CHAPTER III

ANAND'S USE OF THE EPIC MANNER OF NARRATION

_Coolie_ (1936)

Anand's first two novels, _Untouchable_ (1935) and _Coolie_ (1936) are immensely popular for highlighting the plight of the poorest of the poor; both the books have been translated into over forty languages. The two works, however, differ from each other in respect of narrative technique: while the first employs the Joycean method of stream of consciousness with a view to exploring the mind of its hero and concentrating on the theme of untouchability in the Hindu society in particular, the second uses the picaresque manner\(^1\) of _Huckleberry Finn_ so as to relate a series of its protagonist's adventures, nay misadventures, and to expose the evil of oppression of the poor in the Indian society in general. The action of _Untouchable_ is confined to a single day, while that of _Coolie_ is spread over a period of about two years, it begins when Munoo is fourteen and closes with his death in his sixteenth year. Again, unlike Bakha, Munoo moves from place to

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1(a) "The novel relates a series of adventures in the picaresque manner of _Huckleberry Finn_, and like _Huck Finn_, Munoo is no rogue but himself a victim of the world's rogueries."

(b) Reviewing the novel for the _London Mercury_ (Vol. 34, No. 202, August 1936), V.S. Pritchett observed:
"Coolie has, what the English novel has lost — the space, immense variety of incident and character, that was once in the picaresque novel."
— _Ibid._, p. 18.
place, and as he shifts from one place to another, his occupation also undergoes a change: at Sham Nagar, he is a domestic servant; at Daulatpur, a coolie, first in a small pickle factory and then in the market; in Bombay, a mill-worker; and finally at Simla, a lady page and rickshaw-puller. Keeping in view its wide compass, this "prose epic of modern India" has been narrated in the epic manner.

Munoo, an orphan boy, is the centre of consciousness in the novel. The reader sees through his eyes, adjusts himself to his life and 'feels with his skin'. Description of the landscape and different situations, characterization, revelation of various themes are generally accomplished from the protagonist's point of view in the third person. This oblique method of narration combines the advantages of both internal and external viewpoints and eliminates their disadvantages.

Each descriptive passage is invariably accompanied by Munoo's thoughts which lend authenticity and verisimilitude to the given account. Description of the primitive pickle and jam factory at Daulatpur is a case in point:

Munoo walked up to a small window in a corner of the room and looked down. He stood hesitant. It seemed so awkward and dangerous to descend into the strange, dark, airless outhouse of the factory, which sank like a pit into the bowels of the earth, among the tall surrounding houses in the heart of the town. The window was precariously perched on the side of a well. And Munoo was afraid of falling into the well.

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Location of the factory is thus described as seen by Munoo for the first time. It is through him that the reader learns about its uncongenial atmosphere and precarious situation. Even the autobiographical mode of narration would not have suited here, for, in that case, the narrator would have been accused of exaggeration. Limited omniscience, i.e. without editorial commentary is, therefore, appropriate. Likewise, the reader gets a close peep into the interior of the British-owned Sir George White Cotton Mills in Bombay as its description is based on Munoo's keen observation coupled with his own reactions:

Munoo stared at his surroundings, hot and perspiring. The black, expressionless faces of the coolies seemed impenetrable. He lifted his eyes to the horizontal, circular, cylindrical, octagonal, diagonal shapes of the different parts of the machine. The first impact was fascinating. Then the bold gesticulation of a hundred knobs and shafts of the engine deafened him with its uproar. But the wooden columns which stood beyond him,... gave him the feeling of being shut in a cage. 4

Again, the narrative dealing with Munoo's rail journey from Daulatpur to Bombay (at the beginning of Section IV) is attuned to the varying speed of the train. It takes note of the outside scenery and the boy's plight alternately:

The train rushed past groves of dates and palms,... past flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cows and buffaloes, past throngs of men, women and children dressed in clothes of the oddest, most varied shapes and colours.

The panic in his soul grew. The motion of his belly quickened. There was a parched taste in his mouth. His eyes glanced furtively this side and

4 Ibid., p.178.
that. He fidgeted on his hard seat and, lifting
his legs, felt stiff and uncomfortable. His brain
whirled with excitement....3

Here, unlimited omniscient narration would have seemed a digression.
Similarly, the first-person viewpoint would have sounded incredibl
because Munoo, who had studied only up to the fifth class, could no
give the details of the wayside scenery, nor would it have become
him to describe his own condition so pathetically. The oblique
method of narration, therefore, does justice to the subject.

Episodes in the novel also centre upon Munoo. These are so
related that "Karuna"6 or compassion is aroused in the reader's
heart for the victim of oppression. To illustrate, Munoo is taken
to task for relieving himself near the wall outside his master's
house at Sham Nagar. The incident is narrated from his point of
view:

A sudden fear seized him that she should come and
see him. But he could not check himself and get up.
... she appeared at the door, saw him, and, unable
to bear the sight, withdrew. 'Vay, you shameless,
shameless, vulgar, stupid hillboy! ... Hail! What a
horrible, horrible mess he has made outside my
door!'7

5 Ibid., p.147.
6(a) "The Buddhist 'Karuna' or compassion... became for me the
pervasive starting point of comprehension of each feeling,
word, thought, and act that constitutes the world behind the
scene of the human drama, from which catharsis or ultimate
pity arises."
— Mulk Raj Anand, Lines Written to an Indian Air (Bombay :
(b) "As opposed to Aristotle's definition of 'Katharsis' in the
context of tragedy meaning the purging of the audience's
emotions by evoking pity and terror at the suffering of the
tragic hero, Anand's idea 'Karuna' means expiation through
art'."
— Shyam M. Asnani, "A Critique of Mulk Raj Anand's Literary
7 Coolie, pp.20-1.
The narrative focusses the reader’s attention on Munoo’s predicament. Also, a pen-portrait of his mistress is drawn exactly as she appears to the boy. This device makes the reader sympathise with Munoo and laugh at his mistress’s eccentric behaviour. Again soon after the Chief Cashier Mr. W.P. England’s futile visit to Babu Nathoo Ram’s house, poor Munoo is blamed for the fiasco of the tea-party hosted by his master to win his own boss’s favour. Though several characters play their parts in the episode, Munoo remains the focus of everybody’s attention:

A shock of apprehension had passed through him when he dropped the china, and seized his soul in a knot of fear...

Bibiji sprang from her seat near the kitchen and gave him a sharp, clear slap on the cheek.

“You spoiler of our salt!” she raved.

“You have brought bad luck to our house! You beast! And I have tried hard to correct you ---.”

“Oh, leave him alone,” said Prem. It is not his fault.” And he went towards the boy.

“Don’t let me hear you weep, or I will kill you, you stupid fool!” said Babu Nathoo Ram angrily as he came in with tear-filled eyes.

The whole scene, though dramatized, revolves round Munoo whose viewpoint clearly brings out the theme of inhuman treatment meted out to the domestic servants. This is further illustrated by another incident in which the boy is abused and beaten for having bitten his master’s daughter on the cheek in sheer playfulness. Bibi Uttam Kaur raises a hell of noise over it, challenging the very status of the boy to mix with the children of his superiors.

8 Ibid., p.47.
Babu Nathoo Ram, too, flies into a rage; he slaps the boy on the cheek, kicks him with his boots and strikes him with a stick:

'Look, people, the darkness has enveloped the world! Look! ...' Bibiji was beginning again.

Babu Nathoo Ram advanced with a flourish of his hand to still his wife and to slap the boy...
And kicking the boy again, ferociously, he made towards the corner where a thick stick lay...

'Oh Babuji, forgive me, forgive, forgive, please!' he screamed and squirmed, grovelling on the ground.

'Yes, I will forgive you!' the Babu hissed as he came sweating and struck him blow after blow.

Munoo writhed with pain and groaned. 9

The narrative method thus succeeds in revealing the theme of cruelty to domestic servants. It is reminiscent of the Dickensian method adopted for communicating similar themes through his novels.

Other issues such as unemployment, abject poverty, exploitation, communal hatred and moral degradation are also dealt with from Munoo's point of view. For instance, in Section III his frantic efforts to get work as a coolie in the market (after his benefactor, Prabha, has fallen on evil days) are described poignantly:

...he found it difficult to get through to the front, so wild was the rush for jobs by the taller and heftier coolies. He tried to push, to scrape through the edges, to crawl under the legs of the crowd. He sweated with activity. But he did not get anywhere near the vantage point. He stood helpless at the back, only hearing the shouts, the curses, the oaths and prayers that arose from the throng. 10

9 Ibid., p. 59.
10 Ibid., p. 117.
Likewise, the priest's lechery is exposed through Munoo's observation. While following a yogi (an ascetic), he discovers, to his great surprise and disappointment, that the yogi turns out to be a voluptuary who is responsible "for the births of 'sons of god' to the wives of the merchant class." Again, the plight of shelterless coolies, occupying every inch of the pavements of Bombay at night, is depicted through Munoo's felt experience:

Munoo looked...there were corpses and corpses all along the pavement. If the half-dead are company he was not alone....

Similarly, it is through Munoo's consciousness that a picture of the class-ridden society is presented:

'I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Vama, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the Sahiblogs and all servants look alike. There must only be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor.'

The third-person narration, with Munoo as a centre of consciousness, thus effectively brings home to the reader all the major themes of the novel.

Characterization in the novel is also done from Munoo's angle. For instance, the reader learns about Munoo when the latter introspects himself:

'Am I really ominous?' he asked himself. 'My father died when I was born, and then my mother, and I brought misfortune to Prabha, and it seems,'
I have brought misfortune to Hari now. If I am ominous, why don't I die? My death would rid the world of an unlucky person. I would like to die. It were better to be dead....

The interior monologue gives the reader a fair idea of Munoo's characteristics, especially of his sensitivity. No other method would have disclosed his innermost feelings better than that of self-introspection. As regards other characters, they appear life-like in so far as they are drawn from Munoo's point of view. In case of departures, however, the characters are reduced to caricatures. First, successful characterization owes itself to Munoo's observation. For instance, Prabha (in Section III) emerges as an admirable and lovable character because he is so kind to the orphan boy, Munoo, whom he discovers from under the bunk of a third-class railway compartment:

The Seth Prabh Dyal patted the boy on his back and said:

'Come, come now, be a brave lad. Wipe your eyes. We will take care of you. Look, we are almost nearing Daulatpuri!...

He felt very tender towards the boy. He had suddenly recognized a kinship with him, the affinity his soul felt for his unborn son....

Similarly, it is through Munoo's consciousness that the reader is enabled to see through the wickedness of Ganpat, Prabha's unscrupulous partner:

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14 Ibid., p.182.
15 Ibid., p.64.
Munoo... was always quick to sense people's emotions... He had vaguely surmised the causes of Ganpat's temper long ago from the way the goat-face looked at Prabha, at Lachi, at the workers, at the cash-box and the ochre-coloured account books.

He knew on the day that the Ganpat arrived that the goat-face had something on his mind. What it was he did not quite know. So he vaguely called it guilty conscience.16

Munoo's point of view thus prepares the reader to judge Ganpat in right perspective. The device hints at the subsequent event of Ganpat's swindling his upright partner, Prabha, and breaking away from him after leaving him in the lurch. Like Ganpat, other characters, viz. Gujri, Daya Ram, Bibi Uttam Kaur, Babu Nathoo Ram and Jimmie Thomas, appear to the reader exactly as they do to Munoo. For instance, the boy censures his mistress, Bibi Uttam Kaur, thus:

'What an awful bitch of a woman,' he thought.17

The way she constantly nags at Munoo, the servant, further proves that she is a tempest. Similarly, the boy seethes with anger when his uncle, Daya Ram, beats him cruelly:

'Hateful, hateful uncle!' he muttered through his breath. 'Son of a bitch! I hate you!' And he ground his teeth in fury, as if to put some power into the thoughts of revolt that possessed him.

'I shall go away!' he said to himself. 'I shall just disappear from this place, away from that woman and Daya Ram!...'

16 Ibid., p. 94.
17 Ibid., p. 29.
18 Ibid., p. 50.
The interior monologue is suitable for disclosing the boy's secret thoughts which he dare not utter before his tormentors. The device also proves effective in making comparisons and contrasts between different characters:

'Why,' he asked, 'are some men so good and others bad—some like Prabha and the elephant-driver, others like Ganpat and the policeman, who beat me at the railway station?' 19

Successful characterization is thus rendered from Munoo's point of view; nevertheless, editorial commentary in respect of Sir Todar Mal (in Section III) and Mrs. May Mainwaring (in Section V) diminishes the illusion of reality. To illustrate, Sir Todar Mal is introduced by the omniscient narrator as follows:

Sir Todar Mal had been for twenty years or more a luminary of the Daulatpur Bar,... The Government of India...made him a Public Prosecutor in the Daulatpur courts. And, though he had long since retired from that position, his prestige with the Government stood high because he had rendered great services in the war, contributing as much as twenty thousand rupees to the Viceroy's fund.... 20

Since Munoo is not the centre of consciousness here, Sir Todar Mal past history seems redundant; it contributes little to the general scheme of the novel or to the development of Munoo's character.

Here, omniscient narration amounts to authorial intrusion. Perhaps the novelist wants to ridicule human vanity through Todar Mal's characterization. But, instead of imposing the antecedents of this character on the narrative, it would have been better if Todar Mal

19 Ibid., pp.142-43.
20 Ibid., p.81.
had been sketched either through Munoo's observation or by means of a conversation among the coolies working in the pickle factory. It may be pointed out that, as contrasted with the character of Si Todar Mal, that of Lady Todar Mal is more convincing because it is drawn from Munoo's angle:

Munoo applied his ears. He heard another voice, the clarity of whose utterance distinguished it from the previous old man's voice as an old woman's voice...

Munoo wondered if it were not the nagging voice of his mistress in Sham Nagar that he heard in his imagination, though it was not so hard a voice...

Again, Mrs. Mainwaring's characterization (in Section V) has been the chief target of criticism on moral as well as technical grounds. Jack Lindsay in The Elephant and the Lotus (1965) and C.D. Narasimhaiah in The Swan and the Eagle (1969) contend that the last section is not an organic part of the novel and, therefore, could be omitted. Narasimhaiah is by far the more critical of the two. In his opinion,

...the Simla episode of the Anglo-Indian woman isn't an organic part of the total pattern of the novel and exists apart as it were, an after-thought, an accretion on so well-knit a work of art. I wish Anand could cut it out ruthlessly and restore the health of an otherwise admirable work.

Saros Cowasjee, however, does not agree with this view. He opines that the Simla episode "is the correct finale: the boy who had come from the hills to work and see the world goes back to the hills." According to him, "What is wrong with this chapter is

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21 Ibid., p.78.
that Anand gets so involved pillorying the Anglo-Indian woman
that he loses sight of the hero." 23

Section V of the novel virtually begins with an omniscient
introduction to Mrs. May Mainwaring who has brought Munoo to Simla
after the latter had been knocked down by her car in Bombay. The
novelist devotes some five pages to telling her chequered career,
especially about her mixed pedigree. He goes out of his way to
cast aspersions upon her character: "she became a bitch to all
the dogs that prowled round her bungalow." 24 Editorial commentary
unnecessarily shifts the point of view from the central character,
Munoo, to a comparatively less important character, Mrs. May
Mainwaring. It is the main reason that her characterization is
the weakest spot in the novel. It would have, however, emerged
more convincingly if Munoo's viewpoint had been employed consis-
tently throughout. There are, nevertheless, a few instances which
depict her from the boy's angle. To illustrate, her abortive
attempt at seducing Munoo reveals her character more dramatically
and successfully than any amount of authorial commentary could do:

May treated his hands with tender movements, smiled
at him, and carelessly undraping her right leg
before him, flourished a silken handkerchief which
she had soaked in eau-de-Cologne at him. Then she

23 Saros Cowasjee, Coolie: An Assessment, p.53.
24 Coolie, p.243.

In this regard, Saros Cowasjee says:
While editing Coolie for the Bodley Head, I urged Anand to
cut out much of Mrs.Mainwaring's unpleasant background. I
particularly objected to the phrase 'she became a bitch to all
the dogs that prowled around her bungalow.'
— Coolie: An Assessment, p.54.
looked at him with a wild flutter in her eyes, and, completing the manicure with protracted blandishments, said:

'Beautiful boy! Lovely boy! You only want a wife now.'

The boy feels embarrassed and falls at her feet in an orgy of tears and kisses. The coquette, however, conducts herself hypocritically, for she rebukes him for his impertinence. The reader thus learns about her flirtatious nature indirectly and, therefore, quite effectively.

Nobody minds a brief and relevant editorial comment (although that, too, should be avoided as far as possible). For instance, towards the close of Section II, the novelist remarks:

A whipped dog hides in a corner, a whipped human seeks escape.

The remark is apt, as it is highly suggestive of the course of action the boy is likely to pursue after he has been beaten to the point of rebellion. Likewise, in Section IV, the omniscient narrator describes Bombay as a "strange, hybrid, complex, cosmopolitan" city. The description is well-suited and further substantiates the elephant-driver's warning to Munoo:

The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam.

Editorial commentaries, especially where these tend to be too long, diminish the authenticity of the narrative. The story of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Coolie, p. 249.
\item[26] Ibid., p. 59.
\item[27] Ibid., p. 148.
\item[28] Ibid.
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the invention of the rickshaw and its detailed description in Section V is a case in point:

The Rev. J. Fordyce..., being very concerned to see that the souls of his flock did not suffer from the discomforts of the body... concentrated all his efforts to securing an adequate vehicle for the conveyance of their persons from their bungalows to the Church and from the church to their bungalows. He invented the rickshaw. The people of Simla still remember his magnificent model...

The usual length of the Simla rickshaw is nine feet, including the shaft, and the breadth is four feet. The weight is normally 260 to 360 lb., exclusive of the weight of the ladies and gentlemen who ride in them...

Evidently, the novelist wants to communicate to the reader that rickshaw-pulling in a hilly area is a strenuous job. Instead of giving all the details of the rickshaw, he should have only shown how killing rickshaw-pulling is, as he actually does later when Munoo spits out blood owing to tuberculosis, the insidious disease having been aggravated by his pulling the rickshaw for Mrs. Mainwaring.

On the whole, Coolie is, thematically, more ambitious than Untouchable but, technically, it lacks the compactness of the earlier work.

The Lal Singh Trilogy

Anand's trilogy comprising The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) is akin to

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29 Ibid., pp. 252-53.
Coolie with regard to its narrative technique. Like Munoo, its protagonist, Lal Singh alias Lalu, is the centre of consciousness in it. Conceived as "an Indian War and Peace", it is epic in intention and scope. The first volume deals with Lalu's youth in the Punjab, the second recounts his experiences as a soldier taken to France to fight during the First World War, and the third traces his chequered career as a revolutionary on his return to India after his release from a German prisoner-of-war camp. Lalu's point of view is generally employed to highlight various themes, particularly those concerning the Indian peasantry. The opening book presents their problems, the next offers suggestions for redress and the last attempts to tackle these in the light of different political ideologies.

The Village (1939)

The Village recounts Lalu's exploits, first as a wayward youth living with his parents in Nandpur, a village in the Punjab, and then as a recruit in Ferozepur Cantonment. The theme of exploitation and oppression of the Indian peasant by the wicked landlord, the greedy money-lender, the crafty lawyer, the lecherous priest and the callous bureaucrat is put forward cogently from the protagonist's point of view.

The first two chapters of the novel are introductory; these apprise the reader of Lalu's family background and milieu. Appar-

ently, Baba Nihalu dominates the opening chapter but the narrative attaches equal importance to his youngest son, Lalu, as well. It is by means of dialogue between the two that a contrast between the older and the younger generation is presented. For instance, while the father is critical of the railway engine for the harmful smoke it emits, the son "wouldn't mind being a driver and going to Lahore and Bombay with it."\textsuperscript{31} Against the former's reactionary attitude, the latter's outlook is progressive. Again, Baba Nihalu, though aware of the cause of his suffering, is a fatalist; he believes that "it is all in the hands of Wah Gum."\textsuperscript{32} He, however, tells his tale of woe to Lalu:

...I can never forget that those ferungis took the Punjab by a fraud. To make Teja Singh a landlord! Think of the iniquity, people! We lost ten of the twenty-five acres we had inherited, through that thuggery by the Sarkar. And after the traitor's death, his son, Harbans, has the effrontery to take another five by producing a false deed...\textsuperscript{33}

The young man is, however, clever enough to understand his father's temper:

'You shouldn't have taken the deal at the market to heart,' said Lalu. 'You knew long before you went to Manabad that the price of grain is falling. And as for the suit, well, you know that fleeing Balmukand...'\textsuperscript{34}

A discerning reader can thus foresee that Lalu is likely to emerge as a promising character in the succeeding chapters.

\textsuperscript{31} Mulk Raj Anand, \textit{The Village} (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1960), p. 2
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.
Technically, the second chapter is an extension of the first; it introduces other members of Lalu's family and furthers the theme of the novel through omniscient narration interspersed with dialogues. For example, Lalu's mother, Gujri, is described as:

a stately figure as she walked up, in spite of the sixty years during which she had borne six children, and worked hard. Yet she looked strangely demure and innocent. 35

Likewise, Lalu's eldest brother, Sharam Singh, is introduced as "a tall figure of forty with a stooping head, loosely turbaned over a pale face illuminated by a pointed red beard." 36 Obviously the omniscient mode of narration is suitable here because it is economical and reliable. If Lalu's point of view had been employed instead, the reader would have been prejudiced in favour of or against a particular character from the very beginning, for his judgement would have been coloured by the boy's attitude towards that character. Further, dialogues, being common ingredients of omniscient narration, lend liveliness to the narrative and help in characterization and revelation of themes. To illustrate, Sharam Singh, while referring to his younger brother, Dayal Singh, says, "He is already thirty-five and will soon be too old to marry." 37 Similarly, Baba Nihal Singh talks to his cousin, Harnam Singh, about the deplorable plight of the peasants:

35 Ibid., p.16.
36 Ibid., pp.16-7.
37 Ibid., p.18.
...Everywhere one goes in the town it is the same. At the courts, in the bazaar, in the wholesale market. The pleader thugs you, the Seth counts so quickly, you can’t tell the figures, and the policia wants his palm greased before he lets the cart go past the customs...”

The speaker’s remarks are convincing because these are the outcome of his personal experiences and are narrated by him in his own words.

Chapter III marks a significant shift in the point of view; Lalu now emerges as a prominent figure whose fortunes occupy the rest of the book:

‘I Must go to the fair, whatever they say,’
Lalu mumbled to himself. ‘I must,’ he repeated.

Henceforth, all the major episodes in the novel are concerned with him and are dealt with from his angle. For example, in Chapter XI when he returns home with his ritualistic long hair shorn at Manab he is first taken to task by his father and eldest brother, and then publicly disgraced by the other fanatics of the village. After he is beaten by his father and brother, the narrative takes note of his agony:

Lalu was taken aback by the onslaught even though he had expected it. One part of him longed to struggle. But the feeling of docility and respect that had been inculcated in him since birth made him dumb and unresisting, though he smouldered with rage and self-pity.

38 Ibid., p.22.
39 Ibid., p.25.
40 Ibid., p.91.
Lalu's reaction to the humiliating situation is reminiscent of Bakha's stream of consciousness during the slapping episode in Untouchable or that of Munoo's after he is beaten mercilessly by Babu Nathoo Ram and uncle Daya Ram in Coolie. Again, when Lalu wriggles himself out of the hold of his tormentors who have blackened his face, put him on a donkey and paraded him through the village streets, his torment is disclosed aptly through his stream of consciousness:

Oh, I wish I had never been born here if they had to treat me like that! ...the abuse...the shouts...the insults...and...oh, how could they...they blackened my face...they put me...All of them...my own people...'

Likewise, when he is obliged to flee his village in order to escape arrest on account of a false charge of theft, his pent-up fury is expressed appropriately by means of his interior monologue:

'Why didn't I strike the dog?' he burst out as he recalled how Harbans Singh had come threatening towards his father and told him to keep out of it. 'Why didn't I shout, abuse or say something to teach him? Why didn't I do something to deny the charge, to show that it was a frame-up? Why, oh, why didn't I...'

Lalu's point of view thus lends verisimilitude to the episodes. It also evokes the reader's 'karuna' for him.

Themes, like episodes, are also rendered from Lalu's angle. For instance, the Mahant's lechery is exposed through the protagonist's consciousness:

41 Ibid., p.98.
42 Ibid., p.163.
Why couldn't the family learn better than to waste money on gifts for these charlatans? Why? The man hadn't done anything for them for years, but came in at the end of every harvest for his share of the grain, and the gift of clothes! The lecher! He ate sumptuous food, dressed in yellow silks, smoked charas and drank hemp, and, if reports were true, whored and fornicated. And he was kept as a holy man, the Guru of the community!43

Lalu's assessment of the Mahant's character seems quite authentic and is meant to warn the ignorant, naive and stupid people against such parasites and hypocrites as pass for saints. As in Untouchable and Coolie, so also in The Village the protagonist's viewpoint is effective in bringing this theme home to the reader. Likewise, the money-lender's shrewdness is disclosed by means of Lalu's conversation with Seth Chaman Lal. When the latter insisted on having the guarantee of grain as a precondition for lending money to Nihal Singh, Lalu draws the seth's attention to the high rate of interest he is charging:

'A paise in a rupee!' the Seth snarled, opening his mouth wide as if he were going to put his teeth into the boy. Is that any surety for a loan?

'That is eighteen and three-quarters per cent,' said Lalu angrily, 'and you are not content!'

'I am doing business here, not charity,' came the sehukar's answer straight and hard, ...44

Like the priest's hypocrisy and the money-lender's avarice, other themes such as the patwari's high-handedness, the landlord's tyranny and the army instructor's cruelty are all dealt with convincingly from Lalu's point of view.

43 Ibid., p. 45.
44 Ibid., p. 117.
The effectiveness of the epic manner of narration, with
the protagonist as a centre of consciousness, is particularly
notable towards the close of the novel. As the Sepoy Lal Singh is
about to board the ship which is to carry his regiment across the
black waters, the news of his father's death is broken to him.
Upon this, he indulges in dreamy retrospections:

He looked nostalgically across Karachi...to
explore Nandpur.

...his vision...rested now on Guchi's face,
now on the hind legs of Thiba and Rondu going
round and round the well; and then it quickly
passed in array the shifty, squint-eyed, twisted
lecherous face of Mahant Nandgir smoking hemp and
coughing a thick yellow spittle; the refulgent
beard of the landlord and the strained visage of
Seth Chaman Lal lifting his rump to let loose a
noise...

He had had a difficult time of it, he told
himself. The absurd fuss about the long hair and
then that incident about Maya....

Here, the narration borders on the stream of consciousness and is
effective in epitomising the main events of the novel as well as
for recording Lalu's impressions of other characters. Only the
third-person point of view could enable the novelist to cover a
vast ground so briefly and successfully.

As regards editorial comments in the novel, these are kept
to the minimum. The reader does not mind the inclusion of brief
and relevant remarks by the omniscient narrator. For example,
as a prelude to the incident in which Lalu and Maya are caught
red-handed (by her father) while they are engaged in a childish
skirmish, the omniscient narrator aptly says:

It was as he lay thus drowsing one day that an incident happened which was to change the course of his life. The comment arouses the reader's curiosity about the coming event. He feels satisfied that the subsequent happening does prove to be a turning point in Lalu's life. The commentary, nevertheless, becomes objectionable if it is too long and gives the reader an impression that the author is intruding himself into the narrative. To illustrate, in between Lalu's thoughts the novelist starts giving the historical background of the Sikhs' ritual of keeping long hair:

'I will have this forest of tangled overgrowth cut if I get to the town for the fair,' he said with increasing impatience... The katch, kara, kirpan, kesh and kanga might well have been necessary when Guru Gobind was fighting Aurangzeb. Then it was said he enjoined his men to wear shorts because he couldn't get clothes.... Such provisions were dictated by necessity and common sense.... There was no religion in doing so. He had always felt impatient and embarrassed at having to wear long hair. The other K's he didn't mind. They were unnecessary and superstitious, but they did not involve any active inconvenience. The author perhaps wants to acquaint the foreign reader with these facts. His comments, though sandwiched between Lalu's spells of contemplation, can be easily detected and, as such, amount to authorial intrusions. Whatever the reasons for making such bold assertions, it is always better for the novelist to avoid making his own comments. The number of such instances in the novel is, however, small. On the whole, the epic manner of narration generally accomplishes descriptions, characterization and themes of the novel from the protagonist's point of view.

46 Ibid., p. 152.
47 Ibid., p. 28.
Across the Black Waters (1940)

The second volume of the Lalu trilogy, Across the Black Waters, employs the protagonist's viewpoint more consistently than the first; its action focusses on Lalu from beginning to end. It begins with his regiment disembarking at Marseilles to fight in Flanders (France), thus providing a continuity with the previous volume which ends with his unit embarking on a ship at Karachi. It concludes with his being wounded and taken prisoner of war by the Germans at Festubert. Although he is but one of several millions caught in the maelstrom of war, he is the centre of all the events recounted in the novel.

The narrative attaches considerable importance to Lalu's thoughts, words and deeds. For instance, as the convoy ships carrying the first Divisions of Indian troops approach the coast of France, he expresses his feelings on behalf of his fellow soldiers:

'So we have come across the black waters safely,' he said to himself apprehensively, as if he really expected some calamity, the legendary fate of all those who went beyond the seas, to befall him at any moment.  

The use of pathetic fallacy further describes his condition effectively:

The sea spoke the language of his soul, restless and confused while the wind went bursting with joy in the sun. And the ship was urging him forward into the unknown.


49 Ibid., p.9.
All the battle scenes, dealt with in this novel, make a special mention of his involvement. The narrative first depicts the plight of the soldiers in general and then that of Lalu's in particular. For instance, in Section V, a scene of the tired soldiers sitting inside a trench is presented vividly:

Legs athwart, legs sprawled over the length of the trench, legs propped up to adjacent walls, legs bent and squeezed into knots, legs, legs, legs, a conglomeration of legs was all that was visible of the sepoys as they sat about in the trenches...

Lalu crouched as he alternately dozed and contemplated the layers of mud sticking to his boots.... And inside the boots, his feet seemed frozen...50

As in the case of narrative pattern used to deal with Munoo's rail journey in Section IV of Coolie, so also here the description of the soldiers' lot as well as that of Lalu's is rendered in alternate passages. The whole account is thus presented authentically from Lalu's point of view. Again, his encounter with a German soldier is narrated at length. He kills the enemy and divests the victim of his wrist-watch. His action is accompanied by his words and secret thoughts which render the account authenti...

...the boy stooped low like a lion on the prowl and charged him with his bayonet.... The man gnashed his teeth and groaned as he fell. Lalu groped for his victim, to finish him, murmuring: 'Weep and wail!...'

He had not suspected such cruelty in himself, but before his fear or pity could restrain him, a shell soared in the sky and illuminated the shadows and the glass of a wrist-watch on his victim's
wrist. He swooped upon the prize, slightly afraid that the man's ghost might strike him or possess him....51

The protagonist's viewpoint enables the reader to peep into his (Lalu's) mind and to share his anxiety during each operation in the war. The closing battle scene in the novel, in which Lalu is wounded in the leg and captured by the enemy, is a case in point:

He felt a warmth go through his left thigh and he stumbled and fell.
As he looked up he saw himself staring into the barrel of a rifle.
Instinctively a moanlike sob rose from his throat and with a face contorted by terror, he began to sit up, his eyes half closed, his hands lifted in the air.
A bullet went through the calf of his left leg and he fell face forwards.
He hoped he was not dead. Lifting his eyes, shivering, hissing and sobbing, 'Hai Mother,' he saw a lion-moustached German dragging him and two other sepoys into the trench.52

The reader thus identifies himself with Lalu; he perceives all the experience the latter undergoes and feels shocked with him at the death of his close companions -- Daddy Dhanoo, Havildar Lachman Singh and Uncle Kirpu -- one after another.

The dominant theme of the novel -- the horror and tragedy of war -- is communicated through Lalu's consciousness. To illustrate, in Section III he swoons at the sight of the wounded soldiers who have been brought from the battle-field. The effect of the moving spectacle on Lalu's mind is given in detail:

51 Ibid., pp.180-81.
52 Ibid., pp.321-22.
A sudden tremor of dread spread like a panic in his brain above the vague cloud on which hovered the confusion of silence. Would these soldiers ultimately die or recover from their wounds?...
The question seemed to come rushing up with the pressure of blood in his veins and become the subtle ache of trepidation...
The smell of the hospital train seemed to overpower him now... 53

Again, in Section IV the destructiveness of war is censured by the central character:

...he could not believe that ordinary men and women of good sense, and the Governments of France, England and Germany, which were saner and wiser than the ordinary people over whom they ruled, could be engaged in a war in which men were being killed and wounded and houses shattered. 54

Similarly, at the sight of dead soldiers lying in the battle-field, he contemplates the havoc caused by war and pathetically remarks at the close of Section IV:

'After having prepared themselves for life all these years. Dead and finished...' 55

A sense of waste wrought by war is thus brought home to the reader from the hero's point of view. Any editorial comment at this place would have diminished the artistic effect of narration.

Another important theme of the novel — the universality of human nature — is also highlighted through Lalu's consciousness. In Section III he is deeply moved by the sight of the French

53 Ibid., p. 78.
"Lalu faints at the sight of blood, very much as Anand himself did when he saw a blood transfusion during the Spanish Civil War."
54 Ibid., pp. 92–3.
55 Ibid., p. 110.
soldiers taking leave of their families. He is greatly impressed to observe that, like the Hindustanis, they also embrace before parting. The idea that all the human beings are alike in affection is stressed by means of the protagonist's observation:

A woman on the platform was sobbing hysterically, a poor frail thing, as she clung to her husband while he was whispering something as he stroked her and soothed her.

Lalu waved his head as if he were drunk with a sudden tenderness now and he felt as if there was the utterest happiness in that embrace as well as pain.56

Human emotions such as love, hate, joy, sorrow, fear, pity etc. are common to all, irrespective of differences in dress, language and custom. For example, in Section IX, Lalu is touched to see that Madame Labusiere is grieved to remember her eldest son who was killed in action during the war. The whole scene is presented from Lalu's angle:

...from the sorrow of this mother with tears trickling down her cheeks at the memory of her dead son, he knew that these people were also susceptible to sorrow as well as to joy, and to every other kind of inward tumult, that they also broke down when they were struck....57

Again, in Section X it is through Lalu's observation that the irony underlying the war (i.e. the Germans and the English, though both Christians, are engaged in fighting) is brought out effectively. On Christmas Day, hostilities are suspended and both the enemies wish each other a happy Christmas by partaking of the Christmas Cake. If editorial comments had been inserted at

56 Ibid., p. 84.
57 Ibid., p. 219.
these places, the novelist would have been dubbed a propandagast and the narrative would have lost a great deal of its charm. Lalu's point of view, therefore, points out the theme authentically.

Still another theme — agrarian reforms — is dealt with successfully by means of the hero's visit to Labusiere's wonderful cattle farm. He is impressed by the well-groomed animals and the cleanliness of the place. In a letter written by him from France to his mother in India, he records his observations on varied subjects, viz. war and the soldiers' lot, the French culture, his own plans for setting up a farm on modern lines on his return to India and his desire to ameliorate the Indian peasantry etc. As regards the maintenance of French cattle-farms, the prosperity of the French farmers and his own plans, he writes down:

Oh, how clean is the farm! The floors of the stables shine like mirrors! And smell -- you never hear the name of it!

The reason why these people are happier is because they do not borrow money from moneylenders, but from the Bank at very low interest. When I come back, I shall ask the Karmel Sahib to order the bania to give back our mortgages, and to get the landlord to return the lands he has seized from us as a reward for fighting in this war. 58

The letter thus is an effective device introduced to sum up Lalu's impressions of his visit to France, to hint at the various reforms Indian farmers should bring about and to outline his own future programme. It may be pointed out that the next volume of the trilogy deals with his abortive attempts at solving the problems of the Indian peasantry.

There are, however, very few editorial comments in the novel and Lalu's point of view generally pervades the narrative. Nevertheless, authorial comments are not entirely absent. As in The Village, so also in this novel, there are a few references to the Sikhs' custom of keeping long hair. Also, the omniscient narrator makes his observations on the institution of prostitution. During a visit of Lalu, Subah and other sepoys to a brothel at Orleans (in Section III), the editorial comments run as follows:

...They were originally perhaps merely ignorant, poor girls who fell a prey to the advice of someone who told them of a way to earn easy money, and were lured by the life of the senses, till they were fouled and used and couldn't get back to ordinary life. But, as in India, perhaps prostitutes were meant to show the young the various ways of love-making.59

Such comments are, however, few and far between. On the whole, Lalu's point of view is employed magnificently in the novel with a view to presenting various situations and themes convincingly. It is for this reason that the novel has been commended by all Anand's critics, including Meenakshi Mukherjee who calls Across the Black Waters "unlike anything that Anand has ever written."60

The Sword and the Sickle (1942)

The point of view in The Sword and the Sickle is not so consistent as it is in the preceding two volumes of the Lalu trilogy. Apparently, the novel recounts the protagonist's exper-

59 Ibid., p. 57.
iences on his return to India after his release from a German prisoner-of-war camp but, in fact, it does not employ a single centre of consciousness uniformly. In Sections I, II and IX, Lalu alone is in focus, while in the remaining sections, i.e. from III to VIII, the reader's interest is divided between him and another character, Kanwar Rampal Singh, a self-deposed count of Rajgarh. The shifts in the point of view are, however, necessitated by the requirements of different situations.

Section I is narrated exclusively from Lalu's angle. It opens with a description of the last stage of his rail journey from Bombay to Lahore. On his arrival at the depot, he is demobilized from the army on the ground that while he was in Germany, he had been exposed to the seditious propaganda against the British rule in India. Disappointed, he leaves for his native village, Nandpur. The whole account is vivid and takes note of his thoughts in particular:

... he had seldom thought that he would be discharged from the army like that.... He had fought for the Sarkar, conscious that as a soldier he had no rights, but still instinctively hoping for a reward. He had believed that just because he had been in the trenches in Flanders for some months and then laboured in road-making gangs in Germany, the Sarkar would be individually sympathetic to him,...Lalu wished now he had spoken out and told the Sahib a bit of his mind. He wished he could have smashed everything in the office to show his defiance....61

It is through Lalu's consciousness that the reader learns about the real cause of his turning a revolutionary. The seeds of revolt

have been sown in his mind and he is likely to do something spectacular in future. Here, limited omniscience is effective in building a case for the hero's forthcoming chequered career by giving glimpses of his agitated mind.

Section II is also devoted to Lalu. It deals with his visit to Nandpur and traces the developments which oblige him to flee to Rajgarh. On reaching his village, he is shocked to learn that his mother is dead and that his ancestral property has been auctioned to pay off the family's dues to the money-lender and the lawyer. He is also pained to witness the misery around him:

From the putrid peasants who had lain about in Manabad, from the swarms of children who whimpered and howled, as they begged or played antics for a pice... he could feel the pressure of an insidious pus in the boil of bursting pain and misery...62

To him, the effect of depression on India means starvation, robbery and death. He is thus a lucid reflector of the deplorable plight of the poor. Almost unawares, he finds himself associated with a group of extremists who are anxious to bring about agrarian reforms. His uncle, Haranam Singh - now an activist, takes Lalu along with him to a 'Kisan' rally. On being asked to address the audience, Lalu tells them his own story:

'... I ran away from this village when the landlord, Harbans Singh, brought Naapoo Singh, the polícia, to arrest me on a framed-up charge. And I joined the army.

The war broke out and I was drafted out to France.... On my arrival at the depot, I was demobilized without even the mention of a reward, just because I was a prisoner of war in Germany....

I came home to-day and found that my mother is dead, my home broken up and appropriated, and scarcity in the land....'63

62 Ibid., p.49.
63 Ibid., pp.53-4.
The device enables the reader to review (or to understand, if he has not read the previous volumes) the main events of Lalul's life so far. It provides continuity to his past and carries the plot further authentically. Soon after his speech, he is asked to present a petition to the Deputy Commissioner on behalf of all the peasants. He is thus installed as a leader and Prof. Verma offers him the job of a paid-agent to the revolutionary Count. At night, Lalu's sweet-heart, Maya—now a widow—comes to see him of her own accord. The two lovers, being alone in the room, give way to their desires:

The spark of recognition that had lit a fire in their senses years ago now raged with the pent-up fury of their twin bodies, over-running the barriers that stood between them, destroying the taboos in this illicit connection and uprooting all the misgivings, till awareness of the night and of the landlord's watchman emerged with the dawn and extinguished the flame.64

The epic manner of narration is suitable for a candid portrayal of the lovers' union; no other method could do justice to it. It also hints at their forthcoming elopement:

He couldn't let himself be found talking to her again in this village otherwise there wouldn't even be the need of a frame-up for Harbans Singh to enable him to be a guest of that other father-in-law, Jarj Panjam....65

Lalu's point of view enables the reader to foresee his flight from the village to escape imprisonment. Prof. Verma accompanies Lalu and Maya to Rajgarh to make good their escape. The stage is now set for Lalu to enter upon his new career as a revolutionary.

64 Ibid., p.72.
65 Ibid., p.73.
From Section III till Section VIII, the action of the novel oscillates between Lalu and the Count. Though the Count actually appears in Section III, Lalu learns something about him towards the close of Section II where Prof. Verma tells Lalu in advance about the Count's status and plans:

"The Count...is the brother of a landlord, who is dead. The estate is in the hands of the court of wards and while the deceased landlord's son is growing up with his mother in Lucknow, Rampal's younger brother, Birpal Singh, is managing the estate. Well, the Count and I returned from abroad a few months ago.... Now the Count's plan is to organize the peasantry of the big estates in his province into Kisan Sakhis...." 66

Here, Prof. Verma, being the Count's companion and confidant, is a reliable narrator. The Count's importance is mentioned even before his appearance to effect the shift in the viewpoint afterwards. In Section III, however, the Count speaks at length about himself:

"...Always in my boyhood people said I was daft. So I became an atheist and poked fun at religion... Then, as I grew up and acquired a few friends, they said I was a hooligan, so I began to gamble... At that they declared that I was mad, so I became a drunkard... I cut my losses and became an out-and-out revolutionary.... Meanwhile, I enjoy the glory of Leaderi and my imagination is kept ablaze day and night by the reverence that you of the rank and file offer me...." 67

The Count's viewpoint is appropriate to apprise Lalu (and thereby the reader) of his (the Count's) own eccentric behaviour. The ostensible protagonist, Lalu, now pales into insignificance as he admits before Kanwar Birpal Singh: 'I am your brother's new paid-

66 Ibid., p.76.
67 Ibid., pp.90-1.
agent, I shall only do what he wishes." Henceforth, the Count holds the key position. To illustrate, he is the leader of his group during a meeting with the Nawab of Nasirabad and his (the Nawab's) men in Section III. By virtue of the Count's position as a spokesman of the peasants, he dominates the scene, whereas Lalu remains passive most of the time. Likewise, in Section IV, the Count continues to be in focus even when he is admonished by Comrade Sarshar. Sarshar says that the Count's methods are "Anti-Government, anti-landlord, anti-moneylender, anti-religion, anti-Congress, anti-working class, anti-everything." It is notable that Lalu is merely present on the scene of his patron's humiliation. Again, the Count is the central figure during the Sub-Inspector Brij Bhushan Singh's visits to the Rajgarh palace, first in Section IV when he comes to apprehend Lalu on the charge of Maya's abduction, and then in Section VIII to serve the orders of expulsion on the Count and his comrades. Similarly, he is the pivotal figure when in Section VI Captain Effendi raids the palace to arrest the riot-culprits.

At times, the Count behaves as if he were the author's mouthpiece. For example, in Section IV, while stressing the need for a revolution, he gives the historical background of the peasant-problem in India:

"...throughout Hindustan there was a common system of village communities, ruled by...the Panchayat. The land was held in a manner conducive to the best interests of the peasants and could be redistributed from time to time according to ancestral shares...."
The English broke up the villages and handed the land over to robbers like my ancestors, who have reduced the peasants to tenants, with fragmentary holdings, or to labourers without a chunk of soil to wipe their bottoms with. ...\textsuperscript{70}

The Count, like Anand himself, is critical of the British rule in India; he, in his own sarcastic manner, points out the crux of the peasant problem by holding the faulty policies of the foreign rulers responsible for it.

Though the Count is given prominence on many occasions, Lalu is not altogether ignored; the latter keeps coming to the fore from now and then. His meeting with Gandhiji in Section V is a case in point. The reader perceives the Mahatma from Lalu's angle:

\dots at the farthest end sat a little lop-eared, toothless man with a shaven head, which shone clean like an aureole whom Lalu presumed to be the Mahatma himself, naked except for a strip of cloth...\textsuperscript{71}

Lalu's viewpoint restores his position as the central character. The oblique method of narration is suitable for drawing a pen-portrait of the Mahatma; here, unlimited omniscience would have amounted to authorial intrusion and, as such, would have affected the narrative adversely. It is also right to assess Gandhiji's views from Lalu's angle; although Lalu praises the Mahatma's sincerity, he does not like the latter's defining his religion so narrowly as to call himself a Sanatan Hindu. Their conversation reveals their different approaches to solve the agrarian tangle:

\'They are suffering from poverty and are weak, and they cannot protect themselves against the continual threat of being beaten up. When we were intercepted in our march on the outskirts of Nasiabad I called on them to hit back, and that had the proper effect...\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.156-59.

But he felt too embarrassed to tell the Mahatma about the tussle with the Gurkha watchman.

'Your advice to them was utterly wrong in my opinion,' the Mahatma said, his face lined with a painful impatience, '... strength does not come from physical force. It comes from the will....' 72

In order to make the episode of Lalu's interview with the Mahatma seem real, Lalu is shown giving vent to his disgruntled feelings on his way back home:

'He himself looks like the devil!' said Lalu. 'With his large ears, his sunken cheeks and his pointed chin, only he lacks the horns on the head!'.... 'The man is a physical deformity!' shouted Lalu... 73

Propriety apart, the narrative is impressive both psychologically and artistically because it records Lalu's actual reactions on the occasion.

'The story moves forward unevenly, presenting sometimes Lalu's viewpoint and sometimes the Count's. In between the two, there are inserted others' viewpoints. For example, comrade Sarshar's exhortation to Lalu, included in Section VIII, serves no other purpose than propaganda:

'... You people may have the best intentions, but, then they say in English, the road to hell is paved with good intentions! And laziness of the kind, which goes on believing in primitivism and does not lay stress on intelligent organization and solidarity among the workers, betrays not only a lack of confidence in the revolutionary movement of the people, but almost a kind of unconscious contempt and hatred of the masses!...' 74

Such harangues produce the effect of doctrinal writing, retard the tempo of the novel and divert the reader's attention from the

72 Ibid., p. 205.
73 Ibid., p. 216.
74 Ibid., p. 361.
central character.

After a great deal of rambling, the narrative is again put in order only towards the close of Section VIII. After the arrest of Kanwar Rampal Singh, Ram Din and Razwi at Rae Bareilli for defying the police orders, Lalu's viewpoint is resumed and adhered to till the end of the novel. For instance, in Section VIII the scene of shooting by the police on a mob of peasants who are demonstrating for the release of their leaders, is narrated vividly from Lalu's angle:

Lalu saw them turn, scamper, run and fall, rise again and totter.... He heard them shrieking with pain and terror, falling as they were running towards him....

He would show himself and surrender.
Then the soldiers would cease shooting.... 75

The narrative once again becomes effective after a wide gap.

Section IX presents Lalu's viewpoint magnificently. The effect of the news of his son's birth is detailed through his consciousness while he is lodged in jail:

This news seemed to shock Lal Singh back into an awareness of himself and the responsibility he owed to the woman he had left behind him. The thought of the child, born a little prematurely, for it was not due for two months yet, gnawed into him, since it was presumably the activity of the day on which they were evicted from Rajgarh that had brought on Maya's labour.... 76

Consequently, he looks back over the whole of his life in its successive stages; his retrospections run to some ten pages.

75 Ibid., p. 382.
76 Ibid., p. 384.
(pp. 364-93), beginning:

It seemed a long time ago, though it was barely five or six years, when he had gone to Manabad for the festival of lanterns...77

The narrative device employed here is reminiscent of the one adopted to describe Lalu's feelings towards the close of The Village where, on the receipt of the news of his father's death, he reviews his past. The narrative towards the end of The Sword and the Sickle is even more powerful, for, besides epitomizing the main events of Lalu's life dealt with in the three novels, it is interspersed with the haunting refrains of Maya's song of seasons: 'Do not go, my love, do not go.'78

It may, however, be mentioned here that the Lalu-Maya episode in this novel has come under sharp criticism; according to M.K. Naik, it is "totally divorced from the major concerns of the book."79 Meenakshi Mukherjee thinks that "a strand of love and sex hitherto absent is woven unsuccessfully into the narrative."80 Even Anand's great admirer, Saros Cowasjee, opines: "The conflict in Lalu's mind between his love for her and his devotion to the revolutionary movement is the least convincing thing in the book, and perhaps the only serious flaw in this very fine novel."81

Judged from the narrative angle, however, the episode is dealt with successfully. Right from Section II (where Maya voluntarily visit

77 Ibid., p. 385.
78 Ibid., p. 384.
79 M.K. Naik, Mulk Raj Anand, p. 76.
80 Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Beyond The Village", Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English, p. 242.
81 Saros Cowasjee, So Many Freedoms, p. 114.
Lalu) till the end of the novel, all the vicissitudes in their relationship are traced at length from Lalu’s point of view. For instance, in Section III, as they are journeying towards Rajgarh, Lalu is anxious about their future:

But how would his life with this girl work out? He looked at Maya... 'Why have I plucked you from the garden of your father’s home?' he seemed to be asking her as he contemplated her....82

The episode is developed throughout the novel concurrently with the development of Lalu’s career as a revolutionary. In Section VII, there is a sensational disclosure: Kanwar Birpal Singh tried to ‘tease’ Maya when she was alone. The impact of this revelation on Lalu’s mind is depicted in Sections VII and VIII. An illustration from Section VIII proves his anxiety for her:

After her revelation of Kanwar Birpal Singh’s attempt to seduce her, he had, in a resurgence of fear and weakness, almost succumbed to the wild desire of taking her away from the scene of peasant struggles to some safe haven where he could earn a comfortable living....83

In the last Section, there is a correct appraisal of their relationship from Lalu’s viewpoint:

So involved had he become in things outside himself, he argued... that he could not easily relate himself to his feelings about Maya, but only to the Revolution. For she had seemed a hindrance in the way of his work, a responsibility....84

The Lalu-Maya episode is thus sufficiently integrated into the

83 Ibid., p. 346.
84 Ibid., p. 390.
structure of the novel. It is perhaps the only thing that lends charm to an otherwise political novel.

It is also sometimes said that the book is confused or that the author's attitude towards different ideologies is ambivalent. As a matter of fact, Anand depicts Lalu's confusion amid different political theories advocated by different characters, viz. the Count, Prof. Verma, Ladli Prasad Tiwari, Comrade Sarejma, Mahatma Gandhi and Student Razwi. Lalu, an ex-peasant and ex-soldier and now a revolutionary, is not competent enough to take an active part in political discussions. It is for this reason that he remains passive during such debates; and whenever he intervenes, he only betrays his ignorance:

'Well if it is the Revolution we are after,' said Lal Singh with a belief in action far in excess of the Marxism he had so far imbibed, 'let us go and make this betchod Revolution.'

Whenever there is a direct reference to the peasants, his voice is, nevertheless, most vehement. For instance, in Section IV when Ladli Prasad Tiwari says that there is something degrading in upturning the soil, the peasant in Lalu bursts out:

'If there is something sinister in upturning the earth, its upturning yields bread. Those of you who have never yoked a plough to a pair of bullocks and turned the earth can never know the feel of cool sod on the hands and feet....'87

85 "Unfortunately, The Sword and the Sickle turns out to be a hopelessly confused book, owing to the fact that the author's own attitude concerning these ideologies is ambivalent."

86 The Sword and the Sickle, p. 9.
87 Ibid., pp. 159-60.
The shifts in the point of view in this novel are, therefore, understandable. Only there are too many harangues in the novel which detract from the merit of the book, as K.N. Sinha observes:

While it may be conceded that the presentation is both sincere and faithful, the novel, nonetheless, suggests a monotone, the effect of which is not very different from that of doctrinal writing. The author's effort to transmute his emotional beliefs into the novel by finding objective corollaries is not successful.88