Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao are celebrated as the pioneers and stalwarts of Indian English fiction. Among the trio, Anand possesses a distinctive stature and is entitled to a unique position. Apart from being a great writer, Anand has won a place in history as a political activist, apostle of peace, social reformer and connoisseur of art. He was a member of all the three national Akademies of India established for the promotion of fine Arts - Sahithya Akademy, Lalitkala Akademy, and Sangeeta Nataka Akademy. One of the founders of the widely admired arts magazine MARG, he continued as its editor for over four decades. Anand’s multidimensional personality, his multifarious interests and the versatality of his genius put scholars and critics in a quandary. They attach widely different labels to him as humanist, pacifist, social realist, Marxist, Gandhian and so on. In fact Anand was all these and much more, a prodigy beyond definitions and descriptions.
The career of Anand synchronized with the most turbulent phase in the history of modern India. It was a period of trials and tribulations, colonial rule and anticolonial struggle, social awakening and cultural transformation. His fiction gives a sensitive and imaginative rendering of the dynamics of the age as it impressed a creative mind sharing the protests and angst, the hopes and fears, the sorrows and joys of his generation. He declares, “I am of my time and the atmosphere of the thirties with its hangover from crises influenced me strongly” (Two Leaves and a Bud, Introduction).

Postcolonial critics like Edward Said have pointed out how colonialism operated not only as a form of military rule but also as a discourse of domination. Education was one of the primary sources through which the hegemonial discourse was generated and disseminated. Anand has given an account of his experience at a British Indian School. The narration very well illustrates how the imperial strategy of ideological subjugation operated.

There was no religious instruction given in the British Indian schools which I attended........And as the education imparted in these schools was imitative giving very little idea of Indian tradition, but mainly a bastardized version of English curricula, in English, with particular emphasis on English history, ideas, forms and institutions deliberately calculated to show everything relating to Indian history and tradition as inferior. I early
acquired a bias against all indigenous customs and grew up hating everything Indian. *(Apology for Heroism)*

The colonial powers used a combination of force and consent to achieve hegemony and the educational system constituted one of the chief ideological apparatuses employed to achieve the latter. Anand presents himself as the representative of a generation who grew up in the muddle created by the impact of Europe without imbibing any faith, religion or belief. His generation of Indians was the victims of the epistemic violence of imperialism which resorted to every means to erode the indigenous traditions and establish cultural imperialism.

The British introduced English education in India as part of a strategic scheme to disguise their imperialistic designs by the mask of a humanistic commitment to the civilizing mission. As testified by Anand’s experience, it did prove its efficacy in establishing the hegemony, but had repercussions quite unforeseen by the colonial overlords. Contact with English literature and exposure to world literature in general gave the Indian intelligentsia access to fresh avenues of thought and perception and equipped them with the intellectual and ideological capacity to formulate enlightened theories of nationalism. Iyengar observes:

The Western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought and the resulting cross fertilization have thus been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of a new literature, a new climate of
hope and endeavour in the country and a bold marching towards new horizons. (520)

The nationalist discourse emerged and gradually gathered the strength to resist and counter the colonial discourse, at least to a certain extent. The vibrant atmosphere of militant patriotic fervour inspired the writers of the period, and their writings in turn contributed much to boost the nationalist sentiments.

The upsurge began in Bengali literature with the rise of powerful writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Michal Madhusudanan Dutt, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chattargee. The new insights propagated by these writers galvanized the nation into a flurry of patriotic activity and the new vitality enlivened every field of political, social, religious and cultural activity with a zeal for rejuvenation as well as reformation. Sri. Aurobindo has observed that the long overshadowing of the Indian tongues as cultural instruments by English Language hampered the rapid progress of India and successfully prevented her self-finding and development under modern conditions. He comments on how Bengal alone retained its identity and preserved its language.

Bengal was the one 'sub-nation' in India which refused to under go this yoke and devoted itself to the development of its language and first recovered its soul, re-spiritualised itself, forced the whole world to hear of its great spiritual personalities,
gave it the first modern Indian poet and Indian Scientist of world-wide fame and achievement, restored the moribund art of India to life and power, first made her count again in the culture of the world, first as a reward in the outer life arrived at a vital political movements not imitative and derivative in its spirit and central idea. (248)

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Raj Mohan’s wife* was published in 1864 and his later novels, originally written in Bengali were translated into English. The song “Bandematharam”, embedded in Bankim’s novel *Anandamath* (1882), was taken up by the whole nation as a Mantra of patriotism. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee demonstrated how the literary form, novel can be used as an effective social and political weapon and many writers in national and regional literatures followed suit. In the 1920s Rabindranath Tagore emerged on the scene and cast a spell with his literary, intellectual and visionary powers. Tagore’s novels were translated from Bengali into English and his *Gora*, published in 1923 had a great impact on the whole nation. Iyengar describes the novel as “an answer to Kipling’s *Kim* and a patriotic novel with a political angle voicing the aspirations of the people of India towards freedom” (38). Anand became a staunch disciple of Tagore fascinated by his patriotic ardour, his humanistic
concepts, his intellectual concern for cosmic fraternity and his ideal of the synthesis of cultures.

Anand’s career was a prolonged struggle against domination in its diverse forms like casteism, colonialism and capitalism. Anand says that in spite of the completely pernicious system of education which sought to keep the realities of life at bay from him the realities had come home to him and he had become dimly aware of the disintegration and social anarchy produced by British imperialistic domination in India (Apology for Heroism 66). The impressionable mind of Anand, at a very early stage itself registered strong protest against the atrocities perpetrated by the alien rulers on the natives. However, the intimidating shadow of his father, who, (in spite of his membership in the Arya Samaj), was a loyal servant of the British government prevented his anti-domination sentiments from ripening into a pronounced and active nationalist stance.

Lal Chand, Anand’s father coming from a family of traditional coppersmiths belonging to the Thathiar community had managed to secure a position as a clerk in the Dogra Regiment of the British army and the core of his vision for future was the hope of his children securing positions under the Royal British government through English education. It was the aura of Gandhi whose emergence fanned up a wild fire of nationalist spirit that emboldened Anand to respond to the patriotic urges of his consciousness. He took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1921. The consequent clash with his father impelled him to set sail for London
where he secured a Fellowship to do research in philosophy under G. Dawes Hicks.

Anand was virtually a diasporic product like many of the enlightened national leaders of the day. The experience of Western life and the exposure to the socio-political situations abroad, especially his close association with the Bloomsbury group and his membership in the Left Club, played a decisive role in moulding Ananda’s perspective and ideology. The new vision that he formulated was the result of a process of disillusionment rather than that of a pedantic pursuit of a course in western philosophy.

Anand soon lost his admiration for Western philosophy. He realised that it was founded on the arbitrary rule of logical reason. As the finale of his disenchantment with pragmatic Western philosophy came a trip back to India “to reflect on our own major philosophical attitudes” ("Being Truthful to the Echoes of the Mother Tongue"). Back in India, the intuitive wisdom which he found embodied in the Advaita philosophy of Sankara, in the aphorisms of Buddha and in the Jataka stories confirmed his newly acquired faith in the superiority of native wisdom. He got the impression that Buddha, with his affirmation that there is no continuity but only percepts had anticipated Hume 2000 years ago. Two events during his stay in India became instrumental in hardening his resolute postcolonial attitude. The first was his visit to Deccan and other parts of India, ‘under the shadow of alien oppression in years of drought and famine’ and the
The tragic death of his beloved Irene Rhyse who was shot dead in Ireland by the British for her Irish nationalist politics.

The early years in London were a phase of deideologization for Anand. His consciousness came out of the hegemonial haze created by the English education and the colonial impact. As Gita Bamezai puts it, “Anand’s stay in London helped the inner man back to his roots and sources” (39). His mind remained receptive to any philosophical perception which did not contradict the convictions of his own consciousness. He admired Hegel, Hume and Nietzsche. But perhaps Russell impressed him more than any other Western thinker. Russell’s belief in the potentiality of man, his prudent insistence on the need for restraint in the modernization process and his strong objection to a policy of dominating and subjugating people corroborated with Anand’s humanistic outlook. But Anand had begun to feel that Western philosophy was ill-equipped to provide satisfactory answers for the fundamental problems of reality, knowledge, God, immorality, survival, evil and suffering. He records his dilemma in Apology for Heroism:

During 1925-26 I read some of the original classics of Modern philosophy. For a while I hungered for the methods of Indian religions and philosophies and wished I had learnt Sanskrit and researched in one of the schools of ancient Indian thought which gave more rounded answers to life’s questions. (23)
Though Anand was born into a traditional Hindu family of Kshathriya caste he grew up unacquainted with the basic conceptions and spiritual traditions of the religion. His father, too ambitious and obsessed with his material goals took no sincere interest in spirituality and according to Anand, “he reconciled God with Mammon” (Apology 9). His mother Ishwar Kaur, an uneducated peasant woman was not enlightened enough to impart to him any deep and convincing religious conception. Her mode of worship placing little brass idols of the gods and goddess of the Hindu pantheon side by side with a picture of Aga Khan and a crucifix struck Anand as incongruous and absurd. However she was well-versed in Hindu mythology and Sikh history. She had a rich stock of tales from both, which had come down to her through the oral tradition. Anand has acknowledged the impact of his mother’s story telling which strengthened and enriched his imagination and nurtured his patriotic sentiments. However his father’s explanations about “the exalted cosmic view of our ancestors who had made thunder and lightning into Indra sea into Varuna and the sun into Surya” made deeper and more lasting impression on him (“The Source of Protest in My Novels”). Except for such random little strokes of religious sentiment he received little experience of religion either from his family or from the British schools where he studied.

Anand observes: “Hinduism had tended for a long time to be more and more the social organism of caste and less and less a unified religion which created a hotch potch world of inconsistencies” (Apology 9). Early in his
life he detached all ties with the evil-infested religious outfit which he found permeated with superstitions, hypocrisy, injustice and greed. Later on, analysing his attitude to the religion, he has explained that it was “the vulgarisation at the core of the Hindu faith” and “the misuse of tradition based on a complete misconception of what Hindu tradition is” that alienated him. In his opinion actually the sources of tradition lay in the bold speculations of the *Hymn of Creations* in the Rig Veda which speculated about the origin of the universe (“Being Truthful”) His aversion to the established structure of the religion perhaps barred him from taking any genuine interest in the philosophy forming its foundation. However after a few years of Western Philosophy in London Anand was engaged in an earnest attempt to gain better insight into Hindu ideology through a reading of the Hindu scriptures and Radha Krishnan’s interpretation of Hinduism. *The Hindu View of Art* his first major work published in England is as he himself has described it an attempt to bring out the exalted spiritual tradition underlying the Indian scared texts, the art in the temples and the art in the caves. Anand who highly appreciated the wisdom and philosophical content of the Vedas and the Upanishads could not reconcile them with the prevalent dogmas and caste prejudices of Hinduism. In his introduction to *A History of Western Philosophy* Bertrand Russell observes thus: “The conceptions of life and the world view which we call philosophical are a product of two factors: one, inherited religious and ethical conceptions, the other the sort of investigations which may be
called scientific, using the word in its broadest sense”. The beliefs and concepts which come down to an individual through native cultural and spiritual traditions are the strongest influence on him. Anand’s ideology and vision have been considerably influenced by the Hindu philosophy which upholds the Upanishadic Principle \textit{Thathvam Asi}, establishing the identity of the human self with the cosmic self. This perennial idea of cosmic unity had inspired the Transcendentalists, and the ecologists - the deep ecologists in particular - have borrowed it as one of the key precepts of their discourse. Fritjof Capra defines ecological awareness as the recognition of the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the embeddedness of individuals and societies in the cyclical process of nature.

Of course Anand would not subscribe to the deep ecological idea of bio-egalitarianism. Totally discarding the idea that “the Atman (the vital essence in Man) is the same in the ant, the same in the gnat the same in the elephant and the same in the whole universe”, he declares his faith in the ideal of Protogoras: “Man is the measure of all things” \textit{(Apology 95)}. But he has reiterated that the man he venerates is the ‘whole man’ in whom there is a perfect unity of the inner and outer selves and who becomes a holistic element of the ecosystem inextricably linked to the elements. Robert E. Spiller says in his introduction to the \textit{Selected Works of Emerson} “Man is to be the Measure of all things, but he must learn to look two ways and the first is outward into nature”. Anand recognizes this fundamental reality of human existence.
Anand with his intellectual, rationalist approach is absolutely safe from what Murray Bookchin identifies as the main problem with deep ecology -- the tendency to adopt a cloudy intuitionism and mysticism as an alternative to reason. Bookchin points out that the idea of interconnectedness has historically been the basis of myths and supernatural beliefs that have become a means for social control and political manipulation. He cautions that myths, mind-numbing rituals and charismatic personalities can rob us of the critical faculties that thought provides and bring us to the level of outright accommodation with social evils which have to be relentlessly attacked. Anand Bookchin’s says: “It is by this shifting of emphasis from the dark mysteries so carefully obscured and made darker by churches and priests to man and the universe he inhabits, by the reassertion of man and his powers of imagination and vision that the new life will be revealed which is to be lived” (Apology 103). In his opinion, the values man evolves in his relations with other men are more important than the redundancies of religion and power politics. The prioritising of social and moral concerns above spiritual issues puts Anand closer to the social ecologists and eco-Marxists than to the deep ecologists. In Apology for Heroism he pictures himself as marching forward with “the double burden - the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of Indian past” on his shoulders, putting his hopes in the Marxian dialectics developed out of Hegelian theories which furnished a scientific and rational method for the study of society” (67).
The attitude of Anand to history, culture and society is cognate with the perspective of social ecology. Murray Bookchin, for example, prescribes “the great tradition of dialectical reason that originated in Greece some twenty five centuries ago and reached its high point . . . in the logical works of Hegel as remedy to the aversion to reason caused by the value-free rationalism of empirical science and Enlightenment”(5). He holds that dialectical naturalism founded on the Hegelian theory of reality and development, the concept of Being as an ever unfolding Becoming could provide the basis for a living ecological ethics. Anand’s notion of progress agrees with Bookchin’s. He defines it as the self-directive activity of history and civilization toward increasing rationality by freedom and self consciousness in relationships between human and human and in the relationship of humanity to the natural world. A.S Dasan holds that Hegelian dialectics has a considerable place in Anand’s ideology. Neither art nor reality is taken as static. Both involve a process of evolving and changing. “The philosophy of Being and Becoming is visualized in his fictional world mainly through protagonists like Bakha, Bhiku, Gauri, Ananda and Krishna as pilgrimage from illusion to reality and from darkness to light”, observes Dasan(“Anand’s Art of Fiction” 93).

Ecology deals with the relationships within and between the two realms -- the social and natural realms.” Second nature as it exists today”, says Bookchin,“ is marked by monstrous attributes, notably hierarchy, class, the state, private property and a competitive market economy that
oblige economic rivals to grow at the expense of each other or perish”(32). Social ecology is predicated on a political agenda of resistance and encounter against such deformities of social structure which cleave society into the privileged and the underprivileged. It fights for the cause of the subaltern -- the oppressed and marginalised who are denied social and environmental justice. This concern for social justice, the sympathy for those who are denied the opportunity to actualize their potential, forms the primary impetus and motif of Anand as a writer.

Marxian ideology had a decisive influence on Anand. It reinforced his humanistic sympathy and gave a definite direction and orientation to his aspirations and objectives as a writer. In London, as member of the Left Book club he zealously perused Marxian literature and attended a study circle in Marxist thought at the house of Allen Hall, a popular trade union leader and pamphleteer. Anand acknowledges his indebtedness and allegiance to Marxism, but refutes the charge that he is Marxian propagandist.

Rama Jha points out how Renjen Bold who opines that Anand’s novels were written “to popularise Leninist Marxism against the rival ideology of Gandhism” and Margaret Berry who finds Anand’s fiction “suffering from defective insight attendant on an exclusive Marxist aesthetic” are wide off the mark (56). The mainspring of Anand’s inspiration is humanism-- a humanism described differently by various critics as ‘Proletarian Humanism’ (Gobinda Prasad Sharma), ‘Existential Humanism
‘(A.S.Dasan), ‘Historical Humanism’ (S.A. Khan), and’ Gandhian Humanism’ (Rama Jha). In fact Anand’s ideology synthesizes humanitarian ideals borrowed from all these sources --Marxian dialectics Hindu philosophy, Gandhian perspective and Nehruite secular, social democratic vision. His convictions and commitment to the cause of the suffering mattered more than a dogma to stick on to. Bamezai rightly observes that “all his works especially novels written between 1935 and 1945 . . . had in good measure the influence of Marxian philosophy. But he never adhered to a dogma. His works . . . explore new ideas to forge the loyalties of men with love and truth all over the world” (51). If Anand had an ideology to propagate it was an ideal fusion of the Marxian view with its emphasis on history and progress and a technocratic future, and the Gandhian perspective insisting on value based development founded on humanitarian vision.

The formative period in Anand’s career -- the period between the two World Wars -- is known as the Gandhian era in Indian history. Anand, like most of his contemporaries was stimulated by the charisma of the great soul even when he was far away in London. The Gandhian impact became an irresistible influence on the literature of the period. Writers in all Indian languages, inspired by the humanitarian ideals promulgated by Gandhiji, began to take their themes from the miserable lives of the poor and marginalised. The All India Students’ Federation as well as the Progressive Writers’ Association came into existence in 1936, indicating a
substantial growth in leftist influence among the educated youth and the intelligentsia. Anand refers to himself “as one of the initiators of the Progressive Writer’s Movement, which was blessed by the poets Tagore, Iqbal, Vallathol and the novelist Premchand and supported by the humane Jawaharlal Nehru” (“Freedom’s Daughter”). He claims that inspired by the new insights the writers could penetrate deeply into the lives of our own people and try to create a literature with concrete characters in full confrontation of themselves and their human situation and poetries of hope. Writers like Mahdolkar and Ma Warekar in Marathi, Subramanya Bharathi and Bharathi Dasan in Tamil and Bhai Vir Singh in Punjabi also shared the zeal for national liberation fortified by social and cultural regeneration.

The epochal rise of the triad - Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao with their successful Indian English novels provided the literary scene with more confidence and vigour. The maiden fictional works of both Anand and Narayan came out in the same year - in 1935. *Kanthapura* (1938) Raja Rao’s first novel delineating the revolutionary impact of Gandhi on an Indian village was an attempt to propagate the Mahatma’s economic and social vision. K.S. Venketaramani who had brought out his first novel in English, *Paper Boats* in 1921 published his second one *Kandan the Patriot* in 1932. The Political, social, cultural and economic issues raised by Gandhi were taken up as motifs by Anand and his contemporaries. The spiritual force of Gandhi could enrich their perspective and stimulate their genius in a unique way.
The work of K.S. Venketaramani, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao would not perhaps have been possible, had the miracle that was Gandhi not occurred during the period. In fact, it was during this age that Indian English fiction discovered some of the most compelling themes the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchable the landless poor, the down-trodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed. (Bamezai 17)

The innermost convictions of Anand found ratification in the Gandhian ideology founded on the human values of love and compassion. Gandhi’s genuine concern for the socially ostracized and his story of a harijan Boy Uka, published in Young India were what solidified his vague dream of a novel about an untouchable sweeper boy. Gripped by an earnest zeal for the cause Anand finished the first draft of Untouchable in one week in the year 1927. But the final form was given to the work only in 1932, after a trip back to India to spend three weeks with the untouchables in Sabarmathi Ashram, as advised by Gandhi. Nineteen publishers turned down the work on the charge of obscenity and finally Wishart Books Ltd. agreed to publish it, provided E.M. Forster would write a preface. When it came out in 1935, Untouchable became a great success and it has been translated into more than twenty languages. The publication of the novel was a significant event in the history of Indian literature as it was the first work to project an untouchable as the protagonist.
The central motif in the next two novels, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* is the same - domination and exploitation, and the ordeals of the oppressed. In *Untouchable* it is treated as a site specific and contextual problem related to the caste system in India. But in the next two novels Anand considerably expands the scope and dimension of his critique targetting the macroscopic issues of racism and imperialism. In spite of his Marxian faith in technology-aided progress Anand shared Gandhi’s apprehensions about the possible misuse of machines for more intense exploitation of the underprivileged. The ecological theme of conflict between tradition and modernity or between man and machines appears in these novels as well as in some later novels, especially *The Big Heart*.

The three novels written between 1936 and 1941 - *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (194) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942)--designated as “the Lalu Trilogy”, hold a mirror to the turbulences of an eventful phase in history. Though woven together through the central character of Lal Singh, each novel forms an entity in itself. *The Village*, a vivid delineation of rustic life in a typical Indian village, reveals the author’s feeling for the country side and the peasants. Love for the land which is a predominant trait of Lal Singh, the protagonist unifies him with Munoo in *Coolie* and Gangu in *Two leaves and a Bud*. As Marlene Fisher remarks, “he never loses his closeness to the earth and his people, a fact nicely conveyed by Anand in Lalu’s frequent quoting of folk wisdoms and sayings throughout all three novels of the trilogy” (56). *Across the Black*
Waters reflects the anti-war sentiments of Anand who had experienced the brutality and futility of war when he visited Spain, in 1937 during the Spanish civil War. The third novel in the trilogy, The Sword and the Sickle, which presents Lalu in his native village as an active participant in the Kisan movement a part of the Gandhian freedom movement is an attempt to highlight the social and economic vision of Gandhi, the relevance of which is asserted by modern ecologists.

The Old Woman and the Cow or Gauri falls into a class by itself among Anand’s novels as the only work which has a female protagonist. His Progressive, enlightened ideas of women’s status and emancipation find expression through the heroine of the novel. Inequality and oppression are things which Anand cannot tolerate on whatever ground or whichever form it may exist-- whether it is caste, class or gender discrimination or imperialistic subjugation. He, like the ecofeminists, believes that a prolonged history of patriarchal ideology is responsible for the inferior position of women in society. He opines “Women characters are enslaved because submission of woman who is supposed to be physically unequal mentally inferior and used charm to ensnare men is the result of the conventions of slavery inherited by our society at all levels” ("Being Truthful" 6).

Gauri, who manages to walk out unscorched through the burning pyre of ordeals prepared for her by the discriminatory system, embodies Anand’s concept of the emancipation of woman. The simple domestic narrative is
placed in a mythical context and the poor peasant woman is purposefully raised to epic stature, in order to assert the divinity of women. Anand wants to remind us that “in the transmogrifications of the Pre-Vedic goddesses, Sarayu to Sarama, Saraswathi, Parvathi, Durga and Kali, the inspiration came from the feeling for the holiness of creation itself from the mother’s womb: and that ‘our racial inheritance, therefore has substratums of sanctity of mothers’ (“On The Use of Epithets” 3).

Anand’s fiction is replete with ecological feeling and any of his novels can be subjected to a worthwhile eco-critical analysis. But an exhaustive analysis or even a fully representative study is practically impossible in a paper like this due to the prolificacy of the author. So a random selection of a few novels is made. The novels chosen for study are Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud and The Village. The first three are approached from the perspective of social ecology and eco-Marxism. These novels with their proletarian sympathy are obviously concerned with man in society and they offer a critique of the social structures and political machinery which torture the underprivileged. But a close reading reveals that ‘First Nature’ figures as important as ‘Second Nature’ in the narratives, for Anand with his peasant background and sensitive mind fully realises that social and individual problems of men have an intimate and intrinsic connection with the environment. The Village is analysed as a typical pastoral novel dwelling on the characteristic traits of peasant life.
A balanced vision founded on a high degree of political consciousness and an innate feeling for nature enables Anand to give a picture of the life in the villages of India which is not in any sense evasive or mendacious. There is no attempt to cover up the grim and unpleasant aspects of peasant life, no endeavour to render an idealised version of the life in the countryside suppressing the depravity, poverty and ugliness in which a large section of Indians lived and still live. But at the same time he successfully delivers the impression that life in a traditional Indian village had its own redeeming aspects which are totally missing from the sophisticated life in the modern cities. Terry Gifford observes that the nineteenth century novelists of England performed the cultural function of reconnecting their newly urbanised readership with the countryside they or their family had recently left behind. The same function may be attributed to Anand’s writings as the corresponding phase of industrialisation and large scale urbanisation occurred in India during the first half of the Twentieth century when Anand wrote his novels.

The first article of Anand’s humanistic faith is the essential dignity of man. He views any system or institution which denies or questions this as a violation of natural as well as human law of justice. Inspired by the vision of an egalitarian society which ensures maximum freedom and opportunity to every individual, Anand challenges the ‘constructions’ which justify the layering of human community into hierarchies. His position in this regard is in conformity with the social ecological perspective, which, as Bookchin
says, “offers no case whatsoever for hierarchy in nature or society [and] ... decisively challenges the very function of hierarchy as stabilizing or ordering principle in both realms, i.e. e., in nature and society” (Merchant 21). A total negation of the relevance of stratification in society is the message that Anand delivers through the stories of such fine specimens of humanity like Bakha, Munoo and Gangu who are marginalised by discriminatory systems like caste and class.

Anand has explained that the fate of Bakha in Untouchable represents the degradation of millions of rejects in India. The compact record of the afflictions and humiliations to which Bakha is subjected within the very brief span of a day eloquently speaks of the pathos of an untouchable’s existence in pre-independent India. The caste system operated as a brutal oppressive mechanism that callously branded an unfortunate section of the society as untouchables and thrust them to the periphery. The novel opens with a description of the outcaste’s colony, where the scavengers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society lived. The picture is horrid, almost nauseating.

A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal clear water, now soiled by dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel. The absence of drainage system
had through the rains of various seasons, made the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive smell. (Untouchable 11)

Apparently the very environment in which they are forced to live is an affront to their status and dignity as human beings. It has been pointed out that under the caste system environmental ostracism occurred prior to social ostracism. For instance, the outcastes were not allowed to build their colony on a hillside facing the east as they were supposed to be too low to enjoy the privilege of direct sunlight. They had to depend upon the mercy of the upper caste Hindus for water as they were prohibited from drawing water from the wells on the ground that the water would get polluted by direct contact with them. The author says that sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene had lost all meaning for Bakha’s family as they could get just one pitcher of water which was much less than their requirement. The monstrosity of the discrimination becomes evident from the fact that it involved a denial of access to the free gifts of nature. The filth and squalor in which they lived deprived these people of self respect, making them vulnerable and easy preys to domination and exploitation.

Anand presents his protagonist as a unique soul endowed with physical strength as well as moral and spiritual qualities which enable him to rise above the limitations imposed by adverse circumstances and uncongenial atmosphere. Among the inhabitants of the colony Bakha alone is repulsed by the polluted and foul air. Alastair Niven suggests that Anand’s intention is not to present a ‘noble savage’ but to challenge the beliefs of Hindu
orthodoxy. As he remarks, the focus is “on the injustice that condemns the alive reflective, sensitive Bakha to an existence that is a denial of his inner responses” (Niven 52). Rakha, Bakha’s brother who, “seemed a true child of the outcaste colony, where there are no drains, no light, no water” had “wallowed in its mire, bathed in its marshes, played among its rubbish heaps, and his lazy, listless manner was a result of his surroundings” (Untouchable 94). Rakha not only serves as a foil to Bakha but also illustrates the close link between character and environment. Bakha manages to be assiduous in his work and clean and hygienic in habits, overcoming the corrupting influence of the environment, and preserves human dignity only because he is a rare specimen among his fellows.

Ecopolitics is predicated on an interrogation of the ‘constructions’ of nature-- the cultural meanings read into nature, which often become a source of social injustice. As Peter Barry says, the discourse brings out how, “social inequality is being naturalised, that is literally disguised as nature, and viewed as a situation which is ‘god-given’ and inescapable when actually it is the product of a specific politics and power structure” (253). Anand exposes the hierarchical structure maintained by caste Hinduism as a very good example for this strategy of power politics. The mettle and calibre of his characters like Bakha and Bikhu (The Road) prove that the order which adjudges them to be inferior in status to fellows like the depraved priest who tries to molest Bakha’s sister Sohini can be nothing but a lie invented by those who want to keep them under their foot
for ever. Nature has generously gifted them with potential, but the society warps and stunts their growth.

The society is a virtual prison for the like of Bakha. The invisible chains of subjugation render them feeble and helpless. This is illustrated by the moving description of Bakha’s predicament when he encounters the hostile crowd motivated by the ulterior urge for domination. An upper caste man raises a baseless charge of pollution against him. The people who gather on the spot join the man to insult and harass him. His soul is almost exploding with fury and indignation, and yet he mutely surrenders to the ill-treatment. The author explains what happens to his hero on such occasions:

A superb specimen of humanity he seemed whenever he made the high resolve to say something, his fine form rising like a tiger at bay. And yet there was a futility written on his face. He could not over-step the barriers which the conventions of his superiors had built to protect their weakness against him. He could not invade the magic circle which protects a priest from attack by anybody especially by a low-caste man. So in the highest moments of his strength the slave in him asserted itself, and he lapsed back wild with the torture, biting his lips, ruminating his grievance. (*Untouchable* 73)

William Leiss, in his essay “The Domination of Nature” expresses the view that the subjugation of animals and of external nature precedes the
subjugation of men. Society establishes and keeps its sway over the individual through techniques uncovered in the course of the increasing mastery over nature: “Externally this means the ability to control, alter and destroy larger and larger segments of the natural environment; internally terrorist and non-terrorist measures for manipulating consciousness extend the sway over inner life of the person” (Merchant 61). Viewed from this angle, the two images that Anand uses to describe Bakha amidst the mob—‘tiger at bay’ and ‘lion in a cage’—have more than ordinary symbolic significance. Man employs cunning and vile tricks to keep the majestic animals of the forest under his domination. He uses similar tricks to subjugate fellow men.

Alastair Niven remarks that Bakha is an interesting prototype of Anand’s central figures whose “physical excellence parallels his moral worth”(48). The veracity of Niven’s assessment is proved by the fact that the boy manages to preserve unimpaired the finer instincts for beauty and happiness—two basic attributes which distinguish man from other animals—, in spite of the dismal milieu that encompasses him. The aesthetic instinct which seems to have gone dead in the other inhabitants of the colony remains keen in him. Bakha flees to the consoling presence of Nature, the meadows strewn with flowers, from the congested and suffocating atmosphere of the colony. A few minutes in the open fields invariably rejuvenates his drooping spirit. Anand establishes his protagonist’s close alliance with nature through a description that is typically pastoral:
He sniffed at the clean, fresh air around the flat stretch of land before him and sensed a difference between the odorous smoky world of refuse and the open radical world of the sun . . . He lifted his face to the sun, open-eyed for a moment, then with the pupils of his eyes half- closed, half-open . And he lifted his chin upright. It was pleasing to him. It seemed to give him a thrill, a queer sensation which spread on the surface of his flesh where the tincture of warmth penetrated the numbed skin. He felt vigorous in the bracing atmosphere. (38)

All of Anand’s boy-heroes,—Lalu(The Village), Bakha (Untouchable), Munoo(Coolie) and Krishna (Seven Summers)--are ‘endowed with a kind of phosphorous which is kindled to life in contact with the elements’ (The Village 72). An instinctive feeling for the earth and nature in general is shared by all of them. But it seems that Bakha has a direct bond with the sun, may be an indication of his spiritual exaltation. He receives his vitality and strength straight from the sun. It is worth mentioning that according to the ancient wisdom of Upanishads as well as the modern wisdom of empirical science the sun is the ultimate source of cosmic energy. Bate observes that book eight of Wordsworth’s Prelude tries “to bring forward an image of human greatness, to express faith in the perfectibility of mankind, once institutions and hierarchies are removed and we are free, enfranchised and in an unmediated, unalienated relationship with
nature" (29). The same is the prime motif underlying the poetic scheme of *Untouchable*.

Bakha’s experience towards the end of the day illustrates that a human soul, however sublime in nature it may be, fails to respond properly to nature when it is crushed by oppression. He runs out to the fields as usual with the hope of reviving his desolate soul, but his aesthetic impulse fails him. Anand shows how Bakha “switched his mind on to the meadow strewn with a wilderness of flowers of which the shades changed at various intervals”, but “could not reach out from the narrow confines of his soul to his yearnings” (*Untouchable*, 105). The boy has been dismissed from home by his father and he feels isolated, alienated not only from his kith and kin, but from society as such, and this feeling of dejection alienates him from nature as well. As Anand observes in *Apology*, “adequate internal fulfilment is difficult if not impossible ..., unless there are adequate external circumstances to create the conditions for it” (116).

In his introduction to *Untouchable* E.M Forster exposes the stupidity and hypocrisy which makes civilised men see a natural biological function as obscene and shameful:

What a strange business has been made of this business of the human body relieving itself. The ancient Greeks did not worry about it and they were the sanest and happiest o’ men. But both our civilization and the Indian civilization got tied up in the most fantastic knots... We have been trained from
childhood to think excretion shameful, and grave evils have resulted, both physical and psychological, with which modern education is just beginning to cope. (8)

Unlike the indolent and complacent heroes of traditional pastoral Anand’s protagonist in Untouchable is inspired by the vision of a redeemed future, not only for himself but also for his fellow sufferers and this concern for his community may be taken as another proof his spiritual exaltation. He is too naive to see through the complexity of the politics of power and domination underlying the situation and views it as a very simple problem. Bakha’s logic goes like this: “They always abuse us because we are sweepers, Because we touch dung. They hate dung” (So he puts his hope in the automatic flush system which, he has heard, can liberate them from their dirty occupation, and as far as his rationale can analyse it, they will no longer be stigmatised ‘untouchables’.

In Coolie Anand depicts the social, cultural and ecological consequences of the shift from the feudal agrarian tradition to the industrial capitalist system. The earlier hierarchy based on caste has given way to an even more callous and inhuman division of society into two-- the rich and the poor. Anand makes very dexterous use of the pastoral conventions to build up a powerful critique of capitalism in this novel. One of its dominant motifs is the corrupting influence of money. The tragic tale of the orphan boy, Munoo depicts the disastrous impact of the profit-oriented capitalist culture. There is an effective fusion of romantic concepts like the
journey from innocence to experience, the erosion of pristine values of peasant life, and rural-urban dichotomy with the Marxian notions of exploitation, and commodification of men under capitalism and the class war which becomes inevitable thereon.

There are ecocritics who feel that the Marxist critique of capitalism suffers gravely from its failure to recognise the validity of nature as an independent entity. In Bate’s opinion, Marxist criticism with its claim to bring texts down from the idealistic stratosphere into the material world falls in with high capitalism’s privileging of the wealth of nations over the wealth of nature. John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill challenged the premises of nineteenth century capitalist and Marxist theories. Ruskin maintained that life including all its power of love, joy and of admiration is the real wealth of a nation and that the fundamental material basis of political economy is not money, labour and production but pure air, water and earth. In *Principles of Political Economy* Mill asserts the value of nature and expresses his concern about the destruction to the environment that was being caused by economic progress. Marxism which invested heavily in notions of industrial growth, productivity and modernisation turned damagingly away from ecological questions. Romantic ecology rectifies this error of Marxism and puts forth a critique of capitalism which includes a profound concern with ecological questions, focusing on the right relation between humanity and nature.
Eco-Marxism inaugurated by the Frankfurt school theoreticians, beginning with Adorno have offered a remedied approach in complementarity with the Romantic tradition of anti-capitalist critique bringing in the cultural, ethical and ecological dimensions within its purview. They attempt an assessment of capitalism on qualitative as well as quantitative grounds. Adorno and Horkheimer, followed by Leiss and Marcuse scrutinized the capitalist culture which has led to the estrangement of men from both humanity’s natural impulses and from natural scenes and seasons. In Coolie Anand does, in fictional form exactly what they did in their theoretical analyses.

The picaresque structure and the panoramic pattern of Coolie provides Anand with ample scope to indulge his penchant for landscape. Particularly in the first and last chapters of the narrative he turns to nature with his senses finely tuned to register every sound, smell, and colour. The scenic descriptions in these two chapters bear the clear stamp of his eco-sensibility. The minute details gathered through first-hand experience of communion with nature provides the scenes with a unique charm and vividness. These scenes can be taken as clear proof of his reciprocity with nature which confirms the veracity of his oft-professed predilection for the country and life in the village.

The young hero is taken up from the idyllic milieu of a village on the banks of river Beas, and put on an excruciating expedition across half the country—from the small town of Shamnagar through the metropolitan city
of Bombay to the hill-resort of Shimla. The narrative minutely traces the process of gradual degeneration undergone by him--the decline of his physical, mental and spiritual faculties as he proceeds on his odyssey. Neil Evernden stresses the ecological significance of any literature that “deals with the individual in environment, the individual as a component of, not something distinct from the environment” (Merchant 97). Looking at the narrative from this point of view, its artistic design is highly commendable as it imparts a very realistic account of the impact of the changing environmental background on the personality of the hero.

The first scene introducing young Munoo is fully in compliance with the pastoral traditions. Greg Garrard explains how the genre of pastoral which emerged in poetry of the Hellenistic period, with the *Idylls* of the Alexandrian poet Theocritus came to be associated with three terms--‘idyll’ ,‘bucolic’ and ‘pastoral’. “The ‘idyll’ was originally the small picture or poetic vignette, but came to mean the represented situation of rural escape or repose itself:” , says Garrard , “‘Bucolic’ deriving from *boukolos* meaning ‘cowherd’ and pastoral, is a term of Latin origin retrospectively applied to Theocritus’ work thanks to the shepherds (Latin *pastor*) who engaged in singing competitions with the cow and goatherds therein”(35). The setting that Anand has created for introducing his protagonist has apparently been derived from these pastoral conventions. Munoo is hiding away from his aunt who is calling out to him and abusing
him “raising her voice,... . to the highest pitch to which, in her anger and hate, she could carry it”. The boy turns a deaf ear to the piercing soprano.

He heard but he did not answer. He merely turned from the shade of a tree, where he sat hidden.....He had been grazing cattle on the banks of the Beas He had been grazing cattle on the banks of the Beas, and had begun to play while the buffaloes and cows in his charge had entered the low waters of the marsh, where they now sat ,chewing the cud of little comfort that the cool of the water afforded against the torrid heat of the morning sun.( 9)

The idyllic picture is lightly crossed with dark streaks as if the author wants to remind us that even in this seemingly ideal background paradisical bliss is a possibility far removed from reality. “The piercing soprano ....with the frightening effect of all its bitter content “ shatters the tranquility of the vales and the cows ‘enjoy just a little comfort from the torrid heat’. Anand proceeds to project the boy as a true spirit of the hills, a foster child of nature like Wordsworth’s Lucy. He has village boys of his own age as friends and they look up at him as a hero. But even in their absence he never feels lonely here on the hills or in the valley. Nature never lets him feel hungry for “some fruit or other was always in season” ; and “the cool breeze soothed his fatigue of the body ... ... the birds sang , the butterflies flitted over the wild flowers.” Anand emphatically establishes his point -- Munoo’s rapport with nature-- with the poignant
comment, “The blood of little Munoo ran to the tune of this lavish beauty” (Coolie 12).

The greed, selfishness and arrogance of the human world as manifested by the cruelty of Munoo’s foster parents --his uncle Dayaram and his wife-- to the orphan boy offers a contrast to the generosity and tenderness that nature extends to him. The ulterior instinct to dominate and exploit others pollutes human heart even amidst the abundance and lavish beauty of nature. Dayaram, a peon at the Imperial Bank has become a cog in the huge capitalist machine and has internalised enough of its culture to realise that his orphan nephew is a ‘property’, which, if used judiciously will bring him profit. As a ‘property’ has no will of its own, and no autonomy, Munoo’s likes and dislikes are not taken into account and decisions are taken for him. He is torn from ‘the sandy margins of the still backwaters’, and dragged away from the hills to his new station in life as the servant of Babu Nathoo Ram, an officer of the Imperial Bank in the small town of Sham Nagar.

In the novel, the hills appear as an object correlative for Munoo’s identity, his dreams and aspirations. They are brought to life through the boy’s consciousness. “The limitless mountains were being blotted out of Munoo’s mind”, as he reluctantly followed his uncle, and “through his tears he could see the high rocks, the great granite hills, grey in the blaze of the sun, and silver line of the Beas” (24). The receding natural milieu represents the erosion of his selfhood, his sense of identity, as in his case
the self is just a part of the setting. H.C Harex makes the following comment about the symbolic use of mountains in Anand’s fiction:

Hills and mountains are often presented as extensions of mind or external equivalents of psychic states and dispositions. They epitomise human aspirations and have mystical significance as ladders of heaven. Anand’s landscape symbols are far from esoteric, associated directly with the meaning of life and with spiritual values.

The pastoral motif of contrast between life in the country and life in the city is integral to the fictional scheme of Coolie. It is closely related to the theme of the loss of innocence. In Shamnagar Munoo gets engulfed in the swamp of the capitalist urban culture. If Bakha in Untouchable is a lion in a cage poor Munoo is just a mischievous rabbit in a trap. His movements, talk and laughter are controlled by mistress, a real termagant of a woman. The boy is put to hard toil from dawn to dusk without any rest and is virtually starved. The worst thing about the life of servility to which Munoo is sentenced is that he is denied contact with the outside world and the natural elements. He is not let out of his prison cell—the kitchen—except when his mistress sends him on an errand like fetching water.

The author’s comment “But in the open, his strong wild self came back to him with the contagion of the elements, and he could have hit his uncle “(45) (Coolie 45), (when the man responded to his complaints about the hard bitter life which he had had since he arrived with some derogatory
remark about his mother) drives home the point that the contact with the elements is a fundamental condition for self-realization, particularly in the case of those who have lived a life in communion with nature.

True, the boy never enjoys autonomy or personal freedom in its real sense. But during his life in the village, except when his uncle or aunt had an impulsive urge to assert their authority by beating or abusing him Munoo was free, free to play with his friends and roam around in the valley lavish with fresh air and natural beauty. But at Nathoo Ram’s house, his nagging mistress goes on reminding him, “Your place is here in the kitchen “ (Coolie 34) , and she recites to him a long list of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ and as “life in the Babu’s house soon resolved itself for Munoo into the routine of domestic slavery .... the wild bird of his heart fluttered every now and then with the desire for happiness ”.

He asks himself what he is and his mind promptly responds that he is ‘Munoo, Babu Nathoo Ram’s servant’. His broken spirit has become conditioned to accept the subaltern identity without questioning. It has become too meek and submissive to experience the psychological conflict that usually accompanies such an identity crisis and its resolution. Munoo has lost the sense of his own individuality, the faith in his own worth and dignity as an independent human spirit. As the author says, “it did not occur to him to ask himself what he was apart from being a servant and his identity he took for granted” (Coolie 46). It is clearly implied in the chapter
that one of the factors which play a crucial role in the disintegration of the boy’s personality is the alienation from the natural environment.

Babu Nathoo Ram’s wife represents another set of people who also may be viewed as victims of the new culture dominated by money-- the new middle class that has attained material progress at the expense of ethical, moral and spiritual standards. Marcuse invented phrases like ‘one-dimensional man’, and ‘proto-typical urbanite, to describe the modern man who lives in the town or city alienated not only from external nature but also from nature within, from those instincts and impulses which are natural to man. He demonstrates how psychic repression and instinctual renunciation and the persistent mastery and denial of internal nature results in alienation, and ultimately in frustration. The character of Nathoo Ram’s wife illustrates this process of psychological degeneration. She is eager to suppress her peasant heritage, as in her vanity she considers it a source of disgrace. Avarice and vanity seem to have banished all basic human instinct including maternal affection from her heart as indicated by the intolerance and cruelty she shows to her baby. Her face relaxes and a twinkle appears in her eyes only when there is talk about money.

Most of the peasant characters in Coolie preserve the innate humane qualities usually associated with the country in the Romantic tradition. Prabha Dayal into whose kind hands fate delivers Munoo at the end of his flight from Nathoo Ram’s house following the inhuman punishment he receives for a childish prank is the very embodiment of such pristine
Dayal has sought entry into the world of capitalism where money rules supreme but has hardly imbibed its values. There is too much of the ‘milk of human kindness’ in him and he is unfit for survival in that world. His partner Ganpath, the unscrupulous entrepreneur who has been acquainted from childhood itself with the underhand methods of making easy profit finds the simple hearted hillman an easy game. His crooked manipulations lead to Prabha Dayal’s bankruptcy and arrest. Dayal thus pays the price for his refusal to adapt himself to the utilitarian etiquette of the cut-throat culture of capitalism.

Munoo gets plenty of love and affection from the childless couple, Prabha Dayal and his wife. It is an unprecedented privilege in his life and this would have been a bright phase in his star-crossed life but for the burden of the heavy toil in the suffocating atmosphere of the pickle factory. The presence of the slave-driver Ganpath makes the atmosphere in the factory further polluted and unbearable. The factory is described as a strange, dark, airless outhouse which “sank like a pit into the bowels of earth among the tall surrounding houses in the heart of the town. It was a world which the wind of heaven never visited and the sun never entered” (Coolie 83). No wonder, ceaseless toil in the smoke-filled dungeon turns Munoo and his colleagues- healthy young men from the hills- into wrecks. His sensitive nature makes Munoo the worst affected victim of the environment: “Munoo did not laugh and talk even as much as he used to at
Babu’s house. He was possessed by moods of extreme melancholy in the mornings, dark of self-distrust and brooding sinking feeling which oppressed his heart and expressed itself in his nervous, agitated manner” (Coolie 109).

Anand’s description of the working place and the analysis of Ganpat’s attitude are the two important factors in the treatment of alienated labour as a motif in the novel. The intimidating presence of Ganpath, who believes that the success of an entrepreneur lies in extracting the maximum out of the labourers, cow the poor workers to silence. But in his absence they sing together. As they chant the hill songs aloud, as if by a spell, their sagging spirits get charged with vigour and a consciousness of their identity that has almost been forgotten. The sudden transformation undergone by Munoo on these occasions illustrates this therapeutic effect of the folk songs which have their origin from the ethnic sense and collective unconscious of a people. It was ‘as if he regained the wild freedom of his childhood’ and he would take out his mirror and comb his hair with’ the desire to be a man, to flourish the true dignity of manhood’ (Coolie 109).

The author puts special emphasis on the link between his hero and nature by depicting the impact of the changing seasons on him even as he worked long hours, from dawn to past midnight’, in ‘the dark under world’. It is an instinctive awareness of the external nature which remains keen in him even in the absence of any physical contact with the elements. When summer turned to winter Munoo felt more at home in the factory for “with
the coming of winter it was not so stuffy and hot in the factory yard” and he has a remote experience of the pleasant arrival of spring. “Towards the late spring Munoo became very happy indeed for then early at dawn, came mangoes, green mangoes from the village (Coolie 110). The mangoes, in a way re-establish Munoo’s lost connection with nature as well as with his happy childhood. Ganpath who rules the poor hill men working in the factory with an iron rod, forcing them to work long hours from dawn to past midnight confirms Marx’s opinion that in its unrestrained avarice capital loses all human feelings and considerations in the manner it treats its labourers. Marx observes:

But in its blind unrestrained passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus labour, capital oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day. It usurps the time for growth, development and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight . . . . It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, reparation, refreshment of the bodily powers to just so many hours of torpor as the revival of an organism, absolutely exhausted renders essential (Merchant 43).

Asserting the truth of this analysis, the author gives a pathetic picture of Munoo whose misfortune is to get into the greedy jaws of the monster, capitalism: “He rose early at dawn before he had had his full sleep out,
having gone to bed long after midnight. He descended to work in the factory, tired heavy-lidded, hot and limp as if all the strength had gone out of his body and left him a spineless ghost of his former self” (107).

Once his master, trapped by his crooked partner, gets arrested and sent to jail, Munoo sets out on his expedition again and this time the journey takes him to Bombay. The elephant-trainer who takes Munoo with him to Bombay warns him: “The bigger a city, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam. You have to pay even for the breath you breathe” (177). The full range and variety of the topography of India is unveiled as the panorama unrolls itself before the eyes of Munoo on his train journey from Daulatpur to Bombay, from rural to urban environment and the scenic shift is artistically unravelled. As the train starts from Daulatpur ‘only the dark foliage of fruit trees was distinguishable against the earth and the sky’; then there came ‘the steep rise of a cluster of hills of weathered stone and red clay’, followed by ‘the monotone of sand which stretched endlessly before him; under the metallic glare of the sun’ and then ‘the flat land gave way to sudden hills capped by forts, and to a plateau where the day’s strong colours melted lovingly on groves of acacia trees and low bushes at which stray goats nibbled and camels strained their long necks’. The prolonged landscape description that stretches over pages, dwelling fondly and delicately on every minute aspect of the contours and colours of the panorama is an authentic proof of the author’s ecological sensitivity and proficiency.
There is almost a total displacement of nature by culture as the train reaches its destination, as the groves, hills, mountains and rivers with the animals grazing on their banks disappear and the train “rushed past the golden domes of temples the long minarets of mosques, the tall spires of churches, the flowery facades of huge mansions, past mills, burning ghats, grave yards, past stone-yards, past fish-drying sheds, past drying grounds over which lay many miles of newly coloured silks and calicoes....”(176). F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, in their essay, “The Organic Community” express the view that the towns and cities are characterised by an utter insensitiveness to humanity and the environment (Coupe 73).

Wordsworth was concerned mainly with the spiritual and cultural degradation of life in the cities. Anand concentrates on the economic deprivation and environmental marginalization of the poorer sections who are doomed to a life in the city. As Munoo rightly feels when he stands surrounded by the huge domes and minarets ‘vying with each other to proclaim the self-conscious heights attained by their architecture’, the grandeur and splendour of the city dwarfs people like Munoo into non-entities. Anand sarcastically presents a crow which shows its contempt for all this vanity by the defiant gesture of relieving itself on the marble statue of Victoria.

In the Bombay chapter of Coolie Anand exposes the multiple vices which sprang up as inevitable consequences of the new economic and social order ushered in by capitalism. The gravest of these evils was the large
scale migration of dispossessed farmers and the craftsmen thrown out of their traditional occupation. These unfortunate souls who were lured to the cities by fantastic tales of easy fortune-making opportunities had little idea of the nightmarish life that awaited them there. The hovel in which Munoo lives with Hari and his friend gives an idea of the pathetic condition of the coolies in the big cities.

The roof of clumsy straw mats, which drooped dangerously at the sides from the cracked beams supporting it in the middle, was not high enough for Munoo or Hari’s wife to stand in. . . . The mud floor was a level lower than the pathway outside, overgrown with grass which was nourished by the inflow of rainwater. The cottage boasted not a window nor a chimney to let in the air and light and to eject the smoke. *(Coolie 202)*

The ugliness of the coolies’ physical appearance seems to be nothing but a projection of the filthy surroundings to which they are condemned. “Their faces were encrusted with the deep lines of wrinkles, the contortion of the furrows and the hollows of the cheeks, the pits and mountains of the jaws; white layers of fluff covered their short-cropped hair, from their necks to the ritual tuft knots, their eyebrows, their eyelids and eyelashes” *(Coolie 214-215)*. The ill-paid, ill-clad, underfed coolies are dumped in the hovels in the dirtiest possible surroundings and their white masters as well as their native agents complacently believe that they neither desire nor deserve anything better.
The callous routine of ceaseless toil imposed on the workers in the factory of the workers in the factory confirms Marx’s indictment of capitalism as depending on “the greatest possible daily expenditure of labour power, no matter how diseased, compulsory and painful it may be” (Merchant 43). The owners of the factory are not barred by any ethical considerations or moral scruples from treating the workers as objects without souls, without human rights and natural human dignity. Anand who realised that ‘behind the mechanical civilisation of the west was the ferocious man-eater of the profit system’ (Is There A Contemporary Indian Civilization 4), portrays the machines as a source of economic exploitation and human debility. As Rama Jha points out, it is significant that Anand chooses images which bring out the life-denying nature of machines. The alienated nature of the work process transforms the factories into places of torture as far as the workers are concerned. They walked to the factory in a kind of hypnotised state of paralysis, in a state of apathy and torpor which made the masks of their faces assume the sinister horror of unexpressed pain” (Coolie 195). This is what Marx means when he says that in agriculture as well as in manufacture, the transformation of production under the sway of capital means the martyrdom of the producer, as the instrument of labour becomes the means of enslaving, exploiting and impoverishing the labourer.

Anand doesn’t present the working class simply as passive and helpless victims of oppression as Romantic anti-capitalism does. He invests
on their latent revolutionary potential as a source of inevitable social change. The portrayal of the Trade Union Movement which is fast gathering momentum under leaders like Hari and Sauda provides the novel with a note of optimism at the end, in spite of the tragic and premature death of the young hero.

Anand resorts to a cyclical narrative structure in *Coolie*. The saga of Munoo’s expedition beginning from the hills of Kangra takes a full round with his return to the hills to breathe his last. In Marlene Fisher’s opinion, the pastoral motif goes beyond furnishing Anand with technical contrast between a simplicity of living which is possible in nature and not in a city ruled by colonial powers. It is an assertion of Anand’s faith that the cash-nexus of modern civilization can be circumvented only by living close to nature, unself-consciously and in freedom.

On one level Anand clearly implies that Munoo’s having had to leave his natural surroundings for the pickle factory at Daulatpur and then the cotton mills of Bombay played a major role in bringing about Munoo’s deteriorating physical and emotional condition. On another level, Munoo’s return to the hills of Shimla to die represents a literal and physical return to his origins in nature.(39)

In Shimla the boy finds a landscape which converges with the internal landscape which he has always cherished as a part of his bucolic childhood and it has a wonderful impact on him. The author says, “as he looked across with life . . . and now he devoured the landscape with those restless
brown eyes of his which seemed to have an insatiable zest for experience . . .” (COOLIE 291). The recurrence of the mountains as an image symbolizing the unfulfilled aspirations of Munoo serves to intensify the pathos of his untimely death. Fisher perceives the deeper significance of the words chosen by the author to conclude the novel, ‘. . . he passed away -- the tide of his life having reached back to the depths’. They imply a whole network of values and intangible but natural and strongly felt inner rhythms, which were thwarted in Munoo’s life through no fault of his. Munoo is an individual doomed by adverse destiny but as Anand indicates by the title, he is much more than that, he is a ‘coolie’ -- a representative of the new class of underprivileged created by industrial capitalism. In Jack Lindsay’s words, he is “the typical peasant dragged by forces he cannot understand into the industrial machine” (8). The callous machine just swallows him up.

Two Leaves and a Bud brings out the essential linkage between the domination of the human and non-human worlds. Though it is not free from the preoccupation with class conflicts characteristic of Marxian dialectics, the non-economic guises of domination gets the author’s attention in equal measures as the economic. The ecological dimensions of colonial invasion are merged with its political aspects. The appropriation of the land by alien forces is treated as not just an economic and political problem but an ethical and ecological issue as well, giving the message that the natural cannot be divorced from the economical and the political. The novel contains as strong an indictment of capitalism as Coolie. The protagonist,
Gangu is an innocent victim of the changing economic order which dispossesses and uproots the peasants from their secure natural abodes to be vanquished by the forces of capitalism. Lured by the prospects of a well-paid job and deceived by the offer of a plot of land, which the native agent knowing the peasant well enough, throws as a bait, he leaves his half-acre in the Hoshiarpur village and crosses India horizontally to the promised land of the McPherson tea estate in Assam. A search for the origin of capitalism and the vices associated with it will lead us back to the beginning of the privatisation and commodification of land.

Engels believes that this in due course led to the reification of human beings:

To make earth an object of huckstering -the earth which is our one and all, the first condition of our existence was the last step toward making oneself an object of huckstering. It was and is to this very day an immorality surpassed only by the immorality of self-alienation. And the original appropriation, the monopolization of the earth by a few, the exclusion of the rest from the condition which is the condition of their life yielding nothing in immorality to subsequent huckstering of earth. (Merchant 59)

The gross injustice of the system is perceived by the uneducated peasant Gangu as well. He expresses his protest against it in plain but powerful words:
I have always said it and say it again, that though the earth is bought and sold and confiscated, God never meant that to happen, for he does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men, and yet many die of hunger and most live under a heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if the earth was made for a few and not for all men! (Two Leaves 204)

The logic of late capitalism by which the landlords and money lenders of Gangu’s village and the colonial plantation owners are led is an obvious transgression of this fundamental precept of natural justice. The imperial overlords are led by the illusion that not only the land that they have conquered but also the living and non-living resources on it belong to them and are at their disposal. The natural resources as well as the people of the poor countries of Asia and Africa served to develop surplus capital with which the maritime nations built empires. The colonies fuelled the rapid growth of the empires supplying them with not only primary commodities and cheap labour but also a market for the manufactured goods. In Apology Anand comments on how the plundered wealth of India facilitated the primary accumulation of capital and the development of capitalist enterprise in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century and consequently the world market was flooded with cheap machine-made goods such as textiles. “So India”, laments Anand, “the country which had been the Mecca of all freebooters from the West for the beauty of its
textiles and fine handicrafts became the dumping ground of British colonialism “(Apology 69-70). Hundreds of Indian peasants were condemned to live and toil in stiflingly congested and repugnantly polluted atmosphere to provide the British in India and at home with all the luxury they needed.

Conscientious British men like John de la Havre are repulsed by the unethical system that allows such inhuman exploitation. In an entry in his diary De la Havre expresses his indignation about the outrageous and inhuman policy of exploitation followed by his compatriots. “The black coolies clear the forest, plant the fields, toil and garner to harvest while all the money-grabbing, slave-driving, soulless managers and directors draw their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies”(Two Leaves 105-106). He comments that it is a simple, obvious thing that anybody can realize without reading Marx.

The most ferocious aspect of this exploitation manifests itself in the system labelled as indentured labour. De La Havre describes it as curse and a ‘monstrous crime against humanity’, and in his opinion all that was said generations ago by the Wilberforces and Cannings and Garrisons and Lincolns against the hideous shame of slavery could be repeated and added to in respect of what was transpiring on the tea, coffee, rubber and other plantations in India. The plight of the poor peasants who were enticed by the fantastic promises invented by the crooked agents and brought to the plantations was hardly different from that of the slaves, except that they
were not sold and bought. They found themselves in a prison without bars from which there was no escape until death. Narain, one of the coolies expresses the unarticulated sentiment of despair and nostalgia felt by all his fellows: “I would have liked to till my fields again and spend my days with my kith and kin”(38). They are very well aware that it is a futile dream as there are the chowkidars keeping guard over the plantations, and deserters are brought back and dealt with most severely.

Anand has taken up the problem of the appropriation and alienation of labour as one of the prominent themes in Two Leaves and a Bud. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels have, in their essay, “Alienated Labor” analysed the essential connection existing between private property and selfishness and the separation of labour from capital and landed property, establishing the connection of all sorts of alienation with the money system. In the Economic Manuscripts of 1844 Marx says ,“for the worker who appropriates nature through his work, this appropriation appears as alienation, his own activity as activity for and of someone else, his vitality as sacrifice of his life, production of objects as their loss to an alien power” (qtd. in Bate 22). In the capitalised version of agriculture the degree of alienation with regard to labour is in no way less than that of its counterpart in the industrial sector.

The title of the novel bears an intrinsic association with its thematic content and motif. The plantation workers engaged in the mechanical process of plucking the tea leaves go on chanting mechanically, “two
leaves and a bud, two leaves and a bud.” The humdrum chant reflects the alienation and monotony of the unrewarded and uncreative life led by them. The labourer is robbed not only of the material rewards for his toil but the pleasure he should naturally derive from the physical exercise.

The picture of Gangu alone on the hillside, tilling the plot of land, which he has come to possess after many a month of waiting and longing, serves to impress this point upon the readers. “He gripped the handle of his spade with an unwavering faith and dug his foot into the sod made by a furrow and sensed the warm freshness of the earth that would yield fruit....In the white emptiness of his mind there was the sudden pulsation of a wild urge to live(Two Leaves 146). As Jonathan Bate comments about Wordsworth’s shepherd, “he is a fellow- labourer with nature, working in harmony with the elements and seasons ”(22) .Working for himself, he represents the spirit of unalienated labour and the pleasure of internal fulfilment attained through a free relationship with nature, free from social restraints.

Anand, as usual, indulges his fancy for the landscape in Two Leaves and a Bud . The narrative is richly interlaced with topographical descriptions. Anand has observed in his introduction to the book that his attempt to evoke the varying moods of the beautiful Eastern Indian landscape makes the novel more complex than Untouchable or Coolie. “Throughout the narrative”, comments Niven, “there is a rich Lawrentian love of landscape, a Romantic communion of man with nature. This is felt
to some degree in all Anand's books, but in *Two Leaves and a Bud* it is lyrically exhilarating” (87). There is a long train journey which seems to be purposefully included to provide a context for a prolonged description of the landscape, transmitting the varying colour, contours and moods with photographic fidelity.

As in *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, it is clearly implied in the novel, that natural beauty means little to man in a state of subjectivity and deprivation. The workers in the plantation, chained to the mechanical process of capitalist production are insensitive to the beauty around them. The luxuriant green of the mountains around and the lustre of the sky fail to stimulate their souls deadened by oppression and misery. They suffer from what has been diagnosed by the Frankfurt School Theorists as a state of alienation from external as well as internal nature. As Marcuse explains, pollution and poisoning becomes a complex mental and physical phenomena under capitalism:

> When people are no longer capable of distinguishing between beauty and ugliness, between serenity and cacophony, they no longer understand the essential quality of freedom or of happiness. In so far as it has become the territory of capital rather than of man nature serves to strengthen human servitude. (Merchant 53-54)

The passive submission of the native workers to the ruthless exploitation and persistent ill-treatment at the hands of the colonial master
s illustrates the way alienation through repression minimizes the potential for resistance. The momentary blazing up of the spark of rebellion in them, when one of them is brutally shot down by Reggie Hunt, is easily snuffed out by the British masters. Mortally frightened by the threats hurled at them by the white men armed with the machines, they readily relapse into their mute victim roles. Their servility is to some extent ethnological in origin, springing from an inherent feeling of inferiority to the whites which makes them extremely vulnerable to the atrocities. The novel deals with conflict and oppression as a multiform phenomena dwelling with equal priority on its racial, colonial and capitalist dimensions. Hawley observes that Anand reconstructs the myth of imperial hegemony and problematizes Eurocentric representation of colonization that reinforces rigid oppositions like civilization/barbarism, and progressive/primitive. “His narratives” says Hawley, “explore the question of ethnic identity in a prejudiced, empowered, hostile, dominant culture that pretends superiority” (18).

A vain notion of the white man’s unquestionable superiority over the blacks is the mainspring of the arrogance and brutality of British men like Croft-Cooke and Reggie Hunt. Marlene Fisher feels that Reggie Hunt, the Assistant planter, “in his mindless propensity to draw his gun in order to bully the coolies--pieces of property--, and in his mechanical and degrading use of the coolies’ wives to calm his lust embodies the jingoism and racial superiority of colonialism at its most vicious” (49). Reggie imagines himself to be Napoleon Bonaparte which is a clear indication of his
insatiable lust for power. He treats the coolies as property to be used to indulge his whims, to quench ‘the oppressive urge of his hot stead fast lust’ or to satisfy his sadistic impulses. The author describes him as embodying the “superciliousness, the complacency and the assurance of the spirit that built the Empire”(47). The narrative dramatises the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, between the exploiter and the exploited and Gangu in his various roles-- as a dispossessed peasant, as an indentured labourer, as a citizen of a country under the yoke of imperialism-- is at one end of the vicious circle. Reggie Hunt represents the other end in its extreme monstrosity.

In Two Leaves and a Bud, as in the two earlier novels there are unmistakable indications of the gradual erosion of Anand’s faith in machines. The war and the operational methods of imperialism and capitalism have brought to him the realization that technology serves only to widen the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged by enhancing the exploitative potential of the forces of domination and intensifying the fear and inertia of the victims. The incidents at the plantation show how the machine becomes an enemy to man, an instrument of oppression in the hands of unscrupulous men ruled by the instinct to dominate. As Bamezai observes: “In the hands of the exploiters the machine becomes the tool of strangulating people into submission”(72).

Gangu is fascinated by ‘the masculine plough with which he had seen the Engineer sahib working on a bare patch of the plateau’, but the beauty
of that wonderful machine is spoiled by the haughty arrogance of the assistant planter who went about ordering men with the sweeping gesture of his whip. Anand believes that machines are wonderful, and what spoils their beauty is the perverted tendency of people like Reggie who go around with a whip in hand, eager to establish their sway over everything. Whenever their feeling of security is shaken by the slightest token of unrest among the workers, the white people at the plantation resort to the machines of terror -- guns and aeroplanes. “The Steel birds” are brought to relegate them back into quiet servility and as anticipated by the sadistic British masters, “utter pandemonium broke out as the ignorant coolies ran about in panic, frightened to death by ‘the droning birds’ ”. Gangu is shot to death by the lecherous sahib who goes mad with his irrepressible lust for his daughter Leila. He is a direct victim of the brutal arrogance of imperialist racism unlike Munoo whose life withers away under the uncongenial conditions created together by his fate and colonial capitalism. Both these novels, as observed by Premila Paul, “bring out into sharp focus the capitalist domination which cuts across caste, cultural, intellectual and racial distinctions since money and power are the main factors involved here” (32).

In 1935 Anand stayed back in India for three months and the Lalu Trilogy was born from a rekindling of his strong passion for Indian peasant life. As Marlene Fisher comments, “the first book of the Trilogy, The Village is a novel about the earth of India, about its seasons and its
civilization and the village itself becomes a major character in the novel" (55). The young protagonist, Lal Singh represents those hapless Indian peasants who flee from the oppressive regime of the traditional feudal system, only to get in to the clutches of an order which is all the more excruciating. The poor peasant in the old village is at the mercy of the selfish, greedy and inhuman hierarchical configuration comprising of the landlord, the money-lender, the priest and the lawyer. They monopolize the resources of the village and establish an unchallenged regime. Anand, not blinded by nostalgic sentimentality perceives the Indian village in transition; the village that sees the degeneration of old values and the tragic destruction of small peasantry; the village that participates in an inescapable war and the village that sees the rise of peasants in revolt against the imperialist suppression. The narrative conveys a feeling of loss, an intense and intimate awareness of the changing social milieu and an attempt at a compromise accepting it as inevitable and visualising a better order.

This ambivalence in attitude may be considered quite natural in the pastoral poetics of an author like Anand who has such a complex cultural background. Childhood experiences of bucolic life had left their indelible imprint on his mind. Exposure to Western life and the pursuit of various schools of philosophy later in his life made him capable of an objective and impartial assessment of the traditional village existence. Though he upholds the virtues of the peasant tradition, obviously there is no
compromise with its various vices which are abhorrent to a mind refined by wide reading and modern education. He hopes to arrive at a synthesis - a blend of the values of a progressive vision with those of a culture formulated through centuries of life in close acquaintance with the earth and its unerring rhythms. Anand attempts not a passionate idealisation of rural existence but a balanced and critical analysis of the pros and cons of life in the village with an emphasis on the contrast between a traditional rural organic community existing in harmony with the natural environment and as part of modern, mechanized urban society - the contrast on which F.R Leavis dwells at length in *Culture And Environment*.

A townsman’s experience of an occasional visit to the countryside tends to be romantic. A writer with an urban background may naturally have an inclination to romanticise the landscape as well as the country people, to patronise and exploit them. His peasant background keeps Anand free from any inclination of this kind and enables him to render a realistic picture of Indian village life with total impartiality and detachment made possible by the years of exile in London. The first hand experience from which his material is derived provides him with a considerable degree of objectivity in the portrayal of social, cultural and economic realities. Anand dismisses the corruption and degradation brought in by the new industrial culture without a mendacious nostalgia for an ideal past. His vision is totally free from any sort of illusion as to what life in the country means. Rural life is not viewed as an alternative to the technological
civilization but as providing us with some perennial values which may help reintegrate human life with the living power of natural forces.

According to Glen Cavaliero in the country, people living in villages and hamlets tend to have a stronger sense of community than working class apart, is to be found in the town. There also tends to be a closer relationship between classes as they are more aware of each other’s needs and habits by sheer geographical proximity, however much they may be separated by economic disparity. This feeling of kinship and community is comprehensive enough to include the earth and all living and non-living entities on it. The peasant amidst all the troubles and travail of his daily routine experiences a sense of security a sense of belonging in his native village. It is the sentiment expressed by Lal Singh’s father Nihal Singh who returns from a visit to the town:

And walking along this road, Nihal Singh sensed a kinship with the familiar earth. He felt the warmth of the sheltered lives in the village where he was respected. He sniffed the air as if it were nectar and gazed upon the landscape as if it were heaven full of the ineffable bliss of life, full of men and women and children and animals and fruits and flowers. Only the deep red pits of cinder and the mounds of burned clay near the brick factory blighted the view. But now he accepted that desecrated part of the field also as the counter part of the ploughed land,
because it had been established years ago and become part of the landscape of the village.

*(The Village)*

The passage reflects the typical sentiment of the rustic—a unconditional love of his land and everything that belongs to it. This all-encompassing fellow-feeling which is characteristic of the simple-hearted peasant is underscored by the author with a depiction of the warmth with which old Nihal Singh receives the village dog, the anxiety he feels for the peacock when the dog chases it and the feeling of relief which he experiences as he watches the bird fly off safely.

A subtle trait of adjustment and adaptation is another distinguishing feature of a peasant community. The people in the village lead a life in tune with the environment, intimately feeling and responding to the moods of the elements, the changes in weather and the alterations in natural cycles. They are sensitive to the pulses of life in nature and the rhythm of the seasons. The author employs striking images to establish the idea of a cosmic dynamics, an essential link between the workings of human nature—both physical and mental—and the working of the external nature. For instance, Nihal Singh, “felt a sharp chill as he heard the swish of the falling water. His limbs seemed to be crumbling like a soft mound of earth. The cold weather was setting in” *(The Village)*.

One particular feature of the Indian peasant’s life style was highly conducive to strengthening this bond between man and nature. In an Indian
village of olden days most of the routine activities used to take place in the open. Even today the house is not the locus of many activities which in the Western countries necessarily have to be carried out indoors. As we find in The Village, men work from morning to evening in the field, have their meal under the shade of a tree, take their bath in the yard and sleep on the open verandah. These people live in harmony with and work in partnership with nature.

The portrayal of Nihal Singh’s family sharing the mid-day meal, served affectionately by the mother, under a tree evokes a nostalgic picture of a traditional peasant family knit together by a warm feeling of love and mutuality. Significantly enough, they attend to the bullocks, Thiba and Rondu and provide them with water and fodder before sitting down for the meal. Lalu, the youngest of the sons, and the protagonist of the novel is especially concerned about the animal. The yoke of servitude imposed on the bullocks is made lighter by the abundance of care and consideration bestowed on them. Man-animal relationship is exalted into a noble partnership founded on mutual understanding and co-operation from a utilitarian and anthropocentric subjugation and exploitation of helpless creatures.

Lalu, the protagonist represents the author’s concept of a modern, enlightened Indian peasant. He appears to be a synthesis incarnate of the perennial elements of the ancient culture and the viable aspects of the modern one. He is a young man who has received and internalised the
values of modern education without discarding the insights and values that he has inherited as part of a rich traditional culture. The greater emphasis seems to be on his heritage as an Indian peasant:

The mute and patient peasant in Lal Singh, the primitive natural son of the soil, who was descended from the dim nation of stalwart men, hardened by long duress, who had furrowed the slumberous earth and felt a sense of heard tales of long strifes and battles which his ancestors had fought to win their land... (*The Village* 201)

He was educated up to the eighth class at the Church Mission High School at Sherkot, but he is proud of his skill in farm work and confident that his capacity to do any job on the farm has not deteriorated through learning as his brothers and the elders of the village liked to maintain. Anand implies that meaningful labour means a combination of hand and brain and the effective coordination of intellectual ability with physical skill which will enable man “to increase the productivity of the land, and set the house in order...” as Lalu wishes to do. This is the chief concern of ecology—how to attain material prosperity and keep the house or ‘oikos’ in order. As Lalu contemplates with a feeling of gratification, he possess the ‘peculiar knack, a skill that was the natural gift of the peasant. “He is endowed with the unique capacity for the perception of and communion with nature, unlike his friend Churanji whose parents originally came from
a city and ” and who had not inherited this kind of phosphorous which could kindle into life through a breath of the elements” (*The Village* 72).

He enjoys ploughing, sowing, reaping and threshing. The dream he cherishes is not that of sarkar job, but of ‘the rich corn rustling beneath the blazing sun, and the slashing blade of his scythe reaping the crop, in April and his mother making bundles of stalks to carry away’. It is the typical dream of a true peasant. The indulgence with which he works in the soil seems to be the pinnacle of unalienated labour as illustrated by the following picture of Lalu digging a ditch for the water to flow into his field:

> He was only conscious of the mounds of moist earth yielding to his blade and breaking up into smaller mounds or crumbling away into particles where they were upturned . . . waiting for a touch of the thin autumn breeze to smooth his face, he watched the coarse flanks of the earth breaking into clear halves to admit the thin vein of water which had already begun to flow down from the reservoir. (*The Village* 33)

This scene reveals another aspect of the relationship of man and nature. As revealed by Lalu’s indulgent act of digging the workman’s control over nature can become a means of self-realization. This idea is further reinforced by images emphasizing Lalu’s physical and spiritual unification with the elements. “As he began to dig deeper and hacked the earth again and again, till the water flowed through the shapely bed of the ditch, he
felt an admiration for the energy that flowed with the laughter of the sun like a tingling warmth in his body” (*The Village* 28).

He receives warmth from the flowing water. But the mounting pressure of a hostile society deprives him of the fulfilment he usually derives from his work and the pleasure he receives from contact with the elements. The village community has ostracized him for the supposedly sacrilegious act of cutting his hair. Lalu cannot compromise with the attitude of the village that makes such a fuss about something quite personal like cutting one’s hair. Alienation from the human community entails alienation of the spirit from one’s activities as illustrated by Lalu’s failure to apply himself to the process of work with the usual absorption. “He took the curves at the edge of the field and hurried Thiba and Rondu with a fierce push, inspired by the will to forget himself in his work. But his thoughts returned and he was torn and lacerated--full of a bitter hatred for the world “(*The Village* 109).

The alienated self withdraws into a niche of seclusion, disengaging itself from all the bonds with the environment and even natural beauty strikes no chord in the benumbed soul. Lalu went forward, dazed with the weight of his own perplexity, ”breathing evenly in the sunny stillness of the fields where the breeze was turning colder and colder with the damp odour of the newly turned earth , and where the transparent light of the sun shimmered through the elements and sighed among the blades of grass”(*The Village* 112). The breeze and the sunlight and the odour of the earth have not just lost their appeal but have become unpleasant to him.
From an ecological perspective, being human means more than being kind and considerate to the fellow human beings. Ecological humanism has as its foundation a wide sympathy and respect for the other animals and other entities existing on the earth-- being a responsible member of the biotic community. The Indian peasantry in general hold a humble and generous mentality of regard and love for the living and non-living elements of nature. This holistic attitude has been nurtured by our cultural and spiritual traditions, both of which are equally holistic in basic conceptions of life.

In an old-fashioned Indian village the domestic animals are treated as members of the community. The picture of a typical Indian village could hardly be complete if it doesn’t include at least a few characters representing the animal population. Anand who knows this well delineates some bovine characters of Nandpur with equal prominence as the human ones. It seems that The close acquaintance with the animals at his maternal grandfather’s house, where he used to spend his vacation in his childhood days, had sufficiently equipped Anand with first hand information concerning the peculiarities and mannerisms of these domestic creatures who appear as ‘dramatis personae’ in his novel. His account of their behaviour is quite natural. At the same time the episodes involving them are dramatic and interesting. Evidently, Anand had a genuine affection for these animals. The memory of these childhood friends still remains warm in his mind as shown by such passages in the novel.
Suchi rushed clumsily in through the hall door, mooing when, when like a child announcing its arrival home . . . the bullocks Thiba and Rondu stood munching at the fodder in the manger, and whisking their tails to keep the flies from alighting on their dung- bespatched hind legs... the black calf, Vachi struggled to reach its mother’s teats as it lowed piteously. (*The Village* 39)

There is a strong bond of attachment between Lalu and the oxen who “shivered with pleasure every time he touched them, licked his arms with their long tongues as he prepared the fodder and always looked at him with widely dilated, big glassy eyes as much as to ask, ‘what are you thinking, brother?’” (42).

There are occasional cases of animals being prioritised over the human characters as in the scene presenting the encounter between Sir Herculese Long and Suchi, the buffalo. This is fully in accordance with the transitional dynamics of ecopoetics predicated on giving voice to the non-human others, of recouping the marginalized voices of nature. The naturalness of the narration and the preciseness in particularities bear witness to the writer’s intimacy and familiarity with domestic animals.

Hercules Long, the Deputy Commissioner is good-hearted and is inspired by genuine sympathy for the peasants. He implemented many schemes for their welfare. But “in spite of all that he knew of village life, he had no understanding whatever of the language of the bovine species in India” (*The Village*135). This ignorance becomes almost fatal for him
during a visit to the village. Suchi who is the first one to see him enter the village goes forward to receive him, ‘whisking her tail as a gesture of goodwill’. The panic-stricken white man tries to wave and shoo her away, but in vain. The author makes a rather curious observation regarding the analogy between the bovine species of India and its human counterpart: “The Indian buffalo is not unlike the Hindu race, a tame, docile species, tolerant and hospitable in the extreme, spontaneous and natural, weak-willed through want and yet possessed of a curious fire which helped it to endure through thousands of years” (The Village 136). The sahib who belongs to the race that rules the world, who represents the mighty empire is chased up a tree and is forced to remain there until Lalu who has been watching the whole drama from the top of a tree asks Jitu, a five-year-old to go to his help.

The climax of the scene showing little Jitu sitting on the buffalo’s back like a triumphant hero and leading her to the manger while the embarrassed sahib stands watching, and thinking out ways to overcome the disgrace, speaks eloquently on the subject of ideal relationship between man and animals, a topic of great interest to ecocriticism. The boy with the peasant blood in him and acquainted with the ways of the animals finds it an easy task to control the buffalo whereas Mr. Herculese Long in spite of his education, physical strength and mental prowess finds himself at the mercy of the animal and cuts a very sorry figure. It may be interpreted as a carnivalesque portrayal of Nature’s triumph over civilization. The episode
embodies Anand’s ideal of the sort of comradery that is possible between man and animals. The way he lets Suchi occupy the centre of the stage is in accordance with the transitional dynamics of ecopoetics which stresses the need to shift the focus from man to not-man, to revive Jeffers’ philosophy of Inhumanism.

There is the episode of Sir Geoffrey Boyd’s tiger hunt in Two Leaves a Bud which reflects another aspect of this theme--the ecocidal effect of man’s vanity and lust for power. Three lives-- the life of one man and two animals-- are sacrificed to indulge the whim of the vainglorious governor. Sir Boyd wishes to impress his oriental subjects, who according to Lord Curzon ‘ have a tremendous regard for pomp and show and like their kings to be great and marvellous’. A farce of a tiger hunt is organized for his delectation and a number of professional shikaris, hundreds of coolies and a herd of elephants are put into service to make it a success. The climax of the episode shows the extent to which man can degenerate in his pursuit of pomp and glory. The governor having missed his target to the peril of his life, one of the shikaris shoots down the beast and while Croft-Cooke goes on shouting that his Excellency has shot the tiger Sir Boyd poses for a photograph with his foot on the spotted body of the dead tiger. Human beings succumbing to such ulterior instincts have already swept away many a species from the earth and still remain dangerously unconscious of the irreparable damage we are inflicting on the ecosystem by eradicating fellow creatures. In this context, scenes like those discussed above deserve special
credit for ecological significance and should not be underestimated as interludes providing us with some sort of comic relief.

Anand makes liberal use of pathetic fallacy as a means to establish the connection between the perceiver and what he perceives. But more often he uses the landscape or the elements as vehicles for man’s emotions. Thus in Two Leaves And A Bud the river appears to Gangu as “a creative force that bore all the burden of existence on its heart”, and it “flowed down, ember-coloured and quivering almost with the same feeling with which he faced it” (205, 217). Lalu expelled from home and banished from the village feels as he runs for shelter from the downpour that “the sky was weeping bitter tears for him” (The Village, 105).

For Anand, nature is a physical reality and a source of sensuous experience. He doesn’t make any persistent attempt to perceive and interpret the spiritual or philosophical meaning of natural phenomena like Wordsworth and the other Romanticists. The extremely romantic and lyrical description that he gives at times is so vivid and powerful that it makes the presence of the natural milieu a tangible reality to us. Anand’s rendering of the aesthetic experience of nature is becomes quite palpable in passages: like this:

For truly glory, glory ruled everywhere. It was such a joy to awake to the stillness of the gray dawn and walk out through the dew-drenched fields still lying under a misted sheet ... .It was sheer delight to bathe at a running well, groping across his body
by the soft glimmer of a lingering moon and the occasional 
sparkle of a dying star, to see the pale-blue sky tinged with a 
white-red fire, the fading of the twilight and the opening of the 
glued eyes of the world with the glow of morning ....To walk 
back, one’s nostrils filled with the breeze which was pregnant 
with the smell of lush grasses and the pollen of bursting flowers, 
across bands of fields turned green like strips of a carpet, and sky 
clear and flawless, like glass above the mists, shining 
resplendently with winged life dancing and singing across. (The 
Village 160-61)

In the opinion of Lawrence Buell, in an ‘environmentally oriented 
book’ the non-human environment is presented not merely as a framing 
device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is 
implicated in natural history. Anand with a strong sense of social 
commitment, naturally conceives his fiction primarily as human drama, 
with the focus mainly on the role of man as a social being. It is essentially 
‘the novel of human centrality’, as C. D Narasimhaiah describes it. But the 
social milieu as presented by Anand is inextricably embedded in the natural 
milieu. He has often clarified that the theme of his works is ‘the whole man 
‘and ‘the whole gamut of human relationships’. The whole man is at the 
centre of his red green poetic vision--the vision of a world where man lives 
in harmony with nature, upholding natural human impulses and striving to 
attain progress through the ideals of equality, liberty and justice.