CHAPTER II

THE 'STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS' TECHNIQUE IN ANAND'S NOVELS

UNTUCHABLE (1935)

In his first novel, Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand exposes the evil of untouchability in the Hindu society through the consciousness of a sweeper boy named Bakha. The work illustrates that there is a close correlation between formal narrative problems and moral social questions, as S.C. Harrex observes:

Here, the initial problem of the writer (in the context of literary technique) and that of the reformer (in the social context) are identical: how to perceive experience from the untouchable's point of view, how to enter such an alien individual and caste consciousness?

Anand explains the aesthetics of this novel in his article: "The Story of My Experiments with a White Lie" (1967). He acknowledges the impact of Gandhiji on the theme of the novel. He also admits that the narrative technique employed by James Joyce in Ulysses had influenced its form. In his own words:

The 'spiritual' experience of the Gandhi Ashram had to be communicated in a novel which, in spite of its new theme and implied value judgements, would have to be couched in the language of fiction, with some respect for the integral pattern and the technical possibilities of the loose form of the novel. 2


Like Joyce's *Ulysses*, Anand's *Untouchable* covers a single day in the life of its protagonist. Again, both the novels are episodic in structure; there is no story in the conventional sense in either of the two. But as compared with the former, the latter is much shorter and more lucid. *Untouchable* has a greater structural unity; each episode in it paves the way for another and brings home the theme to the reader. Here, the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique is employed more judiciously; the interior-monologues are shorter and more effective, and the flashbacks are used occasionally but appropriately. Bakha, the central character, acts as a centre of consciousness throughout; the reader identifies himself (nay sympathizes) with him and perceives the humiliations an 'untouchable' is subjected to by a majority of the 'Caste-Hindus'.

Each episode in the novel has a rhythm of its own. It follows a definite narrative pattern which may be likened to the three-phase flight of an aeroplane. The preparatory stage, like the gliding of an aircraft, acquaints the reader with the facts of the case. The second stage, like the machine's taking off and flying across the sky, reveals the thoughts that flash across the protagonist's mind. The final stage, like the plane's touching down, pulls in 'the reins of wild horse of fancy' and resumes a down-to-earth narration of the events. The hero's stream of consciousness is thus sandwiched between two factual and visible situations. This cycle of description, contemplation and action
is evident throughout the text. To illustrate, the introductory part of the novel first describes Bakha's milieu and family background, then it lands the reader into the hero's mind, and finally, it puts a stop to the train of Bakha's current thoughts with his father's rebuff. The novel opens with a description of the outcastes' colony, pointing out its ugliness, squalor and misery. Next, Bakha is introduced as "a young man of eighteen, strong and able-bodied, the son of Lakha, the Jemadar of all the sweepers in the town and the cantonment, and officially in charge of the three rows of public latrines which lined the extremest end of the colony." It is autumn, the day is just dawning and Bakha is lying half awake in his small hut. The description is rendered vividly through his sensitivity:

Bakha thought of the uncongeniality of his home as he lay half awake in the morning of an autumn day, covered by a worn-out, greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor in a corner of the twelve feet by five, dank, dingy, one-roomed mud-house. His sister slept on a cot next to him and his father and brother snored from under a patched ochre-coloured quilt, on a broken string bed, further up.

Thus, in a small space the novelist draws a clear picture of the hero's family, hinting at their deplorable plight at the same time. Soon Bakha's craze for European dress and their life style is disclosed through his stream of consciousness. Despite his father's disapproval thereof, his naive mind feels attracted to the life of the Tommies and he secretly wishes to emulate it. An interior

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4 Ibid., p.2.
monologue places him in right perspective and hints at the strained relations between him and his father:

'I must get another blanket,' he said to himself. 'Then father won't ask me to put a quilt on. He always keeps abusing me. I do all the work for him. He appropriates the pay all right.... He is old. He doesn't know anything of the sahibs. And now he will call me to get up, and it is so cold ....'5

His thoughts are, indeed, interrupted by his father's bullying order: 'Get up, oh you Bakhyas, son of a pig.... Get up and attend to the latrines or the sepoys will be angry!'6 The expository part thus passes through the afore-mentioned three stages: description, contemplation and action.

The narrative pattern can be verified by examining some other episodes too. The prelude to the 'touching' episode in the novel is a case in point. At his father's instance, Bakha goes to the town to sweep the market road and the temple courtyard. He is fascinated by the gaiety of the bazaar. He buys a packet of 'Red-Lamp' cigarettes which the shopkeeper flings at him "as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing round the corner of his shop."7 Then his mouth begins to water at the sight of the sweets arranged in a confectioner's shop. Thereafter, he considers the pros and cons of buying these:

'Eight annas in my pocket,' he said to himself, 'dare I buy some sweets? If my father comes to know that I spend all my money on sweets,' he

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5 Ibid., p.4.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p.30.
thought and hesitated, 'but come, I have only one life to live,' he said to himself, 'let me taste of the sweets; who knows, tomorrow I may be no more.'

Having pondered over the matter, he makes up his mind to buy four annas' worth of 'jalebis' which, he knows, are cheap. He then proceeds to buy the 'jalebis'. The three stages of narration are thus observed faithfully.

Again, the first major episode in the novel, i.e. the 'pollution' episode which plays havoc with Bakha's feelings, is narrated on similar lines. While relishing the 'jalebis', he is thrilled by the colourful life of the market. He gets lost in reverie; he recalls the arrangement he has made for beginning his English lesson in the afternoon. He catches sight of a figure sitting in a window, and as he is engaged in staring at her, he accidentally touches a Caste-Hindu. The latter takes him to task for having polluted him: "Why don't you call, you swine, and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched me and defiled me, you cock-eyed son of a bow-legged scorpion! Now I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself. And it was a new dhoti and shirt I put on this morning!" The rebuke leaves the reader in no doubt about the contempt with which the untouchables are treated. Consequently, a crowd gathers round to see what the row is about. The pedestrians form a circle round Bakha, keeping at a distance of several yards from him. They join in to aid and encourage the 'aggrieved' man in his denunciation.

8 Ibid., p.32.
9 Ibid., pp.33-4.
street urchin complains that Bakha has been beating innocent little children, thus confirming the allegation that he is a confirmed rogue. Poor Bakha is confused and feels like collapsing. His reactions are disclosed poignantly:

His first impulse was to run, just to shoot across the throng, away, away, far away from the torment. But then he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulders would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like bodies of the Hindu merchants, but a moral one. He knew that contact with him, if he pushed through, would defile a great many more of these men....

The theme of untouchability is dealt with effectively by stating that the barrier in this case is a moral one. The sarcastic remark of an onlooker brings Bakha back to reality:

'Don't know what the world is coming to! These swine are getting more and more uppish!' said a little old man. 'One of his brethren who cleans the lavatory of my house, announced the other day that he wanted two rupees a month instead of one rupee, and the food that he gets from us daily.'

The viewpoint of a Caste-Hindu is placed alongside that of a sweeper's in order to let the reader judge the situation for himself. Bakha's humiliation, his reluctance to retaliate after the so-called 'touched' man has slapped him before leaving the place, the jeering comments of the spectators and a Muhammedan tonga-wallah's words of consolation to him -- all haunt him. There is a smouldering rage in his soul, he muses over his disgrace and his torment is expressed through an impassioned interior monologue:

10 Ibid., p. 35.
11 Ibid.
... That man! That he should have hit me! 
My poor jalebis! I should have eaten them. But why couldn't I say something? Couldn't I have joined my hands to him and then gone away? The slap on my face! The coward! How he ran away, like a dog with his tail between his legs.... They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too.... That's why they don't touch us, the high-castes. The tonga-wallah was kind.... But he is a Muhammadan. They don't mind touching us, the Muhammadans and the sahibs. It is only the Hindus, and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I am a sweeper, sweeper -- untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable! 12

It is the heart-rending cry of an anguished soul. Bakha is embarrassed by his low position as an untouchable. His incoherent thoughts, expressed by means of his rambling and incomplete sentences, indicate an outburst of his uncontrollable feelings. The impact of the Joycean technique is more conspicuous here than at any other place in the novel. The novelist succeeds in highlight the curse of untouchability through the victim's torment. No amount of direct preaching would have produced so deep an effect as the present interior monologue does.

Likewise, a severe attack against untouchability is launched by means of a two-pronged pollution-cum-molestation episode in the temple scene. First, Bakha is detected on the top step of the stairs facing the door of the temple. The priest and the worshippers rush out, crying that they have been polluted and their temple defiled by the presence of a sweeper. Almost simultaneously, Bakha gets another shock of his life when he notices

12 Ibid., p. 38.
his sister, Sohini, standing behind Pundit Kali Nath. The Pundit is shouting from below that while others have been polluted from a distance, he has been defiled by contact. Bakha rushes down the steps, past the priest below him, to his sister. His state of mind on the occasion is disclosed as under:

He had two impulses, that of fear for himself, for the crime he knew he had committed, another of fear for his sister for the crime she might have committed, since she stood there speechless. 13

An analysis of his thoughts is wedged between description and action. This makes the whole account authentic and moving. Further, Bakha asks his sister to tell him what had happened. She tells him her tale of woe with sobs and tears; while she was cleaning the lavatory of Pundit Kali Nath’s house, he made suggestions to her, and when she screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled. On hearing it, Bakha rushes back to the middle of the courtyard, dragging his sister behind him. He searches for the figure of the priest in the crowd but in vain. The crowd is frightened by his determined advance. His feelings at the moment are unfolded impressively:

He felt he could kill them all. He looked ruthless, deadly pale and livid with anger and rage. A similar incident he had heard about, rose to his mind in a flash. . . . 'Such an insult!' he thought. 'That he should attack a young and innocent girl. And then the hypocrisy of it! ... I hope he didn’t violate my sister.' A suspicion stole into his mind that he might have... 14

13 Ibid., p.47.
14 Ibid., p.48.
Bakha's soul-drama is laid bare quite convincingly. The conflict in his mind reveals his character and contributes to the development of the theme of the novel.

The narrative pattern comprising description, contemplation and action is consistently adhered to from beginning to end. Bakha's reactions to various situations -- both pleasant and unpleasant -- form the crux of the subject matter. It may be pointed out that Anand conforms to reality; besides depicting humiliating situations, he also deals with such incidents as reflect some characters' kind treatment of Bakha. For instance, when he goes to the street where his sister is expected to ask for the daily bread of the housewives, he is scorned by one woman and spoken to gently by another. Likewise, Haveli Charot Singh treats him kindly. He asks him to fill his 'chilm' (fire pot) with charcoal without any fear of its being polluted by the sweeper's touch. He offers him tea and, above all, gifts him a brand-new hockey stick. Bakha's gratitude to this man is expressed by means of his stream of consciousness:

He was overcome by the man's kindness. He was grateful, grateful, haltingly grateful, faltering grateful, stumblingly grateful, so grateful that he didn't know how he could walk the ten yards to the corner to be out of the sight of his benevolent and generous host.... 'Strange! strange! wonderful! kind man! I didn't know he was so kind. I should have known. He always has such a humorous way about him! Kind, good man! He gave me a new stick, a brand-new stick!' 15

15 Ibid., p. 90.
Bakha’s thoughts reveal that even among the caste Hindus there are some kind people (like Havildar-Charat Singh) who do not look down upon the sweepers.

It is remarkable that the three possible solutions -- Christianity, Gandhism and flush-system -- hinted at to solve the problem of untouchability, are tested one after another by recording Bakha’s reactions. First, Colonel Hutchinson, Chief of the local Salvation Army, speaks gently to him with a view to converting him to Christianity. The Colonel’s efforts bear no fruit because he cannot satisfy Bakha when the latter asks him as to who 'Yessuh Messih' is and why he (Bakha) should confess his sins. The former’s vague answers baffle and bore the latter who, in turn, virtually rejects the offer of conversion:

He was afraid of the thought of conversion. He hadn’t understood very much of what the Salvationist said. He didn’t like the idea of being called a sinner. He had committed no sin that he could remember. How could he confess his sins? Odd, what did it mean, confessing sins? ‘Does the sahib want some secret knowledge?’ he wondered.16

Likewise, Bakha’s reactions to Ghandiji’s public speech are made known to the reader at intervals. For instance, when the Mahatma asserts that he should like to be reborn as an Untouchable, Bakha feels thrilled to the very 'marrow of his bones':

That the Mahatma should want to be born as an outcaste! That he should love scavenging! He loved the man. He felt he could put his life in his hands and ask him to do what he liked with it. For him he would do anything. He would like to go and be a scavenger at his 'ashram'.17

16 Ibid., p.109.
17 Ibid., p.125.
Later, when the Mahatma exhorts the 'Harijans' (men of God, as Gandhiji chose to call the so-called 'untouchables') to cultivate habits of cleanliness and to give up drinking and gambling, Bakha thinks that the Mahatma is blaming them. After the Mahatma's speech, he (Bakha) overhears a talk between the poet-editor, Iqbal Nath Sarshar, and his companion, Mr. R.N. Bashir, B.A. (Oxon.), Barrister-at-law. He is impressed by the poet's reference to a machine which clears dung without anyone having to handle it. His predilection for the flush system is evident from his scrutiny of the Mahatma's speech and that of the poet's talk:

The Mahatma had talked of a Brahmin who did the scavenging in his 'ashram'. 'Did he mean, then, that I should go on scavenging?' Bakha asked himself, 'Yes!', came the forceful answer. 'Yes!', said Bakha, 'I shall go on doing what Gandhi says. 'But shall I never be able to leave the latrines?' came the disturbing thought. 'But I can. Did not the poet say there is a machine which can do my work?'

The narrative is thus interspersed with Bakha's thoughts and feelings which lend verisimilitude, authenticity and structural unity to the narrative.

A few flashbacks are also introduced into the novel. These are inserted at appropriate places and are intended to add to the effect of the narrative. For instance, in the opening section, the reader is told about the other members of Bakha's family — his father, younger sister and brother — who are lying asleep inside the mud-house. The omission of his mother is

18 Ibid., p.133.
conspicuous. The fact that she is dead is brought home to the reader by means of a flashback. Harassed by his father, it is but natural for the boy to miss his mother who used to serve him tea before he would go to clean the latrines. Besides the morning tumblerful of tea, he remembers her for her affection towards him:

His mind went back to the morning after his mother's death, when although he, Bakha, was awake, his father had thought he was asleep and presuming he was never going to get up, had shouted at him. That was the beginning of his father's subsequent early morning calls.... He often thought of his mother, the small, dark figure, swathed simply in a tunic, a pair of baggy trousers and an apron.... Indian to the core and sometimes uncomfortably so (as she did not like his affecting European clothes), but so loving, so good, and withal generous, giving, always giving, buying him things, kindness personified. 19

The above flashback was needed to complete the picture of Bakha's family background.

Similarly, Lakha gives an account of his son Bakha's miraculous escape from death when he was a child. The flashback is necessary to testify the age-old practice of untouchability and to contrast the attitude of the older generation of sweepers with that of their younger generation. At noon, Bakha returns home dejected after the bitter experiences he has had in the market, at the temple and in the street. Exasperated, he complains to his father against the callous treatment meted out to the sweepers by the Caste-Hindus: "They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt." 19a

19 Ibid., p.5.
19a Ibid., p.63.
about an actual incident that had happened to him. Once the child Bakha fell seriously ill and Lakha went to Hakim Bhagwan Das's dispensary to fetch medicine for him. Lakha waited outside the dispensary for a long time and requested many persons to speak to the physician on his behalf, but in vain. At last, he entered the dispensary, touched the Hakim's feet and requested him to save the life of his dying son. His entreaties fell on deaf ears, for the Hakim shouted at him:

Chandal! (low-caste) by whose orders have you come here? And then you join hands and hold my feet and say you will become my slave for ever. You have polluted hundreds of rupees worth of medicine. Will you pay for it?20

The actual words of the physician, reproduced by Lakha, lend verisimilitude to the account and highlight the theme of untouchability. After his initial callousness to Lakha, the hakim's heart melted and he visited the sweeper's house to check up the sick child and cure him. After listening to his father's tale, the son comments that the physician might have killed him. Upon this, Lakha retorts:

They are really kind. We must realize that it is religion which prevents them from touching us.21

Lakha's narrative reveals his deep-rooted sense of inferiority and his docile acceptance of the laws of fate. Contrasted with him, his son seethes with discontent with his lot and clamours for recognition as a human being. The flashback thus brings out the

20 Ibid., p.65.
21 Ibid., p.66.
contrast between the two generations of sweepers represented by the father and the son respectively.

The novelist's choice of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique, including interior monologues and flashbacks, puts the novel into a fairly neat framework for the dramatization of Bakha's inner experience. The theme of untouchability which, at Gandhiji's suggestion could be taken up by Anand in the form of a tract, has been effectively dealt with in this "great little novel" through a successful handling of the narrative technique. That is why E.M. Forster, in his "Preface" to the novel, praises, among other things, the novelist's unique stance:

Untouchable could only have been written by an Indian, and by an Indian who observed from outside. No European, however, sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha, because he would not have known enough about his troubles. And no Untouchable could have written the book, because he would have been involved in indignation and self-pity. Mr. Anand stands in the ideal position... He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment... 22

Except for the poet's harangue which ranges from 'Nirvana' (release from the trammels of existence) to modern plumbing, the novel has been highly praised for its unique theme, compactness and artistry, as M.K. Naik remarks:

Of all Anand's novels, Untouchable is the least flawed in form and structure. The Poet's harangue

apart, the narrative itself is a thing of perfect unity and chiselled finish. 23

Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts (1938)

Anand's novelette Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts is the tale of a dying consumptive's life-and-death struggle, interspersed with his memories of the past. The novelist, in a letter to Saros Cowasjee, justifies the use of the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique in this work:

In it the man, who was aware of the despair of life generally in the beginning, begins to be conscious of his own despair. And knowing that everything is against him and that he is bound to die, he wishes to be rid of himself. In the confrontation with the death wish, he searches for authenticity. The "drama of self-consciousness" is staged by him through his memories. 24

The outward action of Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, like that of Untouchable, occupies a single day in the life of its protagonist, Nur. He wakes up early in the morning on the fateful day and dies in the afternoon. There is hardly any movement on the surface; the consumptive Nur keeps lying in his sick bed from beginning to end. During the day, he is visited by his close relatives, his doctor and his old class-mate, Gama, with


K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar expresses a similar view:

Of all his novels, Untouchable is the most compact and artistically satisfying, and the most revealing and rewarding.


whom he holds conversation on various subjects. His fast-deteriorating condition is depicted side by side. There is, however, much movement in his mind; images of the past haunt him. The novelist resorts to the flashback device time and again with a view to tracing the causes of his frustration, desperation and physical deterioration.

The introductory passages describe his condition vividly through omniscient narration:

His fine face, . . . with the brown eyes bulging out of the deep sockets, and the indrawn cheeks, was flushed . . . with the shame of a rose which has withered before it has begun to bloom. His body was limp except for the spine, which ached as it had ached increasingly through having to lie in bed day after day for five months, and the hard ribs and collar bone which seemed to crack as they rose out of his transparent flesh like the dry roots of a bare tree still sound at the heart.

The omniscient narration is suitable for describing his sunken eyes, indrawn cheeks, aching body and withering flesh, for no other mode would have produced a deeper effect. Here, the autobiographical mode of narration would have been out of tune because the consumptive Nur could not describe how he looked like. Likewise, the description of Nur's appearance by any other character in the novel would have been conditioned by his relations with him.

It may be pointed out that the novelist employs the metaphor of the sun throughout the story to indicate the passage of time as

His father's rebuke again shatters his will to live as the narrator remarks: "He really wanted to die and escape into the 'greater freedom' of the divines." 30 The stream-of-consciousness method, comprising interior-monologues and flashbacks, is appropriate for communicating the emotions that rise and fall in his sad heart.

As Nur is despair of life, he searches almost the whole of his pain-marred life. His past is recreated through a series of shift-backs. First, his early childhood is described through his recollection of his grandmother's tale which she used to tell him when he was a small child:

Once upon a time there was a little boy whose father was a confectioner in the bazaar and whose mother was a beautiful houri. And he had a grandmother who loved him very much...he used to toddle and walk, holding the hand of his father.... But when he was five, the cruel angel Izrael had come and taken away his mother.... And another woman had come into their house instead, who, his father had said, was his new mother. But she was only a little bigger than he and he could not call her mother, as she quarrelled with him over the toys when they played together....31

The device thus serves the purpose of giving the details of his story from the very beginning. It is not possible for a person to remember his own early childhood; someone else has to tell him about it. Hence, it is through the grandmother's tale that the protagonist's early life is delineated. A person can, however, recall his school and college days. Accordingly, Nur's student

30 Ibid., p.52.
31 Ibid., pp.11-2.
career, with its salient features, is reproduced by him through flashbacks one after another. His earliest recollection goes back to the fear of his primary school master's rod:

...there was a queer impatience, in the feel of early mornings, the fear of being late at school.... Thank God, one was rid of that, though it had taken him a long time, for he was seldom really ill even though he had prayed in secret to be ill.... As he had hurried on his way to school, the dizzy vision of the Master's perpendicular rod had blotted out space and time, while the clothes stuck to the flesh in the clammy heat and perspiration of summer mornings... 32

Likewise, he recalls the other unpleasant experiences of his childhood, viz. the beating he got from his father for having lost his shoes, and the punishment he received from his school-master for not having obliged him with a basket of sweets. Another image that lingers in his memory is that of the greedy and dirtily-clad Maulvi Shahab-Din who used to give him lessons in the Koran in the evenings.

The present and the past intersect each other so that the mind may not be completely lost while reviewing the past. For instance, Nur comments on dirtiness thus:

What was the use of cleaning and purifying oneself, for instance, if the clothes one wore when saying prayers were soiled by all the dirt of the streets and the sweat of the body at night? 33

The mingling of the present with the past renders the account authentic and depicts the mental growth of the character.

32 Ibid., pp.14-5.
33 Ibid., p.16.
Again, Nur shares his memories with his friend, Gama, his
class-fellow who had discontinued his studies after successive
failures in the fifth class, and who had turned a tonga-driver
since then. Gama calls on him to enquire after his health and
brings him a basket of fruit. They review their primary school
days, in general, and recall the incident concerning Master Kanshi
Ran's sadism, in particular. One day, the master had tried to
kiss Nur but when the latter refused to be kissed, the former
beat him the next day. Nur reported it to his friend, Gama, who
in turn threatened the teacher with dire consequences if he did
not mend his ways.

The two friends also debate on the use of education; Gama
talks about its futility: "What is there in education, brother!
Waste of time!"[^34^], while Nur glorifies it: "Education means
wisdom, wisdom means the correlation of the growth of body and
mind: the correlation of the growth of body and mind is achieved
through knowledge and knowledge is power...."[^35^] The contrast
between the attitudes of the two friends is brought out convinc-
ingly through this dialogue. Ironically, Gama who is less
educated than Nur, is more successful in life. The novelist
censures the existing educational system in India without intru-
ding himself into the narrative. Likewise, the government recruit-
ment system comes in for sharp criticism through Nur's personal

[^34^]: Ibid., p. 27.
[^35^]: Ibid., p. 28.
bitter experience. He tells Gama about his frantic efforts to procure a respectable job. He narrates at length the interview he had faced at Patiala. The stigma of being a confectioner's son chased him and deprived him of the opportunity of getting into government service despite his being a first-class M.A. Disappointed, he remarks that "jobs are given by the Public Service Commission for smartness, general appearance, the possession of a good pedigree and according to the number of testimonials and recommendations from influential persons that a man may have than for anything else."36

Nur is the centre of consciousness in the story; it is through his consciousness that the reader perceives most of the themes and characters in the novelette. He talks to Gama about his college friend, Azad,37 who had influenced him most. He tries to obliterate Gama's prejudice against Azad, saying that Azad had initiated him into the mysteries of poetry and philosophy. It is really a triumph of narrative technique that Azad's character is portrayed without ever presenting him in person. His sterling qualities, viz. — patriotism, love of poetry, candidness, valour — are brought home to Gama (and thereby to the reader) through Nur's impressions of Azad. The picture of Nur's cruel father is also

36 Ibid., p. 42.
drawn from his point of view. The Chaudhri's taunts add to his misery that is caused by frustration and augmented by his malignant disease (tuberculosis):

...You wasted hundreds of rupees of my hard-earned money, and you couldn't even get a job to feed yourself and your wife and child... You have disgraced me and given a bad name to your family! Go to hell and die and be done with it, wretch... 38

Again, he looks upon his grandmother with a mixture of pity and hatred:

And always he had pitted and hated her. The pride of his love for his dead mother had never overcome the barrier of the wrong she had done him in allowing his father to marry again. And since she had aged too, he had never been able to overcome her ugliness, and the weight of her doting affection only increased the barrier. 39

His feelings towards his grandmother are thus faithfully recorded by means of his stream of consciousness. Likewise, his attitude towards his wife, Iqbal, is described from his viewpoint:

Nur looked at her. She seemed so helpless and shy... he wished he could hold her in his arms now and make a contact which he had refused to establish between himself and her ever since they had been married, except in the moments of lust... 40

In a short span of time, Nur's soul-drama is successfully shown through his consciousness, chiefly with the help of flashbacks. It is in tune with the general belief that "before death, or the final null and void, sometimes a man of vision can see the

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38 Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, p. 59.
39 Ibid., p. 19.
40 Ibid., p. 48.
important parts of his life come before him." K.N. Sinha, in his book *Mulk Raj Anand* (1972), opines that though Anand is not an existentialist like Sartre, Kafka, or Camus, he comes closer to the existential thought in *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*, for here he probes the very nature of pain as central to existence. The novelette bears out the chief tenet of existentialism, i.e. each man is what he chooses to be or what he makes himself. Nur's tragedy is reflected in his self-composed line: "Why did you drag me into the dust by making me an M.A.?" The verse runs as a refrain throughout the narrative and points out the cause of his predicament. Nur's doctor, Captain Pochkanwala, also holds him responsible for his condition: "I am afraid Mr. Nur has been exciting himself," he complains to Nur's father.

Among Anand's critics, only K.N. Sinha has paid due attention to *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*. The novelette, in his opinion, is "a highly powerful lyrical novel which surpasses all the novels of Anand in its deep and authentic search for illumination." It is, indeed, a profound psychological study of a dying consumptive: "The body of Death lingered on the sick bed." In artistry, this 'long short story' deserves comparison with *Untouchable*, only the flashback device is over-wrought in it.

41 *Author to Critic*, p.107.
42 *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*, pp.30-1.
44 *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*, p.65.
The Big Heart (1945)

Like Untouchable and Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, The Big Heart also employs the stream-of-consciousness technique to 'interiorize' its central character, Ananta. Its action also covers a single day in the life of its protagonist; in both Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts and The Big Heart, the day happens to be the hero's death-day. The method of indicating time in this novel, however, differs from that in the earlier works; while simple words such as morning, noon, afternoon and evening are used in them to denote the passage of time, the Tower-Clock keeps chiming in the background of this novel in the same way as the Big Ben does in that of Virginia Woolf's famous novel Mrs. Dalloway. The particular way of recording time is correlated to the peculiar setting and central idea of the work. In the vicinity of Kucha Billimaran — the venue of action — there stands the Clock Tower which is symbolic of the machine age or the 'iron age'. Anand's predilection for the machine, just hinted at towards the close of Untouchable, finds stronger and more definite expression in The Big Heart. Here, the novelist is primarily concerned with the problem of 'worklessness' among the traditional craftsmen in the wake of opening of a small factory in their midst. He is not against the introduction of machinery, rather he is in favour of it; that is why his hero Ananta sacrifices his life while protecting the machines in the factory against Ralia's reckless attack on them. The author
prefaces the novel with extracts from Lord Byron's oration on the Luddites, the Nottinghamshire weavers, together with his own comments:

Although human conditions have much changed since Lord Byron thus spoke in the House of Lords this quotation is given here because it still might have some relevance to our time. 45

It may also be pointed out that the opening chapter of the novel is written in the present tense whereas its remaining chapters are rendered in the past tense. The possible reasons for the novelist's using the present tense in the first chapter are mentioned below:

(i) Anand deals with real places, and not fictitious ones as Hardy's Wessex or R.K. Narayan's Malgudi. In the introductory chapter of The Big Heart, he describes a locality named Kucha Billimaran that actually exists in Amritsar. Its description together with that of the Bazar Kaserian, the shrine of the Goddess Kali, the Golden Temple, the Clock Tower in its neighbourhood, is true to reality.


In a letter dated November 1971, Anand wrote to Saros Cowasjee:

...I wrote this novel at the end of the Second World War, when I had been engulfed in the vast and endless destruction brought by civilization on itself. I was thinking of Gandhi's natural rejection of the machine. I wanted to show that, though we can't reject the machine altogether, we have to control it, as a driver controls a railway engine.

-- Author to Critic, p. 123.
(ii) The problem of unemployment among the craftsmen as a consequence of industrialization seems a world-wide phenomenon. It is made clear in the very opening chapter:

The sudden cramp, which has got hold of the souls of men ever since the ragged rhythm of the machines in the shed began to drown the hammer-strokes with which the coppersmiths were used to smooth rough metal into shape and imprint the polish of gold on finished pots, augurs ill for them as a caste.46

(iii) Despite all the rogueries and devilries attributed to the hero, Ananta, he is treated as a martyr. He is introduced as "the rogue who has returned from Bombay, knows a little about the war and calls the sun’s maturing death ray a ray of revolution. He thumps his big chest with his fist and shouts, "There is no talk of money, brothers: one must have a big heart!".47 His anti-capitalist aphorism runs as a refrain throughout the novel in the same manner as Nur’s verse line: 'Why did you drag me into the dust by making me an M.A.?" does in the Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts. The remaining chapters, however, deal

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46 The Big Heart, p.11.
In this regard, Anand says:
In The Big Heart I asked a fundamental question: "Could a semi-literate, seemingly rough, coppersmith, generally known as a rogue, be really found to be a saint? I had the hunch that my hero, Ananta, had rescued enough nobility from the small life to which he was condemned by his adventures as a manual worker in Jamshedpur, Bombay and other places. And, that by becoming a revolutionary trade unionist, he had almost achieved saintliness... That the hero is martyred or sacrifices himself adds, in my opinion, to the compensating value of his love.

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47 The Big Heart, p.11.
...he explored for her wrist to feel the pulse. The limp curve of her feeble arm, with the drooping hands at the end, sent a curious thrill through him, almost as though it was the same limb which, leaping eagerly from the pillow, had in Bombay caressed him when he had suffered for the movement... he felt the nostalgia of those moments when, her hand in his, and his big chest heaving against her pigeon breasts, the moist pressure of her lips on his own, he had first had her on the terrace of the shrine at Kanowan, the day after all the other pilgrims had gone...

The beat of her pulse was irregular, and he knew that still the slow silent fever clung to her... 49

It is noteworthy that there is an intercalation between the past and the present which makes the whole account seem authentic and real. Besides his anxiety for his mistress, Ananta feels concerned about his fellow coppersmiths who have been deprived of work owing to the setting up of a factory in the locality. The frustrated men try desperately for jobs in the factory. Ananta has just returned from Bombay and Ahmedabad where he has had glimpses of labour movements and trade unionist activities. He is also refused a job in the factory, so he identifies himself with his dispossessed brethren. As he is sitting beside his sick mistress, Janki, his mind also goes out to them in sympathy. He recalls the row he had witnessed that morning between his fellow coppersmiths and the foreman, Channa. Ananta's predicament is understandable:

Bathed in the shadows of the room, chained down to the life of this woman by invisible strings of emotion, his helpless frame twitched at the recollection of the hopeless crowd in the dull grey light of the narrow lane before the gates of the factory shed. He felt he had suffered with those men... 50

49 The Big Heart, p.29.
50 Ibid., p.30.
In fact, the dream episode given in Chapter II reflects the working of his mind effectively. As he sets himself to work on an unfinished cauldron at dawn, he is haunted by the nightmare that had awakened him:

And then there was a considerable crowd before him and he had begun to speak. But Janki, his mistress, had interrupted him with a wail.... And they were following him, while he had run, their hands dripping with blood. He had been frightened and had tried to run faster, but behind him there was a voice calling, 'I am hungry, I want blood', and he had felt almost overpowered.... He had looked back and found a black woman with a trident in her hand standing on the cremation ground, stamping upon corpses and dancing as she shrieked again and again, 'I am hungry! I want blood.'

The dream has a subtle touch of the stream-of-consciousness technique. It reveals the hero's aspiration to be a trade-union leader as well as his apprehension of his doom. It really proves prophetic of the catastrophe that overtakes him in Chapter XXVI where Ralia, Ananta's 'ex-drinking companion', betters his (Ananta's) head against a broken machine while the latter tries to prevent the former from wrecking machines in the factory. Ralia, in a fit of furious frenzy, behaves as if he were destructiveness incarnate:

And he lifted his voice in a hoarse, drunken ghostly cry-shriek, even as he struck his hammer on machine parts and stamped his feet in a dance: 'I want blood! I want bones! I want bodies and sinews of men!'... I drink blood; I drink oil; I drink urine; I like the young best, han, because I am a whore, see!... I want to be raped! I am a bitch, see!... I am the bitch goddess machine, han, the Kali of the iron age, the age of machines!... Hoon, han, hoon, han.... I will wed you — I, Ralia; I am Shiv, and you are Kali....'"
There are frequent drifts in Ralia's faltering speech; first, he imagines himself to be the goddess Kali, then a whore, next a bitch, later the bitch goddess machine, and lastly, the god Shiva, the destroyer. In a paroxysm of anger, desperation and madness, augmented by drunkenness, it is quite natural for Ralia to utter all nonsense. It is also consistent with his character to speak, to use a Joycean expression, 'alcoherently' under the influence of wine. In Chapters III and XIV, there are ample proofs of his drinking bouts. For instance, in Chapter XIV, he speaks drunkenly while he is consuming liquor with Dina on the platform of Bali's little grocery and 'sherbet' shop:

'There's no flour — anywhere.... See!' Ralia said, sobering at the mention of his wife and the flour, and angry with frustration. 'She can eat dung.... And she can drinkurine! See! She eetdunganddrinkurine as I eetdunganddrinkurine!' 53

The use of such compound and unheard of words as 'eetdunganddrinkurine' is certainly an innovation which produces the desired effect. In this very chapter, many other similar expressions such as 'Gimmeurine' and 'Shirrup' etc. are employed. These are illustrative of the incoherent speech a drunkard is likely to utter.

Ananta's secret thoughts and feelings, as well as Ralia's eccentric conduct, are depicted appropriately through the 'stream-of-consciousness' method. At other places, however, the conventional mode of omniscient narration is largely employed. For example, in Chapter VI, the hero's qualities of hilariousness,
rebelliousness and frankness are described by means of the external point of view of editorial omniscience:

And he sped along with the kids running little capers of joy behind him. For the rogue and scoundrel that he was to the elders of the thathiar community, he was the idol of the youth of the craft.... Also, there was the air of the rebel about him, the man who worshipped no God and feared no mortal and had travelled further by train than anyone else in the neighbourhood. And there was his large, expensive, generous manner, the open, frank, hearty speech which endeared him to those whose impulses were yet free from all restraint...54

Obviously, it was not possible to portray Ananta's characteristics dealt with in the above passage by his stream of consciousness nor could the autobiographical mode suit here, for that would amount to self-praise. And if any other character in the novel had paid him the compliment, he would not have been so reliable as the omniscient narrator.

As regards the theme of clash between the classes -- here between the factory owners and the dispossessed coppersmiths --, multiple points of view are projected through a discussion among different characters. The mode of narration, adopted to deal with the question whether or not to resort to direct action, reveals different approaches of different characters. Ananta, the hero, is eager to form a union of all the jobless coppersmiths so that they may effectively demand justice from the capitalists. Satyapal an angry young student leader, is all for violent methods, Mahasha Hans Raj, an anti-machine Arya Samajist, suspects Ananta's

54 Ibid., p.45.
intentions and suggests a compromise, and Sardar Puran Singh Bhagat, the scholar-poet, counsels patience for the revolution to come off:

'Leaving aside the treatment anyone gets in heaven, what about ensuring a job now?' Ananta pointed the finger of an agitational challenge to the knot of thathiars. 'Will you join the union?'

'Yes,' they all muttered with one voice.

'There is no time to form the union. You must act if you are to make an impression,' said Satyapal.

'Ohe, son, you keep out of this,' said Ananta. 'Don't incite them. We have suffered long, but we can still suffer in patience till the moment arrives.'

'Yes, Satyapal. Men live and work for a cubit of stomach,' said Mahasha Hans Raj. 'And it is a question of their soul. Try compromise first.'

'The pomegranate is ripening, brothers,' said the poet. 'And it will burst if you have patience.'

The dialogue thus outlines different viewpoints to tackle the problem confronting the frustrated, jobless 'thathiars'. A discerning reader, however, vouches for Ananta's ability to assess the situation correctly.

Again, omniscient narration interspersed with dialogues is appropriate for dealing with situations which are replete with action. The tragic scene of Ananta's cold-blooded murder at the hands of Ralia is a case in point:

At this Ralia sprang up and, gripping Ananta by the throat, overpowered him.

'Now speak, swine!' he roared with a resurgence of energy.
'I will break you and rend you, as I have broken those machines, dog! I will pull the levers, push and twist your head and turn the cogs in your machine head as you were fond of doing in "Bombai", whoremonger and pimp! I shall show you!'

And he viciously lifted and struck Ananta's head on the broken part of a machine with a maniacal fury, till Ananta's skull cracked like a pitcher, and a stream of blood shot out in thick spurts.

'Ohe! Ohe! O Ishwar!' shrieked Viroo, rushing out like a frightened ape.\footnote{Ibid., p. 214.}

The narration of the heart-rending scene is effective because of
the juxtaposition of omniscient narration and dialogue: the use
of mere dialogues without editorial commentary would have rendered
the scene ineffective, and omniscient description alone (without
the actual words spoken by Relia and eye-witnesses) would have
deprived the scene of its realism. The right mixture of descrip-
tion and dialogue lends verisimilitude to the whole account; the
reader feels as if the event had taken place before his very eyes.

Thus, the use of 'stream-of-consciousness' technique in

The Dig Heeret is moderate, it is not so intensive as in Untouchable
and Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts. It is one of the
reasons that the work lacks the compactness or unity of the
earlier novels. Ananta is not always in the focus of reader's
attention as his counterparts Bakha and Nur are. The possible
reasons for Anand's limited use of the technique in this novel are
given below:
(i) By the time the novel came to be written, the method had lost much of its popularity. So, Anand rightly restricted its use only to the unfolding of sub-consciousness layers of his characters' minds (i.e. especially in respect of Ananta and Ralia).

(ii) Unlike Untouchable and Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, The Big Heart is divided into twenty-seven chapters. In some of the chapters (say Chapter IX and XXVII), Ananta figures very little. Chapter IX describing Nikka's betrothal ceremony goes on practically without Ananta's presence. Likewise, the last Chapter (No. XXVII) containing Sardar Puran Singh Bhagat's sermon to Janki after her lover's murder seems redundant because it unnecessarily shifts the point of view from Ananta to Sardar Puran Singh. The author, in fact, wanted to recreate in the novel the panorama of life as seen by him. Explaining the reason for the nervousness of the prose in The Big Heart, Anand wrote to Saros Cowasjee:

57 M.K. Naik is critical of the last chapter of this novel:

One wonders whether the novel would not have gained, if the last section (XXVII) of twelve pages, most of which are taken up by the Poet's long harangues to Janki, had been much shorter. As it stands, it seems very much like an anti-climax.

Likewise, C.D. Narasimhaiah observes that "its last section.. can be cut out without any injury to the work."
During my adolescent life in Amritsar, I had seen
the cloth merchants turned textile mill-owners, thus
making the whole city into a mental asylum. Crime
had settled down side by side with poverty. Prosta-
tution was rampant. And decay seemed to spread
like cancer in all directions. The bad dreams
swarmed on my pillow and left me wondering what
would happen when the parasites of the modern period
would regiment the old craftsmen...

The nervousness of the prose in The Big Heart, its
prolixity, and its amorphousness were deliberately
meant to create the atmosphere of confusion and
insanity, as in a bad conscience. 58

The Road (1961)

The employment of stream of consciousness in The Road
differs from that in Untouchable, Lament on the Death of a Master
of Arts and The Big Heart: its action covers two days, instead of
one, and it does not concentrate on the consciousness of the central
character alone. Its narrative pattern is kaleidoscopic: there
are frequent shifts in the point of view and the reader is allowed
to peep into the minds of different characters in quick succession.

Ann

...pursued the mirror game, at various levels of
consciousness of the people, concave and convex,
involved in this drama of the road. You will notice
that, technically, it is not a straight narrative,
but diversified by breaking through the obvious
planes to the impenetrable world of feelings of the
characters involved. The story becomes a pattern,
the kind of phulkari embroidered in Haryana. 59

As the novel begins, some Caste-Hindus -- Sajnu, Daya Ram,
Mahesh and Ram Nivas -- bar the way of Bihiku, the Chamar boy, and
his mother, Laxmi, while she is proceeding to the temple. Unable

58 Author to Critic, p.122.
59 Ibid., p.124.
to put up with the insult. Bhikhu’s sensitive nature revolts against the discrimination with which the ‘Chamars’ (leather-workers) are treated by the so-called ‘twice born’. The agitation in his mind is disclosed through his consciousness:

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. The bard in him, who felt equal to life inside him if not from his status in the world, summoned up a strange foolhardy courage into his limbs. He kept pressing on with his torso, although they were all pushing him back gingerly with their hands.

His mind goes back to the time when they used to play together and touch each other in their games. While playing, he used to touch the temple walls too. His thoughts at once serve the purpose of exposition and acquaint the reader with the situation, i.e. the Caste-Hindus would not touch the stones quarried by the untouchable to make the road.

The situation worsens when the crafty Pandit Suraj Mani instigates Sarpanch Thakur Singh against the road-makers by sending him a message through the Thakur’s young daughter, Rukmani: ‘Tell your father that Bhikhu has gone to Dhooli Singh’s field.’ Consequently, there is an altercation between Sarpanch Thakur Singh and Lambardar Dhooli Singh:

‘Come out of your field and tell me if fire and cotton can be put together?’ challenged Landlord Thakur Singh.

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61 Ibid., p.11.
'Brother Thakur Singh, this work has to be done,' answered Lambrardar Dhooli Singh. 'The road has to be built... And these boys will do the job...' 'Oh, Dhooli...,' said Landlord Thakur Singh. '... And now these chamar boys are earning wages and walking on the heart of our whole caste brotherhood... Do you realize that you will have to marry your daughter to a chamar and your son to a sweeper woman -- if you persist in this course.'

The dialogue is an effective device for depicting the split between the two groups led by Thakur Singh and Dhooli Singh respectively. Families are divided, friendships threatened and marriage contracts spoilt over the question whether or not to work with the untouchables engaged to construct the road.

The 'stream-of-consciousness' method is employed to explore the secret thoughts of each character in turn. The method contributes to characterization as well as to the development of the theme of untouchability. For instance, it is through Lambrardar Dhooli Singh's flux of mind that his stand is made sufficiently clear:

The crafty Brahmin dog was at the root of the whole trouble, Dhooli Singh knew -- the hypocrite, with the rosary in his hand,... These young upper caste boys were cowardly -- even his own sons! Otherwise, there would have been no difficulty about breaking the stones and building the roads. They played about with the untouchable boys when the elders were not looking, but when it came to work they had become pure Hindus. As though I am not one!...

These views attributed to Lambrardar Dhooli Singh, a staunch supporter of the untouchables, would have been branded as propa-
sound.... She realised that now there was a chance of breaking off this exchange arrangement, and she would not have to be given to Sajnu, whom she despised for his arrogance and his roughness. And her heart opened to the sorrow of the untouchable women, though she stood bewildered, wondering how to express her sympathy for them. 65

Sapti, Dhooli Singh's wife, also realises her folly for having deserted her godlike husband. She is chagrined at her failure to stand by him:

Then, from the darkness of her soul, there arose an anguish cry, the mourning sound for the lost clothes, the lost religion, the lost husband, the lost son and the lost daughter. And, through the cry, she touched her heart, where there were tears. And as she sobbed, Mala holding her, she cocked her head and said:

'Let us go to where your father is — we cannot stay where the light of the house is not!' 66

Again, Lachman's remorse is deeper than Mala's or Sapti's. His point of view lays bare his soul-drama effectively to depict the transformation he has undergone. His sense of guilt of being Sajnu's accomplice in the crime of setting fire to the untouchables' huts overwhelms him. He is haunted by the wails of the suffering untouchables. First, he contemplates suicide, then he confesses his crime before the Block Development Officer, and, later, he goes back to his father and engages himself in the task of road-building, little worrying about his betrothal to Rukmani, the landlord's daughter and Sajnu's sister. Lachman's conscience begins pricking him after he has committed the crime. A panic seizes him and he thinks of ending his life by drowning himself in a well. His

65 Ibid., p.60.
66 Ibid., p.62.
stream of consciousness depicts his torment:

He crushed the whole line of ants under the right foot and began to step down. The crunch of the murdered ants on the sole of his shoes, disgusted him.... Only by soaking himself in the water could he absolve himself, calm himself, forget, forget — and forgive himself for the crime of defying his father.... Perhaps the women of the Chamar households were still wailing, invoking the goddess Kali... 67

The narrative method is equally successful in registering momentary changes in the hearts of Pandit Suraj Mani, Thakur Singh and Sajnu. These characters cling to the old taboos and look down upon the untouchables. To illustrate, Lambardar Dhooli Singh compels Pandit Suraj Mani to eat mangoes in the company of the 'Chamar' road-makers. An incidental editorial comment at this stage is significant:

At any rate, the taboo of touching seemed to be broken, in so far as the Brahmin was compromised into accepting mangoes handled by the untouchable woman, Lachmi.

That is exactly what Dhooli Singh had wanted as a sanction for breaking the taboo himself. 68

The remark made by the omniscient narrator shows that the Pandit is made to lick the dust after all the fuss he had created over the segregation of the so-called untouchables. Similarly, Thakur Singh remains obsessed with a superiority complex till the close of the novel. His real sentiments are faithfully recorded towards the end:

67 Ibid., p. 65.
68 Ibid., p. 84.
"... But, today, the low ones sit bloated and yawn, because in this evil Kali Yug, men do not believe in God, or their betters... Good! — their houses were burnt down by the wrath of the heavens! And, now one day, lightning will strike the whole race of chamaras and outcastes..." 69

Obviously, it is only through the landlord's stream of consciousness that the reader gets a glimpse of reality, that is many caste Hindus still despise the untouchables as their inferiors. Again, the novel concludes with an incident in which Sajnu kicks a brass cup out of Bhikhu's hand, cutting the latter's lip a little. Poor Bhikhu who has been offered water by Rukmani, is assaulted by Sajnu and his companions. Sajnu's following remark leaves the reader in no doubt about the ill-treatment meted out to the untouchables:

'Wait, I shall tell father of what he has done!' said Sajnu. 'He will be hounded out of the village like a mad dog — soiling the cup!' 70

Thus, the narrative records the feelings of different characters in order to draw a true picture of the post-independence Indian society in respect of the problem of untouchability. Though untouchability has been constitutionally abolished and declared a cognizable offence, it still exists in our country. Much needs to be done in this direction; apart from laws, a change of heart is necessary to root out the evil. This is hinted at by the novelist by a skilful use of the 'stream-of-consciousness' method.

69 Ibid., p.103.
70 Ibid., p.110.
It is generally alleged that The Road is a poor rehash of the Untouchable, that is why most of Anand's critics like D. Riemenschneider, M.K. Naik, Saros Cowasjee and Alastair Niven have called it a failure. Anand, however, refutes the charge:

Riemenschneider...thinks that The Road is a failure. I don't think he has noticed the new elements of the labyrinthine interiors, which I tried to touch in this book. This novel was, therefore, not a repetition of Untouchable but an attempt at a breakthrough, at various layers of awareness below awareness.

The author is right in employing the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique to delineate different attitudes of different characters

71 (a) "In my opinion, The Road is a failure...
The plot, the presentation of characters or the action proper do not seem to have any coherence. The conflict between a low-caste boy and the traditional society has been analysed in Untouchable much more convincingly and comprehensively. In The Road we find all the old arguments once more; nothing new is said."


(b) "...The Road has neither the unity of Untouchable, nor the diversification a panoramic picture demands. In the earlier novel, Bakha stands in the centre; in the latter, interest is scattered, leaving Bhikhu a pale, unrealized figure in the crowd."


(c) "Though Anand had written a first-rate novel on untouchability twenty-five years ago, the subject still offered possibilities which he failed to explore in The Road."


(d) "None of the characters is deeply drawn, though a strong sense of what each one is like emerges from the tone of what they say..."


72 Author to Critic, p. 125.
to the problem of untouchability. The subject, of course, had great potentialities for its exploration but the novelist has compressed a vast subject into a space of only one hundred and eleven pages. He does not concentrate on any single character or event for a long time. Bhikhu, the central character, is a pale figure; there is not much of him in the novel as there is of Bakha in the Untouchable. The Road lacks the unity, depth and artistic excellence of the earlier work. As regards the relation between form and theme of this novel, the reader feels that the theme of untouchability has been merely touched upon by depicting a panorama of actual life. The problem could have been highlighted still more effectively if the novelist had elaborated the protagonist's sufferings and humiliations through his soul-drama at length.