CHAPTER V

MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW IN ANAND'S NOVELS

Two Leaves and A Bud (1937)

Anand's first three novels — Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud — though thematically grouped together as epics of misery, employ different narrative techniques: the first novel uses the Joycean method of stream of consciousness, the second is written in the epic manner and the third projects multiple viewpoints. While the first two novels have each a single centre of consciousness, the third does not concentrate on the protagonist alone; Gangu, the central character in Two Leaves and a Bud, is not the focus of the reader's attention throughout as Bakha and Munoo — the heroes of their respective novels — are. The novelist's intention in this work is to highlight the plight of the tea-plantation coolies. He depicts the panorama of life on the Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam. The action of the novel takes place on different planes: Gangu, the coolie, is the victim of oppression; De la Havre, the kind-hearted English doctor, is the champion of coolies' rights; Reggie Hunt, the dissolute English assistant planter, is tyranny incarnate.

No doubt, the story begins with Gangu's migration from the Punjab to Assam and virtually ends with his reckless murder by Reggie, yet his point of view is presented intermittently. Only a few incidents centre upon him, viz. his wife Sajni's death due to
malaria, his humiliation at being refused a loan for his wife's funeral, his being singled out as one of the ring-leaders in the coolie-riot, and finally, his death at Reggie's hands for thwarting the latter's evil design to rape the former's young daughter, Leila. For most of the time, he remains passive; he is out of focus during the De la Havre - Barbara episode, the polo match, Reggie's affair with Neogi's wife, the panic among the whites (except De la Havre) over the so-called mutiny on the estate and the hunting expedition arranged in honour of the visiting dignitary — His Excellency, Sir Geoffrey Boyd, the Governor of Assam.

Gangu's point of view reveals the sufferings of the tea-plantation coolies. It also points out the corruption rampant among the recruiting and administrative staff. Circumstances oblige Gangu to leave his home for a distant place. At home, he had fallen a victim to the money-lender's avarice; the interest on his younger brother's mortgage had piled up and, strangely enough, all his (Gangu's) three acres of land, as well as his hut, had been confiscated by Seth Badri Dass. His thoughts during the last leg of his rail journey clearly depict his predicament:

'... I am getting old. I have only a few years to live; and I should have liked to die among my kith and kin rather than in this jungle, already three days' and nights' journey from Hoshiarpur.'

On getting employment, he feels as if he had been deceived; the falsehood of the recruiting agent Sardar Buta Ram's tall

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promises soon dawns upon him. He is much distressed to hear from his neighbouring coolie, Narain, "This prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless an unbreakable jail."\(^2\) He has the first bitter experience of his superiors' apathy towards him when his wife dies of malaria and he wants a loan to meet the expenses of her funeral. The peon stretches his hand and demands 'nazrana' of him and the clerk refuses to present him to the Sahib on the ground that he (Gangu) had not obliged him with a gift toward his recruitment. He begs of them for mercy and they, at last, allow him to see the manager. Mr. Croft-Cooke, the manager, turns a deaf ear to his entreaties. On learning that Gangu is medically advised segregation lest he should spread infection, the manager rebukes him and orders him to leave the office immediately. Chagrined and humiliated, the poor fellow goes to a 'bania' to borrow money. The theme of exploitation and oppression of the poor coolies by their callous superiors -- both Indian and English -- is thus effectively dealt with from Gangu's point of view.

As regards Dr. John De la Havre, he stands by the oppressed, neglected and helpless coolies. He enters the story towards the end of Chapter I and remains in it till Chapter XXI; he does not figure in the last five Chapters XXII - XXVI. As a doctor, he feels concerned about the health of the poor workers. He finds that infected water is the chief cause of cholera epidemics over the estate every year. He feels criminal not to do anything about it.

He puts forward a practicable scheme for the supply of disinfected water but the authorities shelve his plan.

As a humanist, Dr. De la Havre is against colonialism; he believes that no country has a moral right to rule over another and that the natives should be allowed to run their own show. He is writing a book to uphold his socialistic ideas. His beloved, Barbara — the daughter of the slave-driver, Croft-Cooke — happens to glance over a part of his manuscript which reads as follows:

"Why do these swarming, undernourished, bleary, worm-eaten millions of India suffer so?... The black coolies clear the forests, plant the fields, toil and garner the harvest, while all the money-grubbing, slave-driving, soulless managers and directors draw their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies. Therein lies the necessity of revolution in this country...." 3

Dr. De la Havre pleads for radical changes in the system in which a few grow rich by virtue of the sweat of thousands of the poor. He is so much obsessed with his views that he bores his beloved, Barbara, with his harangues. In his enthusiasm to translate his ideas into action, he sides with the suffering coolies, and consequently, loses his job and his beloved into the bargain. He plays an important role in the story. He helps Gangu when he is in trouble and gets the latter a piece of land promised to every coolie under the terms of the contract. In fact, the kind-hearted doctor enjoys the confidence of all the coolies working on the

3 Ibid., pp.122-23.
Macpherson Tea Estate. The escalation of trouble on the estate from what was initially a row between two coolie women — Chambeli and Neogi's wife — is a case in point. The coolies who have been beaten up by the Sardars and Reggie Hunt, approach him. He is deeply moved by their tale of woe and advises them to see the 'Burra Sahib'. Later, at their instance, he leads them in order to apprise the manager of their grievances. He is, however, misunderstood by the authorities and is sacked. He thus acts as a spokesman of the poor workers. After his dismissal, he goes to see Barbara before finally leaving the place. Chapter XXI is entirely devoted to his last visit to Croft-Cooke's bungalow. The scene of his taking leave of his sweet-heart is pathetically told from his angle. He is given a cold farewell; he leaves the place with a heavy heart. This chapter brings out the whole gamut of his inmost feelings, especially his attitude towards Barbara who, too, forsakes him. Dr. De la Havre is the mouthpiece of the author, he expresses those sentiments which are dear to Anand himself. The element of propaganda is too conspicuous in his speeches and writings. The doctor, nevertheless, stands for reason and wisdom.

Next, Reggie Hunt is the villain of the piece. He appears in Chapter II and remains in the novel till the end. A few chapters — XIV, XXV and XXVI — are chiefly concerned with him. In fact, the reader's attention is drawn towards this character when, referring to him, Narain says to Gangu unambiguously:
He is a very budhush sahib. He is always drunk. And he has no consideration for anyone's mother or sister. He is openly living with three coolie women. He is portrayed as a young and dashing philanderer. For instance, Chapter XIV begins with a polo match in which his performance is emphasized, and it ends with his voluptuous affair with Negi's wife. Both the episodes are related from his angle and are illustrative of his stubborn temperament. While playing polo, he strongly feels that he must avenge the three goals that the rival team had debited to his side, and yet he does not let his bearer, Afzal, score any goal, for he believes that the prestige of the white man must not be lowered. Again, the pornographic scene of his seducing Negi's wife delineates his lechery:

/...he swung her body hard, hard, harder, tearing the flesh of her breasts, biting her cheeks and striking her buttocks till she was red and purple like a mangled corpse, ossified into a complete obedience by the volcanic eruptions of his lust./

Reggie's sadism is demonstrated towards the close of Chapter XV: riding his horse, he moves into the thick of the crowd of coolies, ruthlessly trampling on men, women and children who run about in utter confusion. In Chapter XIX, when all the whites on the tea-plantation (except De la Havre) gather in the fortress of the club because of their imaginary fears of a mutiny and await the police from Silhet, the military from Manipur and the air force from Calcutta, Reggie does realize that he is the root cause of the trouble. He is, nevertheless, incorrigible, for soon after the

4 Ibid., p.42.
5 Ibid., p.186.
quelling of the so-called coolie-uprising, he reverts to his pastime of enticing females. For instance, in Chapter XXV he chases Leila with a view to raping her but the timely appearance of her father on the scene foils his evil designs. Frustrated, he fires at Gangu and shoots him dead. The last Chapter XXVI outlines the verdict of the partial Jury that find him, by a majority vote, not guilty of the charge of murder or culpable homicide and acquit him.

In Chapter XXV, the novelist traces the cause of Reggie's eccentric behaviour to his faulty upbrining. It is through his consciousness that the reader is apprised of his family background and his attitude towards his parents:

If only that bloody swine of a father of mine would buy me some shares. But that is hoping for the impossible, so long as that bitch of a woman, my stepmother is alive.

Reggie thought of the heartless treatment she had accorded him when he was a child, having kept him at school even during the holidays, so that he might not come to Ivy House and become too chummy with his father. He had been so lonely then, except when he went to stay with his own mother.... Even those visits to his mother were sad, because of his mother's changing lovers.... He had ached for a girl in those days, and yet he could not date anyone except a barmaid....

Reggie's viewpoint brings out the tyranny perpetrated by the English employers upon the Indian working classes. The reader is left in no doubt about the humiliations and sufferings the latter are subjected to for the sake of earning their livelihood.

6 Ibid., p. 267.
The viewpoints of Gangu, De la Havre and Reggie thus draw a complete picture of life on the Macpherson Tea Estate. It may, however, be pointed out that the structure of the novel is loose because it has no consistent point of view. The work lacks unity and finesse because of the frequent and abrupt shifts in the point of view. These are not properly co-ordinated; there is no link between any two consecutive chapters. For example, the first chapter is about Gangu and the members of his family, while the second deals with Dr. De la Havre and other English characters in the novel and so on.

Another defect in this work is that the propagandist in Anand gets the upper hand of the artist in him. In this regard, Sars Cawasjee rightly remarks:

"Two Leaves and a Bud whittles down to propaganda. This is not simply because Anand gives a one-sided picture, but because he fails as an artist and thereby underlines the documentary nature of the work. In an attempt to be fair to the English, he throws in the altruistic doctor de la Havre. But the doctor remains a mechanical contrivance, unconvincingly sketched, and the effort to strike a balance fails..."

Given Gangu's point of view consistently, Two Leaves and a Bud, like its predecessors — Untouchable and Coolie — would have probably ceased to read as propaganda and, perhaps, would have also ranked among Anand's best novels.

The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), Republished as Gauri (1981)

In The Old Woman and the Cow or Gauri, Anand employs multiple points of view to tell the pathetic tale of a young woman named

7 So Many Freedoms, p. 87.
Gauri. He portrays her character from different angles with a view to presenting different attitudes towards women in the Indian society. The novel begins with Gauri's marriage to Panchi and, after dealing with a series of her misfortunes, ends with her separation from him. The first half of the story depicts her docility, while the second half traces her transformation from a cow into a tigress. In the beginning, her aunt-in-law, Kesaro, accuses her of inauspiciousness and dalliance and poisons Panchi's ears against his wife. Consequently, he harasses her, beats her up and forcibly sends her to her mother's house. Her mother, Laxmi, at the instance of her (Laxmi's) cousin, Amru, sells her to a rich, old widower. Despite her protests, she is given over to her buyer, Seth Jai Ram Das. Hereafter, she emerges strong enough to defend herself: she foils the Seth's attempts to subdue her; she resists Dr. Batra's overtures to seduce her; and finally when her husband assails her, calling her chastity in question, she refuses to be cowed down and leaves his house in protest against his callousness.

Section I is written from Panchi's point of view; Gauri is introduced as a young, shy and beautiful bride as seen by him. In the male-dominated Indian society, it is appropriate to draw a pen-portrait of the bride from the bridegroom's angle. To illustrate, in response to Panchi's complaint that Gauri is getting him teased by her friends at the 'showing' ceremony, she simply shakes her head shyly and whispers into the ear of one of her friends in order to communicate to him:
'She says "It is not I who am teasing you but it is the fun of these girls and you must not mind."' the saheli interpreted.⁸

As Panchi expresses his eagerness and impatience to look at her, she uncovers a part of her face to enable him to catch a glimpse of her bright forehead and big mellow eyes. His curiosity having been aroused to excess, he "forcibly pulled aside the jhund of her dupatta and saw — a light wheat-brown face with regular strong peasant features and the bloom of innocence on it."⁹ He feels proud of being the possessor of a comely and innocent girl.

Panchi's point of view in the opening section of the novel successfully draws the reader's attention to Gauri's physical appearance, her family background and milieu. It also brings out a contrast between the temperaments of the couple and enables a discreet reader to foresee the cat and dog life they are likely to lead. Apart from these considerations, a few bad omens also foreshadow disaster. These are:

(i) the pony's reluctance to go ahead when the marriage procession is hardly 'a thousand hands' away from the bride's village,

(ii) Panchi's stepping over the threshold before oil has been poured on the corners of the doorway, and

(iii) Amru's asking the priest to stop the couple's gyrations around the sacred fire because the bridegroom's side had brought only cheap gold-plated jewellery for the bride.

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Section II presents the viewpoints of Kesaro, Panchi and Gauri to highlight the sufferings which Gauri undergoes at the hands of her husband and her aunt-in-law. Her coming into her husband's house is deemed unlucky because it coincides with a drought and a fall in the family fortunes. In Panchi's words:

'She has ruined me.... She has destroyed our home, this Gauri.... My aunt Kesari is right when she says that this bride is the incarnation of Kali, the black goddess who destroys all before her, who brings famine in her breath and lays bare whole villages....'

Likewise, Kesaro blames her for the break-up in the joint family whereas it is really due to a quarrel between Panchi and his uncle Mola Ram. Earlier, she also incites Panchi against Gauri, insinuating that she is not true to him:

'...I don't like the visit to our home of Rajguru and your other friends, when you are not here....'

Hearing it, Panchi flares up and threatens to kill his wife if she has really been free with any of his friends. His aunt thus sows in his mind the seeds of suspicion about his wife's conduct in the same way as Iago sets Othello against the latter's wife, Desdemona, in Shakespeare's tragic play Othello.

Upto this stage, Gauri is painted as a docile person who is at the mercy of her husband. The novelist now presents her viewpoint as well, implying that she, too, is sensitive to insults heaped upon her. For instance, she protests mildly to her husband against his aunt's nagging and his shoe beatings on her behalf.

10 Ibid., p.29.
11 Ibid., p.35.
But there is no perceptible change in her husband's treatment towards her even after Panchi and his wife shift to potter Rafique's barn. She bears with her husband's fits of anger and proves herself a devoted wife. For example, when Panchi is in trouble, she willingly gives him her gold ear-rings to sell so that he may tide over his present difficulties. After selling the ear-rings, Panchi and Rafique return home drunk and Panchi abuses Gauri. Upon this, Hoor Banu, the potter's wife, takes him to task:

'You are the shameless one and not she!' The poor girl has been waiting with your food all cooked and ready. And though you two have been drinking, and I suppose eating, she has not tasted a morsel!'

Here, Hoor Banu vouches for Gauri's dedication to Panchi. Her point of view is appropriate and reliable. If Gauri herself had said anything in self-defence, that would have amounted to self-praise.

It is noteworthy that the scenes of quarrel between Panchi and Gauri are dramatized so that the reader may assess each situation objectively. Their first fierce quarrel which results in Gauri's expulsion by her husband is a case in point. After the episode of Panchi's stealing mangoes from Lalla Birbal's grove, Gauri tries to appease him by disclosing that she has become pregnant. Contrary to her expectations, he feels nervous and asks her stupidly when and how that had happened. For days he is plunged into the biggest confusion and one day he raves wildly against her:

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12 Ibid., p.62.
'Whose is it? Mine or someone else's?'
'Whose could it be...?' she shrieked.
Then softening, she appealed... 'Don't be cruel and doubt me! I ask you with my joined hands!'

Deaf to all her entreaties, he thrusts her away angrily and compels her to go to her mother's house. Multiple points of view in Section II thus highlight Gauri's sufferings at the hands of her tormentors. As the narrator refrains from making editorial comments and taking sides, the reader is free to form his own judgement. The method of narration is also successful in furthering the plot: if the first section serves the purpose of exposition, the second forms the next stage, i.e. complication, in the development of the plot.

In Section III, the viewpoints of Laxmi, Amru and Gauri are juxtaposed to narrate the circumstances leading to the climax, i.e. the selling of Gauri to Seth Jai Ram Das. Gauri's unexpected return to her mother's house gives rise to suspicions; Amru blurts out that her husband might have turned her out of his house, and Laxmi, too, thinks alike:

'I hope he did not injure the child in your womb', Laxmi said. 'The brute seems to have left such deep marks on your right cheek, neck and back — he might have killed you, the way he belaboured you!'

The conflict in Gauri's mind between her attachment for her husband and her aversion to him is revealed through her stream of consciousness. She recollects the hot passions with which he had

13 Ibid., p.88.
14 Ibid., pp.93-4.
assailed her after she had yielded to him and wonders how he could have sent her away after all that, specially when she was with child by him and needed his love and care. The feeling of hatred soon overpowers her:

...She had felt, belatedly, that she should have turned on him and had hit him with both her hands, and all her strength, to make him realise the cry of that innocent spark in her womb which he was frightened to see...15

Sometimes she hopes that he will soon repent and come to take her back but sometimes she feels distressed to think that she is cast out for ever.

Soon after her visit to her mother's home, Amru prevails upon Laxmi to sell Gauri to Seth Jai Ram Das, a banker of Hoshiarpur, in lieu of cash and the wiping out of the mortgage on their two houses as well as the cow, Chandari. The heart-rending scene of Gauri's being forcibly sent to her buyer's house is handled dramatically. It presents the viewpoints of the main characters involved in it. Laxmi coaxes her to reconcile herself to the changed circumstances and advises her to go to the Seth's house quietly, saying that she is not murdering her daughter. Upon this, Gauri first flies into a rage and then appeals to her to refrain from selling her. Laxmi relents but the relentless Amru does not change his mind. The following extract from the narrative at this juncture shows the appropriateness of several viewpoints:

15 Ibid., p. 97.
'What are you doing if you are not "muderening" me!' Gauri shrieked. 'Is this not murder? You will repent afterwards when you have to face your God! So don't do it! Mother, you who are my mother! I am begging you.' And she stretched her arms towards Laxmi.

The old woman went to her and, after embracing her dislocated herself and fell at Amru's feet, saying: 'Spare her, spare her. If she doesn't want to go, leave her. I beg you, look at my white hair. I touch your feet!'

'Keep quiet!' Amru shouted, ...16

The handling of the delicate situation of Gauri's being forced to go to her buyer, much against her will, is superb. The narrative succeeds in arousing compassion in the reader's heart for the victim of oppression i.e. Gauri. The employment of multiple points of view in this section, therefore, makes the whole scene dramatic and effective.

Section IV deals with Gauri's predicament after she is sent to the Seth's house. First, the viewpoints of both are placed side by side to enable the reader to perceive the situation and to assess Gauri's character accordingly. The Seth is in a dilemma; he neither succeeds in persuading Gauri to give in, nor does he overcome his desire for her. His viewpoint enables the reader to look at the problem from his (the Seth's) angle:

What a mistake, he felt, he had committed in not consulting Pandit Ram Narain about making a horoscope of the girl to see if her stars would tally with his. His impatient heart did not want to wait. The heavy curve of her hips, like the ramparts of a mountain, appeared before his gaze, filling him with the wish to caress them. Not for a long time had he seen such compact rounded hips!... For them he could forget all her indifference....17

16 Ibid., pp.108-09.
17 Ibid., p.114.
Gauri's case is presented even more vehemently: she is determined to defend her honour at all costs. She frustrates Jai Ram Das's plans to seduce her; when he puts her arm around her, she shakes his hold off with a mad power, declaring that she is guarded by the Goddess. She further warns him that if he tries to come near her, he will burn. All his persuasions to win her over fail. Her point of view lets the reader delve deep into her mind:

Gauri lay with her senses taut, ready for another battle. Should he move towards her, she felt she would tear him up like a tigress. Somehow, the child in her belly, the sense of which came through the occasional bile in her mouth, made her more determined.  

The Seth is thus constrained to think that if he had not paid Amru, he would have allowed her to go.

Again, the Gauri-Batra episode is also narrated from the viewpoints of the concerned characters. Having rescued Gauri from the clutches of the Seth, Dr. Batra himself begins to harbour evil designs on her. She is employed as an 'ayah' in the nursing home run jointly by Dr. Mahindra and Dr. Batra. One day, Dr. Batra catches hold of Gauri with the intention of violating her chastity. The timely appearance of a nurse, Miss Young, thwarts his plan and Gauri is saved from being disgraced. The scene in which she is nearly raped by Dr. Batra is described vividly from multiple points of view:

'Go, she shrieked. And then as though she was unable to live up to her strength, she yielded but began to howl, her hands on her face, and her sobs rising uncontrolled and incoherent from her mouth.'

18 Ibid., p.125.
Nurse Young burst in from the door and some nearby patients flocked behind her.

Dr. Batra realised the humiliating position he was in, as he cowered in the dark. He got up nearly falling as he did so.

'Devil!' Miss Young shouted, horror struck.

He turned towards her and, crossing the floor, slapped her on the face.19

Later, Dr. Batra's analysis of the situation places Gauri in right perspective. He himself realizes that the woman is stronger than he in will power:

He thought of the delights he might have had in the young able bodied hillwoman if only she had kept quiet. But she had rejected him with a fierceness which showed that her will was stronger than his...20

Section IV thus describes in detail how Gauri moves 'from the frying pan into the fire'. It delineates different attitudes towards women. For instance, speaking to Dr. Mahindra after his (Batra's) abortive attempt at raping Gauri, Dr. Batra remarks:

... There is nothing criminal in wanting a young girl, Doctor. But this old hag (Miss Young) always comes dragging her religion into it and the low creature makes me feel as if I am a dirty sinner.... Probably she wants men herself, — well I hate her creed. She is a sour puss! These women are cunning and low and put on such pious airs of innocence, the libidinous creatures!'21

After the mishap, Dr. Mahindra is obliged to break away from Dr. Batra; he starts his own hospital where he employs Gauri as a nurse. When asked by her benefactor what she wants, she opts to go back to her husband. This section, by putting forward different

19 Ibid., p.143.
20 Ibid., p.147.
21 Ibid., p.149.
viewpoints convincingly, paves the way for a reconciliation between Gauri and Panchi.

Section V is pervaded by Panchi's point of view. He is now filled with remorse for having turned out his innocent and beautiful wife, so he proceeds towards Pipan Kalan to fetch her. The narrative takes note of his regrets at having deserted her:

...he realised the folly of his impetuous behaviour in turning Gauri out, more intensely now than he had done ever since the rains began to fall. What a sudden strange darkness had enveloped his brain on that inauspicious day when he had struck her because his aunt Kesaro had put the idea in his head that Gauri had dalliances with more than one, and was an "unlucky girl born under the wrong stars!" Now he despaired himself for what he had done...22

Here, the stream-of-consciousness method is suitable for laying bare his inmost thoughts and feelings. Again, his viewpoint is emphatically presented when Amru gets him beaten up. He swears at both Amru and Laxmi because they have committed the dastardly crime of selling Gauri:

...she has sold my wife...I shall murder her if you don't remove her from near me; I will go to the gallows if necessary, but I shall kill them both — she and that swine Amru!...23

In this section, Panchi's point of view enables the reader to review the whole situation from his (Panchi's) angle. Apart from a confession of his own guilt, he rightly blames Kesaro, Laxmi and Amru for having wrecked his marital happiness and consequently, for having ruined Gauri's life.

22 Ibid., p.159.
23 Ibid., pp.171-72.
Section VI deals with the efforts made by Laxmi and Adam Singh (a friend of Panchi's late father) to trace Gauri in Hoshiarpur. Besides presenting the points of view of Laxmi and Adam Singh, it also includes Dr. Mahindra's viewpoint. First, through Adam Singh's consciousness, the reader is convinced that there is an incestuous relationship between Laxmi and her cousin, Ammi. On the way to Dr. Mahindra's hospital, Adam Singh looks at Laxmi with desire/admits that she has still a charm about her and repents of not having thought of living with her after her husband's death. Laxmi, too, confesses that she has had illicit relations with many men but she feels more ashamed of having sold her daughter than having slept with many men. Next, Dr. Mahindra admonishes Laxmi for her ignorance and for her crime of selling her daughter. His harangues, however, give the reader an impression that he (Dr. Mahindra) is the mouthpiece of the author. This is evident from his following remark:

They will consider me a sahib, spoiled by the life in Vilayat! 24

He stands for wisdom in the novel; nevertheless, the reader's attention is diverted from Gauri to him. For instance, the Doctor may be right in his place when he censures the Indian society in general but he sidetracks the main issue when he speaks at length about the evils prevalent in the society:

24 Ibid., p. 196.

In the 1960 edition of the novel, Dr. Mahindra's remark reads as follows:
'They will consider me an atheist, an irreligious, wanton sahib, spoiled by the life of Vilayat!'

-- The Old Woman and the Cow (Bombay: Kutub Popular, 1960), p. 244.

Evidently, Anand has shortened the above sentence in the 1981 edition to absolve himself of the charge.
Our Dharma is feeding the Brahmins and paying interest to the Banias. And ill-treating the untouchables. And Vinoba can convert a good man here and a good man there. And some tigers may learn to eat vegetables. But can you tell me how many sons of ministers have given away their land to the poor at the bidding of Vinoba?...25

Dr. Mahindra's scathing comments sound like propaganda. Besides, these retard the tempo of the story.

Section VII brings out the contrast between Panchi and Gauri by presenting their viewpoints side by side. Gauri, having been traced by Laxmi and Adam Singh at Dr. Mahindra's hospital in Hoshiarpur, is restored to her husband, Panchi. Their reunion, however, does not last long. Like the legendary hero, Lord Rama, who doubted his wife Sita's chastity while she was in the demon king Ravana's captivity, Panchi, too, suspects Gauri of adultery. He is anxious to comprehend the truth about her life in Hoshiarpur and insists on demanding a proof of her purity. Multiple points of view are rightly employed to deal with their violent quarrel resulting in Gauri's leaving Panchi's house for Dr. Mahindra's hospital. She has decided to earn her living and have her child delivered there:

'I shall go and work in Daktar Mahindra's hospital and have my child there. And I will not come back again!' She was defiant and her face knit together with a terrible strength, even though the tears were in her eyes. 'And if you strike me again, I will hit you back...' And she stood up, her frame shaking.26

Many critics, viz. Jack Lindsay, Krishna Nandan Sinha, Meenakshi Mukherjee and Saros Cowasjee have found fault with the

25 Gauri, p. 194.
26 Ibid., p. 226.
novel because its story does not run parallel to the legend. That
the novelist has altered the Sita-Rama legend should not be objec-
ted to, as Gauri's words to Hoor Banu towards the close of the
novel clearly refute the accusation:

...They are telling him that Ram turned out Sita
because everyone doubted her chastity during her
stay with Ravana! ...I am not Sita that the earth
will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out
and be forgotten of him...'.

The novelist is true to reality and does not blindly adhere to
the legend. In Section VI, however, he makes Dr. Mahindra's
speeches too long. In this regard, M.K. Naik rightly observes:
The Old Woman and the Cow would certainly have been
a better book, if Colonel Mahindra had been a man
of fewer words.

On the whole, Gauri, though one of the centres of consciousness
in this novel, is indeed the focus of the reader's attention
throughout; each point of view employed in the novel generally
contributes to her characterization and to the development of the
plot, and thus highlights the place of women in our society.
Anand himself is of the view that Gauri is "my offering to the
beauty, dignity and devotion of Indian women."}

Death of a Hero (1963)

Anand's novelette Death of a Hero: Epitaph for Magbool
Sherwani deals with the events of the last thirty-six hours in the
life of its protagonist in the context of Pakistan's aggression

27 Ibid.
28 M.K. Naik, Mulk Raj Anand, p. 95.
29 Gauri, flap comments.
upon Kashmir in 1947. The narrative takes into account different attitudes of the natives towards the trying and ticklish situation confronting them:

The situation had arisen all in three days, in which every Kashmiri would be tested. Those who believed in God would accept their fate as though it was the trial on judgement day. But those who hoped for a new morning for Kashmir would have to fight because only through survival would there be a chance to metamorphose the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of the young from the past servility. ... 30

The novelist employs several viewpoints to denote various outlooks on the problem, viz. pro-Indian, pro-Pakistani, pragmatic, feudalistic and fatalistic which are represented by Maqbool Sherwani, Ahmed Shah, Syed Muratib Ali, Sardar Jilani and Mahmdoo, respectively. Each point of view highlights the theme of the novel and develops the character of its hero.

Maqbool Sherwani is an exponent of the pro-Indian stand taken by the National Conference; his love for the native land is the only criterion of deciding its fate. In his own words:

... I am for Kashmir. Not for its usurpation by force, but for its freedom to choose where it wants to go. And Nehru can be trusted more than Jinnah. ... 31

He is enthusiastic about defending Kashmir against the enemy's wanton attack. He apprises Mahmdoo of the atrocities committed by the raiders in Baramula in the name of their holy war; they have looted both Hindus and Muslims and committed rape upon women.

31 Ibid., p.12.
In a conversation with his adversary, Ishaq, he shows his determination to keep the interests of the state supreme:

'Deign to join our reception committee, Maqbool Sahib. You will see that your leaders will also accept the inevitable!'  
'Never!' answered Maqbool. 'It is a question of principle. Do we believe in Kashmir first, or religion first,'  
'In religion — in the religion of our prophet... and of our holy Koran.'  
'And when did the Prophet, or the Koran, say that brother must kill brother...’32

Through this dialogue, Maqbool's patriotism is contrasted with Ishaq's fanaticism. Likewise, in his altercation with the fanatic lawyer Ahmed Shah, Maqbool Sherwani voices his opinion vehemently:

'This is a war of liberation!' protested Ahmed Shah. 'A war! An historic event! We are passing through times which will decide our destiny for ever. And everyone has to choose now...’  
'I will certainly not be bullied by you,' interrupted Maqbool. 'I don't believe in this historic event — we were living peacefully enough and struggling against wrongs... And then these people came, with guns pointed at us, demanding accession by force —'33

The situation demands that debates on the question confronting the characters be treated in the form of dialogues. The reader is thus free to assess the situation objectively; there are no editorial comments to condition his observation and affect his assessment. The action of the novel also moves forward swiftly. For instance, the threats given by Ahmed Shah to Maqbool Sherwani clearly hint at the coming events: Maqbool's unflinching faith in his principles offends Ahmed Shah who gets the former executed ruthlessly towards the close of the story.

32 Ibid.  
33 Ibid., pp. 53-4.
The character of the hero who dies a martyr's death, is also brought out vividly from different angles. Mahmood is impressed by his intelligence, and Rahti and Syed Maratib Ali by his fearlessness. His friend, Ghulam Jilani, sides with him even at the cost of annoying Ahmed Shah and Khurshid Anwar. He pays Maqbool a rich compliment by saying to Maqbool's enemies who happen to be his (Jilani's) guests:

...I believe in friendship. I think you can talk to Maqbool and make him see reason. And once he sees it and promises to be with you, he will keep his word -- that I can assure you! ...34

Begum Mehtab, too, speaks highly of him, saying that she always commends Maqbool to her son as an example of sacrifice. Maqbool's sister, Noor, praises his love for the weak. Mahmood pays him a compliment when he tells the latter's father:

... Maqbool Sahib has been known as a friend of the broken people. He is a worthy son. And you ought not to feel that he is doing anything wrong if he wants us to struggle against the invaders.35

To his enemy, Ahmed Shah, Maqbool is, of course, a traitor and unrepentant rebel. A clear picture of the hero thus emerges from different viewpoints. The method is effective because the reader is free to form his own opinion, without being guided by the omniscient narrator.

Contrasted with Maqbool Sherwani's pro-Indian outlook on the Kashmir problem, there is Ahmed Shah's pro-Pakistan attitude towards the issue. The latter is bigoted — intolerant and

34 Ibid., p. 53.
35 Ibid., p. 64.
narrow-minded in religion. This is evident from his following statement:

...I want union with Pakistan.... I believe in a Central Muslim state, which will be a counter to Communism in the north, and to the Bania Hindu Raj in the South.... And we can connect up with our brethren in the middle east and revive the glory of ancient Islamic democracy in a world ridden with unbelief!...36

Ahmed Shah is instrumental in condemning Maqbool to death. After the latter's ruthless execution, the former orders Zaman Khan to lift the corpse, to tie it to a pole, and to write the word 'Kafir' on his shirt with his own blood. Besides presenting the attitudes of Maqbool Sherwani and Ahmed Shah, those of other characters are also shown side by side. For example, Syed Muratib Ali's approach is pragmatic: on one hand, he does not allow Maqbool to stay in his house lest the enemy should harass him for giving shelter to a rebel, and on the other, he gives him money to frustrate the plans of the enemy because his carpet factory had been looted and set on fire by the raiders. Similarly, the landlord Sardar Muhammad Jilani, his wife Begum Mehtab and their son, Ghulam Jilani, stand for the feudal order; they are friendly to Maqbool Sherwani and help him to make good his escape from their house, and at the same time they entertain Khurshid Anwar, an officer of the invading army and his stooge, Lawyer Ahmed Shab. They also agree to pay a huge sum as conscience money to the Pakistani army officer. The commoners in the novel, viz. Mahmoo, Rahti, Juma, Qadri, Saleem Bux and Maqbool's father accept all kinds of tyranny with the traditional fatalism...
of the villager. All the events in the novel lead to the catastrophe, i.e. Maqbool's murder at the hands of the enemy. And the progress of action is achieved through an artistic presentation of different viewpoints.

On the eve of his execution, Maqbool writes a long letter to his younger sister, Noor. The inclusion of this letter, which is discovered after his death on the arrival of the Indian troops on the scene, is a welcome change in the mode of narration. It is a clever device of putting all the views of the martyr at one place. The contents of the letter disclose his deplorable plight inside the condemned cell, the treatment meted out to him by his tormentors, his love of Kashmir and his views on its future, his poetic talent, his attachment for his sister and his philosophy of life etc. Maqbool's character is thus drawn at length and it is not right to say that "the central character fails to rise above the level of a type." 37

The novel has a rich potential for being adapted into a play; the use of multiple points of view is appropriate for the dramatization of its action. Critics, however, ignore this novelette; M.K. Naik calls the book "a slight and superficial work" 38 and Saros Cowasjee dismisses it as "an unimpressive work." 39 It may be pointed out that here the novelist's intention is not to build up a long narrative but to delineate different

38 Ibid., p.109.
39 So Many Freedoms, p.165.
attitudes towards the Kashmir problem, and the unfolding of the
theme is effectively achieved through multiple points of view.

This short novel has succeeded within its narrow scope and it is
incorrect to say that "mere hinting of these attitudes could not
give necessary flesh and body to the scrappy narrative." 40

1. Margaret Berry, Mulk Raj Anand: The Kan and the Novelist

40. Durga Das, India from Cairncross to Nehru and After (London: