arrested for non-payment of dues by the police inspector Ram Nath. After returning from the police station, Prabha Dayal decides to leave the place and go to his village with his wife. When they reach the railway station, Prabha Dayal gives Munoo a silver coin of a rupee. At the time of departure, Prabha Dayal and Parbati weep bitterly. It is virtually a heart touching departure.

After losing job, Munoo tries but is unable to work in the grain market as a coolie. Because there is a cutthroat competition among the coolies for securing a job worth one paisa. Anand highlights in the fact that savage fight among the coolies must occur if the workers remain individual workers. But somehow an elephant driver in a circus comes to his rescue:

You stay here and help us to pack. I shall get you wages for the coolie work you do. And at night I shall smuggle you somewhere into the train.67

With his help, Munoo is able to reach Bombay where he begins a new chapter of his life. The elephant driver provides Munoo some food at every major station. Munoo thanks to the help of the elephant- driver.
The struggle for survival among the poor is prevalent everywhere. In Bombay too, a coolie employed in a factory is ruthlessly exploited by a moneylender, a landlord, a contractor and a shopkeeper. In Bombay, Munoo saves a little girl from an accident; this little girl is the daughter of Harihar, a mill-worker in Bombay, who is returning to his work after an absence of four months. Hari had gone to his native village to bring his wife and children. Thus he meets Hari, an old worker of the Bombay Cotton Mill. Harihar invites Munoo to work with him, if they are lucky to get work in the Mill. Harihar promises him to introduce to Mistrisahib at the Mill.

Munoo no doubt holds Harihar in high esteem. He is just waiting with him for the events to take a right turn because having no work, he is wandering aimlessly. With many requests, Harihar gets success in providing Munoo a job in the Mill.

It is Sir George White Cotton Mill. Its supervisor is Chimta Sahib, whose real name is Jimmie Thomas. He has employed the whole family. While Munoo and Hari are to be given twenty-five rupees each, Laxmi, the wife of Hari, is to be paid rupees five and the two children only rupees two and a half each. Chimta Sahib gives Hari a hut near the factory for rupees three per month. Infact in the White Cotton Mill, the condition of the labourers is very miserable. In spite of tiring manual work, they do not get proper wages.

Anand has made the point that the bourgeoisie under one-pretext or the other snatch away from a coolie even the low wages that he receives after putting in back breaking labour. They thus force out life blood from shrivelled and dry bones of labourers and grow in unprecedented affluence living in palatial bungalows and working class
sinking down in grovelling poverty. Anand is aware of the contrasts which social life under the bourgeoisie system of production presents—the oppressors standing at the top and the oppressed in the bottom. The huts of the poor are shown realistically.

The mud floor was at a level lower than the pathway outside, overgrown with grass which was nourished by the inflow of rain water. The cottage boasted not a window nor a chimney to let in the air and light and to eject the smoke. But then, had it not the advantage of a sound sackcloth curtain at its door, when most of the huts in the neighbourhood had torn and tattered jute bags, or broken cane chicks, old rags, bent tins and washing and what not, to guard them against the world.  

One morning, when all workers reach the Mill as usual, Chimta Sahib declares that Ratan the worker friend of Munoo is dismissed. Instead of accepting his dismissal, Ratan at once makes up his mind to teach the supervisor a lesson. He goes to the office of the all India Trade Union Federation. Where he meets Sauda, a trade union leader. He thus describes the world of the two—the haves and the have nots:

There are only two kinds of people in the world. The rich and the poor. Sauda continued, and between the two there is no connection. The rich and the powerful, the magnificent and the glorious. Whose opulence is built on robbery and theft and open warfare, are honoured and
admired by the whole world and by them. You, the poor and the humble, you, the meek and the gentle, wretches, and broken in body and soul. You are respected by no one, and you don't respect yourselves.69

Not only here but in all his novels, Anand expresses his protest against man’s inhumanity to man. It is found in various forms. Here in the Bombay chapter, it takes the shape of the virus of rank communalism. It is not presented as a separate feature of the society but as a part of social malaise. The panoramic scope affords Anand an opportunity to present as a victim of this social disease. This episode is further used to continue Munoo’s odyssey. Further, Bombay for Munoo had once been a dream-city and it is in conformity of the general pattern also that after having known the reality of Bombay, Munoo should be shown going away.

Soon after the Hindu-Muslim riot in Bombay, Munoo is knocked down by the car of an Anglo-Indian lady. This is the car of Mrs. Mainwaring. Her daughter, Circe Mainwaring, asks as to what they should do now. Her driver, who is a Muslim, is able to recognise that Munoo is a Hindu and wants him to leave where he lay. He does not care whether the boy lives or dies. But Mrs. Mainwaring orders the driver to pick the boy up and put in the car.

Now Maunoo’s life takes a new turn. Mrs. Mainwaring, an Anglo-Indian lady, decides to take him to Simla as she needs a home servant. The concluding portion of the novel has been criticized by the
great and renounced critics like Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah, Prof. M.K. Naik, and Jack Lindsay. They consider it the weakest portion of the novel. But Saros Cowasji does not agree with them. He says:

_It was right of Anand to retrieve his hero from the horrors of Bombay and to allow him to regain some of his identity before he catches his lungs out pulling rickshaw for his mistress. It was the correct finale: The boy who had come from the hills to work and see the world goes back to the hills._\(^70\)

It is largely true that after a Zolaesque portrayal of the socio-economic ravages in the Indian landscape, the Simla episode comes off as a whimper but there is powerful irony in showing Munoo in Simla.

Mrs. Mainwaring is a kind hearted and generous lady who goes to see him with the gifts of fruit and flowers during the first few days. She even nurses him, buoying up the dejected spirit of the boy with such sentiments as:

_Carry out my instructions every morning and you will become well._\(^71\)

She was really very kind, as to a point she did suffer qualms of conscience about having ill- used the _'Poor dear'_ , but she was not allowed to be kind and good. And she had to efface herself completely and suffer in silence. Mrs. Mainwaring’s treatment of Munoo is only a link in the longer chain of exploitation, which culminates in the tragic denial of life itself to him. His tragic death is a result of his exploitation
by society. It is naturally the high point of dehumanisation. *Coolie* is therefore a typical novel of the oppressive trend in modern society.

After reaching Simla, he enters a new phase of life as a rickshaw-puller. Indeed, he finds it very hard, pulling the rickshaw on the first day. Mohan, a young rickshaw puller, tells him that rickshaw-pulling is an art which he himself learns. Owing to malnutrition and feeble body, he is easily tired by pulling rickshaw. In Bombay he had thought of mastering art working on the machine. Like Prabha Dayal, Mohan shows sympathy for his condition, but he is helpless beyond extending his pieces of advice.

Munoo’s stay in Simla as a rickshaw puller of an Anglo-Indian lady fulfills all his secret aspiration. There no doubt he receives care and attention than ever before. He is in constant touch with the glamour world of the European lady.

In *Coolie* Mulk Raj Anand presents a deeply moving picture of the proletarian as a helpless victim of the social milieu. The title indicates his social place and every episode highlights his misery. The thematic concerns clearly perceptible are poverty, exploitation, social and economic parasitism and moral corruption. The novelist’s greatness and artistic virtuosity lies in his universalising the tragedy of Munoo, making him thereby ‘a prototypical character with universal dimensions.’ Munoo’s story, therefore, justifies the opinion of Peter Coventry:

The child could serve as the symbol of the artist’s dissatisfaction with the society, which
was in process of such harsh development about him. In a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the machine, the child could become the symbol of imagination and sensibility, a symbol of nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturising humanity. Through the child could be expressed the artist’s awareness of human innocence against the cumulative pressures of social experience.\textsuperscript{72}

The main cause of Munoo’s sufferings, which make our heart melt, is the lack of decision and innocence. Due to this characteristic, he cannot stay at one place. Despite having been a home servant and daily wage earner, Munoo has many good qualities. Although many people curse and abuse him, yet he does not show any ill feelings towards them. This shows the greatness of his character.

The novel closes at the moment of his death. He is another discarded victim of the social system into which he has tried to carve himself a place. Anand believes that that will never be and allow people of his kind to live as dignified human beings rather than as its slaves.

Nobody shows sympathy for his miserable condition. He is rather tortured and abused like a slave dumb animal. Moreover, Bibi Uttam Kaur, Babu Nathu Ram, his uncle Daya Ram, Ganpat should show a human behaviour towards Munoo because he is not only a poor but also an orphan. The treatment meted out to him by them results in
unbearable sufferings, which make our heart bleed. When the novel begins, he is only fourteen year old boy and at the end of the novel he is sixteen year old. Within a short span of two years, he undergoes innumerable sufferings and ultimately says good bye to this world. No doubt some characters such as Dr. Prem Chand or Chhota Babu, Sheila, the Daughter of Nathu Ram, Prabha Dayal, the owner of pickle-factory in Daulatpur, the driver of elephant-in a Bombay circus, Harihar-the worker of Cotton-Mill, and Mrs. Mainwaring have some compassionate feelings for Munoo and bring a little silver lining in the surrounding darkness of life, but it is not enough. The novel is definitely an appreciable artistic creation, which draws the attention of the readers towards a big social problem.

◆

IV

Two Leaves And A Bud (1937) is the third novel of Anand's literary corpus. Unlike Coolie (1936), which is an epic novel, Two Leaves And A Bud is a dramatic novel. It deals with the sufferings and miseries of the workers on the Tea-Plantation of Assam who have to pluck two leaves and a bud day in and day out. In Two Leaves And A Bud also the thematic centrality noted in Coolie is equally noticeable. It is this coherence which gives to Anand’s fiction its structural tautness. As M.K. Naik has noted:

Two Leaves And A Bud presents the theme of the exploitation..., since in the earlier novel, the scene shifts from one stratum of society to another, while in the later work, the entire
tragedy is unfolded against the background of the tea-plantation which is microcosm in itself, a world in which British officials and their Indian subordinates on the one hand and the indentured coolies the other are ranged in two separate camps of the exploiters and the exploited.\textsuperscript{73}

It will, therefore, be seen that in this novel also the tension is maintained through contrast. The two worlds-one of indentured labourers and the other of the British rulers are alternated, with De-La-Havre's humanism acting as link. Most of the time, however, the two worlds do not meet proving the age-old Kipling thesis about East and West.

\textit{Two Leaves And A Bud} (1937) presents a ghastly picture of the pathetic life of peasant-turned labourers working in Assam Tea-Estates owned by the Britishers. It is thematically a sequel to \textit{Coolie} in that it takes up where \textit{Coolie} (1936) ends.

There seems to be an obvious thematic nexus between \textit{Coolie} and \textit{Two Leaves And A Bud}...that is, in both the novels, the protagonist represents the predicament of the proletariat as a 'class' in the former set in a vast formless and indifferent society, and in the other in a cruel capitalistic environment. The mania of racial superiority and superciliousness of the ruling class aggravates the situation in the later novel, and the free
moving Munoo of *Coolie* is virtually enslaved in
the Tea Estate in the *Two Leaves And A Bud*.74

The novel takes its title from the simple refrain, which the
tea leaves’ gatherers recite as they pick two leaves and a bud:

I will make a good sheaf,
Plucking, plucking, plucking,
Two leaves and a bud,
Two Leaves and a bud.75

*Two Leaves And A Bud* describes the pathetic plight of the
labourers in Assam-Tea-Plantations. It deals with the problem of
indentured labourers who face injustices of India’s white rulers. The
novel is poetic, brutal and realistic. It is full of satire against British
capitalism. There is also a play of irony in the novel. The novel presents
the theme of the exploitation of the under privileged with far greater
concentration than *Coolie*. Gangu is a victim of capitalism. Gangu
comes to the plantation to start a new life. He ends up by losing his life.
M. K. Naik opines:

Unlike Munoo, Gangu is presented in depth.
He is one of the most complete and memorable
portraits of Indian peasants in Anand’s fiction.
He is the authentic figure, since he presents all
those baffling contrasts which marked the pre-
Independence Indian peasant character....
Thus, Gangu is at once gullible and shrewd. He
laps up all the stories told by Buta about the
plantation utopia to which he has been lured by
the barber; yet, at the same time, he is well
aware that Buta is lying it on thick. Years of misery have made him a meek, passive and abject fatalist; yet he is also capable of a sudden assertion of his will to live, as when he is digging his field.  

This novel has a unified and well developed structure. It opens with Gangu’s life at the tea estate, closes with the thought “Life is like a journey” in his mind at the end. Gangu’s journey is finally over. In between is an exciting narrative, rich in incident and dramatic values. In spite of its wealth of character and episode, the novel maintains its unity, as every detail is woven round the central theme of Gangu’s exploitation. Another outstanding feature is the combination of poetry and irony which runs through the whole novel. In this novel the artist too is ultimately seen to have been overborne by the reformer.

Dr. S. Lakshman Shastri, the editor of the Contemporary Indian Literature writes:

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand is a unique type of optimistic humanist who is capable to move the most pessimistic man to action. He is a very sensitive lover of all that is good and lovable on earth—good books, fine pieces of art, good manners, He stands for lasting peace and friendly relations between nations. At the same time he is also a ruthless critic of all that is worn-out and decaying—dehumanising and degrading customs, manners, out-dated social and
political institution reactionary thoughts and ideologies. As a disciple of Tagore and Nehru, Dr. Anand has made painstaking efforts to understand the soul of his land which has been expressing itself through Indian thought and Indian culture. It appears to us that it is the profound knowledge of Indian mind, on the one hand, and critical assessment of the various out-dated social system and institutions on the other, that has made Anand an uncompromising agitator and organiser.\textsuperscript{77}

Anand himself has remarked about this novel:

And yet I feel that this book had to be written, because what I had to say in it was deep in me from the days when I lived for a while near a plantation in Assam and visited Ceylon and saw the inhumanity and barbarism prevalent there, with the consequent dehumanisation of the colonials involved in the process.\textsuperscript{78}

So the novel is remarkable for its realism too. Anand also says:

As I get into the book, I was biased in favour of my Indian characters and tended to caricature the English men and English women who play such a vital part in this bloom.\textsuperscript{79}
Like Munoo in *Coolie*, Gangu is the central character in this novel. Gangu is middle aged farmer working on his field in a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab. He could not make the payment to his debt to moneylender. Since the moneylender is very cruel, he captured Gangu’s land. As a result of which he is forced to leave his native village for livelihood with his household, his wife Sajani, Leila and Buddhu, his children, to work on the Machpherson Tea-Estate in Assam. Soon he discovers that the world of a tea- plantation is like a prison house.

Now his ordeals begin. Cholera breaks out and Sajani falls ill. Leila, the young daughter of Gangu while leisurely plucking the leaves by herself becomes the victim of lust of Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager in the tea-plantation. An insane now Leila is once followed by Reggie Hunt to her house where in front of Gangu in frustration and fear he shoots blindly and kills him. Thus the life cycle of Gangu, a poor worker in the tea plantation comes to an end by a brute force. No doubt a trial follows and Mr. Mowberley concurring with the majority view of a jury-consisting of seven Europeans and two Indians find Reggie “Not guilty” of charges of murder of Gangu and culpable homicide and discharges him.

Thus the injustice of the British Raj, the exploitation and oppression, the misery and suffering of the Indian masses are all uncovered. This novel of Anand is more complex than *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. Anand lived for a while near a plantation in Assam and visited Ceylon and saw inhumanity and barbarism current there. *Two Leaves And A Bud* is based on real hard facts. Anand as an artist highlights the tyrannical manners of the British officers with the Indian
workers in the tea-plantation in Assam. The owners of plantations were the Britishers, who employed the Indians, but they always treated them with suspicion, distrust and humiliations. They had no sympathy with the poor workers in the tea gardens. For instance, the Britishers like Reggie Hunt broke the wall of the human culture to have sexual intercourse with Leila, a simple, helpless girl.

The Indians were also recruited in the British Army to retain and to expand the grandeur of the empire. But there too was racial juxtaposition of the British and Indians; Mulk Raj Anand’s novels follow an identical pattern. Each describes a principal figure who brings focus on the injustices of society for a better life in the existing unjust state. He time and again suggests that a good life is only possible after the destruction of the present order. The novel ends on a note of hope in anticipation of social revolution.

In Two Leaves And A Bud, the main concern of the author is to present the contrast between Indian tea labour and the self-complacency of British tea planters. The novel begins with a realistic description of Gangu’s life who is very poor and old peasant of Hosiyarpur district in Punjab. Although he does not want to leave his native place, yet poverty and many circumstances of his family force him to do so. He leaves his village in search of job like Munoo of Coolie, sepoy Lal singh of Trilogy and many millions who take up hundred jobs outside their homes in the vast country. In the beginning of the novel, he thinks how his younger brother had mortgaged his all three acres land and small hut to Seth Badridas. This incident brings adverse circumstances of poverty in his life. Buta Ram, a labour contractor of the Machpherson-Tea-Estate in Assam assures him an opportunity of job and free land of farming and cattle growing Gangu
realizes that he was only a poor barber at home. It seems almost like becoming a sepoy with the facilities. As Buta Ram says:

They will give you a house, a nice house, built with brick in the Angrezi manner, with a tin roof. They will give you everything, everything. Believe me. Don't call me by the name of Buta if they don't do well by you call me a dog instead.\textsuperscript{80}

In the plantation Gangu meets Narain Das, a coolie, who tells him the miserable and poor condition of coolies in the Machpherson-Tea-Plantation. He tells him that the place is just like a prison. Though it has no bars, yet it is, nevertheless, an unbreakable jail. Dr. V. H. Rutherford's report on the position of coolies in the Tea-Plantation of Assam thus presents a very touching picture:

On the tea plantation of Assam a man gets 8 d., for eight hours a day, a woman 6 d., and a child 3 d., in the tea factories the workers earns 9 d., for an eight hour working. The coolie suffers not only this low level of wages but frequently from indebtedness to his employers in outlandish districts where he is dependent upon the shops provided by the employers for his foodstuffs, fuel etc, This indebtedness together with the insolation of the plantation, renders it difficult for him to seek employment elsewhere, and this practically reduces him to a life of economic slavery. His treatment often
borders on the inhuman and his chances of justice and redress are chimerical. 81

A tragic thing happens in Gangu's life when his wife Sajani dies of Malaria, leaving him alone and broken. This sudden death of his wife brings so many problems in his life because he has no money for her funeral. Although the fuel of cremation would not cost anything because there is plenty of wood in the forest of Assam, the performance of her funeral rites according to his religion requires money. He feels that he must cremate her dead body immediately because it was kept in his house for last two days.

Dr. Sahib orders him to remove her dead body or it can spread disease. Anand also deals with the ignorance of the coolies. For instance when Leila, the daughter of Gangu tells Narain that her father and mother are ill Narain shouts,

It must be Cholera; he said, Cholera! And without even looking at his neighbours, he ran towards his own hut, shouting, Cholera, Cholera! The mother of Baloo, takes the children out as soon as you can. Cholera, Cholera! Has spread. 82

In this vivid scene the novelist shows the miserable condition of Gangu. In spite of manual work in the tea plantation, he has no money for his wife's funeral. He thinks that he must go to Bania asking him for a loan. But he realizes that he should never again borrow money from a
Sahukar. They had seen the curse of borrowing which has landed them into present state

The present system of plantation labour is a curse and crime. It is monstrous crime against humanity. All that was said, generations ago, by the Wilberforces and Cannings and Garrisons and Lincolns against the hideous shame of slavery, could be repeated and added to, in respect to what is transpiring to day on the tea, coffee, rubber, and other plantations in India.\(^\text{83}\)

Gangu recalls that previously Buta has told him that manager sahib is a very kind man. He can give him money again. He thinks that he would go to the big dafter and request the Babu to present him before the sahib. Soon he reaches the office of Mr. Croft-Cook to borrow money to defray the expenses of the last rites of his wife. At the office a chaprasi asks him for a nazrana, which Gangu promises him to give later on. A moment later Babu Shashi Bhushan comes out and asks him for a gift then he will present him before Croft-Cook. Having no other way he is virtually forced to assure him that he would send a basket of sweets later. Through such references Anand shows utter heartlessness of a system in which man becomes so corrupt as to be completely dehumanized. Moreover it shows Gangu’s miserable condition in the Machphersion -Tea-Estate.
On Gangu’s narration Croft-Cook comes to know that his wife has died of malaria, and he was also a victim of Malaria. Owing to fear of spreading infections, he shouts at him.

You bloody fool, Get out! Get out! You have been spreading infection all over the place!
Didn’t you know that you were under segregation? By whose orders did you come here? 84

This shows the cruel and inhuman behaviour of Croft-Cook towards him. Meanwhile he meets with Havre and tells him about his poor condition. He requests De-La-Havre that he will be grateful if he can make a recommendation for him to the Bura Sahib for land. This shows his poverty and struggle for life. Again he expresses his fabulous words to De-La-Havre about the poor condition of coolies in the Tea-Plantation. Here the poor have no chance while the Sardars are thriving. The tea planters are very harsh and strict with coolies and pickers. For Instance, while plucking when the two women are quarreling out of sheer jealously for each other Riggie Hunt, the assistant manager of the Tea-Plants, all of a sudden appears on the scene. Without any qualm of conscience, he orders a Lathicharge immediately which results in beating of many labourers and death of one Dilawar Singh. On the suggestion of Gangu all coolies go to De-La-Havre, the only figure who can be called human. They thus request him to come forward for their rescue.
Hazoor! You are my mai-bap, Talk a few words to the Manager Sahib about the Sardars and save us from the anger of Raja Sahib.  

Like Dhooli Singh in *The Road*, he gets ready to give any help for coolies. If Gangu’s character is common with Munoo’s character in all his dumb suffering, the English Doctor De-la-Havre resembles Bakha’s character with all his rebellion. He is an idealistic and sympathetic doctor who criticizes the tea-planters as well as Indian coolies. On account of his behaviour, he puts himself into a complete out-spoken opposition to his own countrymen. He is not so much against individuals but against the system which is prevailing in the plantation. In this reference D. Riemenschneider says:

Gangu and De-La-Havre fighting against society took different forms. But in the end none of them won. Neither fatalism nor rebellion bears any fruit.  

Infact, there are two parallel levels of action in the narrative. In the first centre there is a poor old peasant Gangu, who faces tragedy and a brutal machinery of exploitation. The second centers on Dr. John De-La-Havre, the English doctor who is ready to solve the problems of the coolies against tea planters. As P. K. Rajan remarks:

In *Untouchable*, the poet Iqbal Nath Sarsar just plays his role as the spokesman figure towards the end, he does not become the
protagonist of a parallel plot. In *Coolie* too Mohan, the spokesman figure who envisions the dawn of revolution is not elevated to heroic heights. But De-La-Havre in *Two Leaves And A Bud* grows to such stature in the narrative that he is even taken for the hero of the novel.  

The effect on the English planters of this episode is entirely different. The army and the air force are called in to defend the tea-planters against the coolies who have rebelled. The club is turned into a fortress. The tea-planters start sleeping with their revolver under their pillows. De-La-Havre virtually becomes the hero of coolies. When he walks towards the road, many coolies follow him.

Gangu is shocked to know the tragic death of his wife Sajani. No doubt he faces many problems in the Tea-Plantation after his wife’s death. He says that,

**My heart is weeping. My wife is dead and my children are young.**

Infact he curses the system of society. Some persons have comfortable life and others like him suffer from dire poverty. It is a curse of system that many people die of hunger, poverty and exploitation. On account of poverty Gangu cannot return money to Sahukar. Owing to poverty he faces many difficulties in the Machpherson-Tea-Estate. The portrayal of Riggie Hunt is of a figure of lust, evil and cruelty. He fits too well into the moral design. He is an eager lusty person who is always ready to rape the coolies’ women,
taking advantage of their poverty and miserable condition. He has illicit
relationship with many coolies’ women without qualms of conscience.
Therefore it is Riggie Hunt who causes final tragedy of Gangu’s life.
The thing happens when he sees Leila, the daughter of Gangu, in the
field; He shows his lustful desire for her and calls her with his offer,

I will give you a nose ring and bangles. 89

Instead of accepting his allurements and lustful designs, she shows
boldness and snarls him:

Nahin! Go away, I will call my father. I don’t
care who you are, whether you are a sahib
or......Go away and let me work! My father will
be angry if I don’t get back home before the sun
sets..... 90

But, Hunt’s lust which does not recognize any impediments what
so ever makes him insane with the unlimited power. Not only does he
shoot Buddhu, but also Gangu when he comes out to see what is
happening. His such a brutal death exposes the extent of colonial
exploitation of Indian coolies. It also shows mockery of justice when
Hunt is acquitted by a pre-dominant jury of seven European and two
Indian members.

Gangu, no doubt, faces many problems in the Machpherson-Tea-
Estate misled by the false promises given by Sardar Buta Ram, the
cunning agent. In this connection, P.K.Rajan remarks,
This story of Gangu, which, like Munoo is a tragedy, is narrated by means of the western story-telling tradition of character-situation interplay.⁹¹

Through the suffering he learns the real cause of his tragedy which he expresses to his fellow Narain.

Money is every thing.⁹²

In this world it is the root of happiness. Owing to poverty, he faces many problems in the plantation. Patient suffering and passivity are his basic characteristics. He does not show any defiance against cruelty, but remains static through out the novel. The instant sorrow of this simple peasant finds expression in this poignant cry to Buta Ram,

Oh! Friend Buta Ram, if only I had known thing were going to turn out this way. I wouldn’t have come here.⁹³

This image of him gives the impression that the novelist idealizes his peasant traits like simplicity and honesty. On account of his lack of development, he remains a flat character. He seldom grows into the hero of the realistic narrative. As Marlene Fisher remarks:

Gangu is ultimately too much of a symbol to be a man.⁹⁴

It is De-La-Harve who shows utmost sympathy towards his condition. Sometimes he acts merely as a mouth-piece of the novelist. Dr. De-La-Harve is a British physician who is incharge of the dispensary at the Machpherson-Tea-Estate but unlike the hard-hearted
and snobbish managers of the Tea-Estate, Dr. De-La-Harve is a compassionate and egalitarian person. He happens to have given up the Imperial Medical Service for the sake of visiting India, because his father had spent many years as an I.C.S. officer in this country and had told him a lot about its beauty and wealth. But he had been greatly disappointed to encounter so many poor and sick people begging food and money in the streets of Lahore and Delhi in the past. Now he is pained to see the heartless exploitation of the Indian coolies at the hands of the British managers of the Tea-Estates in Assam.

In his student days he had been fond of reading and writing poetry, but his father had forced him to study medicine. Now that he is living in the midst of the Indian coolies who are constantly exposed to the epidemics of Cholera and Malaria, he realizes the importance of medicine. He notes that the Indian coolies are not only ill-paid and ill-treated by the British managers of the tea-estates but also housed in brick-built rooms without light, ventilation and sanitation. The result is that they become vulnerable to the attacks of Cholera and Malaria. Therefore, he proceeds to make plans for the supply of clean drinking water and sanitary fittings to their dwellings. With these characteristics Dr. De-La-Havre tells his beloved Barbara,

**It is no use hating anyone,’ It is the system.**

**You must hate the system.**

Dr. De-La-Havre is deeply in love with Croft-Cook’s daughter, Barbara, who admires him for his sensitive and sensible approach to life. But neither the snobbish Croft-Cook nor his comfort-loving wife, Margaret, approves of his intimacy with Barbara on account of his
sympathetic attitude towards the Indian coolies. He has a clear and scientific understanding to solve the problems of Gangu as of other coolies of the Tea-Plantation.

Infact, it is Reggie Hunt who shows a cruel and brutal behaviour towards Gangu and other coolies. Having been intoxicated with racial superiority and absolute power, he treats not only Gangu, but also other coolies like a slave or dumb animal. He tortures coolies and uses their women to satisfy his insatiable lust. Like Munoo in Coolie, Gangu does not show any kind of his reaction throughout the novel. Infact, some of the minor characters in the novel are more successful than the major ones. They are free of any compulsion to represent an idea. In the plantation nobody cares for Gangu’s poor and merciless condition. After being thrashed by Craft-Cook, he expresses tremulous words that come out of the depth of a broken heart in a simple passage.

The Sahib will not give me a loan,...He beat me for coming out of quarantine. Oh, friend Buta Ram, If only I had known things were going to turn out this way, I wouldn’t have come here, and he took his hand to his eyes to wipe the tears that had welled up in them with the reproach against the Sardar that he had suppressed into self-pity.96

As Saros Cowasjee remarks in Gangu’s artless words:

There are all the pathos, the suffering, the anguish of his hero.97
However, Gangu has all the characteristics of the down trodden. Sometimes he appears to revolt against cruelty and injustice. D. Riemenschneider rightly remarks,

There is the old coolie Gangu who like Munoo possesses all the characteristics of the downtrodden; The almost unendurable suffering apathy which only at rare moments generate a flash of anger, revolt or only hope.\(^9\)

Not only does Gnagu get low wages but also thousands of coolies do. Owing to such a malady, many coolies decide to leave the plantation form but they are hardly allowed to do so. As Narain tells him that the officer of plantation tries to check, but the coolies still try to move on. Despite all sorts of odds and dangers, they continue their struggle. Regarding low wages, the following assertion is quite revealing:

The low wages were so low that they amounted to no more than three pice a day. So thousands of coolies left the plantation. They were lying down on the roadside in scores. But they were determined not to return to the garden.\(^9\)

Previously Gangu was attracted to the Tea-Plantation with the promises of a good wages and better living condition, but on the plantation he had to toil from dawn to dusk on very low wages. Although he is harassed by Tea-planters, yet he has no escape from his place. He suffers not only physically but also psychologically. He
shares his suffering with his daughter Laila and dies trying to save her chastity. About his condition in the plantation, Shaileshwar Prasad Seti remarks.

**Gangu is the victim of the set-up which sets a premium on falsehood and unsound values. Through his consciousness every single act of inhumanity acquires huge proportions. Gangu’s innocence is persecuted but in the process the stark inhumanity of the tea-plantation is exposed.**

Thus *Two Leaves And A Bud* presents the theme of the exploitation of the underprivileged with far greater concentration than *Coolie*. In the earlier novel actually the scene shifts from one stratum of society to another. In this novel, the entire tragedy is unfolded against the background of plantation. Comparing it with the previous novel, Iyengar says,

*If Untouchable has a sort of piercing quality, with its enormous range and multiplicity of action and character, it has an almost epic quality. Two Leaves And A Bud may be said to be essentially dramatic novel.*

Firstly Gangu is deceived by false promises of Buta Ram, a labour contractor of the Machpherson-Tea-Estate. He did not tell him about the poor conditions of the Tea-Plantation. In this connection M.K.Naik states,
Gangu’s exploitation starts. He is aware of it. He is lured to the plantation by the fabulous promises made by Sardar Buta who recruits labourers for the tea estates.\textsuperscript{102}

The Tea-planters don’t show any sort of kindness towards Gangu’s uncomfortable and wretched condition. When he requests Reggie Hunt for granting him a loan for the cremation of his wife’s dead body, the bully shouts at him for spreading disease. It is the cruel and inhuman behaviour of the Tea-planters which does not permit them to have any softness for the poor. M.K.Naik thus describes the average tea-planter’s attitude to the Indian coolies.

\textit{For them the Indian labourers are just a piece of property, a sub-human being with no rights and all duty. Whose only utility is to be a serviceable tool in the vast machine of the plantation?}\textsuperscript{103}

Therefore, the central theme of the novel is the combination of pleasure and grief which run through the whole novel. There is irony everywhere. Gangu comes to the plantation to start a new life and goes out losing his life. The strain of irony becomes very powerful at the end when Reggie Hunt shoots Gangu. Moreover, the tea-planters should show a kind behaviour towards Gangu’s problems and they should provide loan for the cremation of his wife’s dead body. Like him there are many coolies and labourers who are harassed by their masters in the vast country. From the beginning to the end of the novel, the protagonist faces different kind of problems. In spite of sufferings,
inhuman treatment, injustice and cruel system of the plantation, he cannot leave his duty because he is aware of his limitation of not getting job any where else. Sometimes he appears very conscious of his problems and anxious to find solution, but at another time he remains dumb or static. Finally he dies, trying to save his daughter. Despite his best efforts and a long trail of sufferings, Gangu could hardly reach near the life which he cherished for himself and his family. He is undoubtedly one of the most powerful compassionate characters of Mulk Raj Anand who always remain alive in our memory.

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