CHAPTER – THIRD
SOCIAL VISION IN
M. R. ANAND'S NOVELS
SOCIAL VISION IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVELS

One of the chief sources of pleasure in reading fiction is its satisfaction of our desire to know more about man in his relation to society. A novelist it may be said, is in search of a unity in the diversity of life and civilization. He, therefore, cannot turn his back on the social realities of his time, but should carve man's image in his art with his social awareness and insight into life. Anand asserts that 'Art is for life's sake', for the sake of man's progress. Literature should be used as a means of alleviating the suffering of fellow human beings. The creative artist is a realist who allows his vision to be shaped by the time, the place and the circumstances of the period to which he belongs. Anand believes that the work of a creative writer inspired by a mission: a power to attack the evils of life like hypocrisy, cruelty, insensitivity, etc., and on advocacy of love and compassion which make human life nobler and happier. The novel should certainly concentrate upon the real drama of 'the body soul' and the truth of life, with all its sufferings.

Untouchable, the first novel of Mulk Raj Anand, describes the unlawful treatment to those members of society who have been declared untouchables. His way of characterization attacks this social evil affecting the
members of Hindu community. His basic intention is perhaps to highlight the evils of caste system. Practically, it signifies exploitation and unfair means; advantage to one class of society and disadvantage to another. The central theme of the novel is age-old injustice perpetrated by the people of the higher caste on those of the lower caste.

Untouchable reveals the major events that take place in the life of Bakha, the hero of the novel, in a single day in the town of Bulashah. The eighteen year old boy is one of the sons of Lakha, the Jamadar of the sweepers of the town and cantonment. Bakha is a child of the twentieth century, and the impact of new influences stirs him. From Tommu he has secured a pair of old breeches, and from a sepoy, a part of old boots; he would if he could, like to look like a white foreigner and so be in the "fashhun". But as the day dawns, his work of latrine-cleaning also begins. His dream notwithstanding, he is a steady and efficient worker. Anand describes Bakha's morning-round of duties with a painstaking particularly, bringing out both the efficiency with which the boy does this essential service and the callousness with which the beneficiaries receive it as if it were a matter of no account whatsoever. Three rows of latrines to clean single-handed, and several times too; to bring cleanliness in the place of filth: such is Bakha's daily toil which he turns into a dexterous art.
Untouchable is a short novel but most revealing and rewarding of the lot. The 'unities' are admirably preserved, as in a classical play. It explains not only the lower strata of society, sweepers, to which Bakha belongs but also the bottom scale of morality. Seeking a boy injured in a hockey game, Bakha brings him to his house. Instead of praising and appreciating his efforts to assist an injured boy, Bakha not only is assaulted and debarred but also charged with defiling the injured boy.

In this regard, the society thinks that touching the sweeper, whom it considers an outcaste, will bring impurity to blood and thereby the fall of dignity. Shall we ask the custodians of religion and owners of the society to recall the identity of their forefathers? In the ancient times there were only four major castes - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras, and now they have multiplied into more than two thousand castes in Indian society. Where have these caste varieties come from? Isn't it the result of frequent blood-mixing among them?

Untouchable, the most roaring novel, presents before us the naked reality of the society and has remained a revolutionary novel. Bakha, an outcaste is the chief character of the novel. It should be kept in mind that untouchability in pre-independent India meant something very different from what alienation has meant and means in the
West. "Bakha, unlike Stephen Daedalus of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* as a Young Man Ulysses never had the choice of self-imposed exile."¹ He had never taken an education that could help him - as it helped Stephen - and could give him moral direction. Rather Bakha is an untouchable by birth and has to remain till doom. His life is inescapable from cleaning and sweeping the road. He is taken as dirt because he cleans and touches dirt. This was the position of millions of Bakha, in our country. For Anand it is unacceptable and hence creation of Bakha's inner life makes *Untouchable* the kind of novel that has great social as well as human significance and thus makes it a part of the growing concern that Mulk Raj Anand himself was feeling for metaphoric untouchables, in all cultures and walks of life. In all Bakha does very little. He neither leads an insurrection nor runs away nor tries actively to change his circumstances. The actual social and economic conditions of the youth's existence were, after all, facts, and Anand was much grounded in Indian social reality to ignore such facts. Still, when Bakha in a key scene in the novel is slapped in the face for having failed to announce the polluting shadow of his sweeper presence, something is set-off within the eighteen-year-old boy, which was to remain permanently with him.

The novel broke sharply with certain British and Indian traditional attitudes and habits of thought. This is particularly true concerning ideas about what was 'clean' and what was 'unclean' or what was appropriate for treatment in a novel and what was better ignored. One such taboo in both countries—though for very different reasons—centered on the disposal of human excreta. Neither the Indians nor the English were at ease with these topics. Anand has, himself, described that the work of cleaning the latrines in Gandhi's Ashram deeply impressed him:

I had, of course, learnt the gospel of dirty hands in Europe, where I had cooked own food, scrubbed my own floor, and done the fetching and carrying. But because I had developed an English puritan attitude towards excreta I had recoiled against latrines. I knew now I would have to face the fact that there was refuse in the world, and that if the sweepers would clean the latrines of the caste Hindus and carry away dungs, then the so called caste Hindu should also learnt to clean the latrines and carry the excreta. 2

As a result of this experience, as a result of unlearnign and then learning a new from within a more human frame of reference, Anand was able to depict in untutored Bakha a startling—if intuitive rather than reasoned—work

ethic. It is an ethic, which allows him, while he is engaged in his tasks, to forget the odiousness of his job and, instead, to be aware of his body.

The hero of the novel suffers i.e. morally, socially, and financially. The exploitation of simple peasants and ignorant people; the blood sucking image of landlords, Sahukars, Seths and more specially, custodians of religion, in the form of priests, etc., is quite heart-striking. Though, all the low castes of society had fallen a prey to these giants, sweepers, who are brutally tortured, belong to the lowest among them. It is the irony of circumstance that sweeper caste is counted neither in Hindus nor Muslims. "Are you a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sweeper"? This line gives a categorical and systematic position of sweepers in our society. Sweeper, being a member of the lowest class of society is treated worse than a slave who is better in the sense that he can change his master and subsequently gets different types of tasks at different times. But sweeper is a sweeper and will be so. The next generation will also be following the same profession. It is sufficient to accept that whosoever is born in a respectable family will always be good, no matter what he performs; whereas the truth remains that goodness cannot be monopolised by any specific class.
Bakha, having passions and feelings like a normal man, when finds no way, tries to convert himself into a Christian boy with the help of a local missionery. This incident tells us that one should acknowledge the compatibility of other religions where all are treated alike.

*Untouchable* covers many events in the life of Bakha, a low-caste boy. He is an eighteen year young boy, son of Lakha, the Jamadar of the sweepers of the town and cantonment. The whole story takes place in the town of Bulashah, a North Indian town. Bakha is a boy of twentieth century who has dreams like a common man. He sometimes thinks, he would have looked like a white foreigner. His sister Sohini is also found of modern ways of living and fashions.

One day when his sister goes to a well to fetch water, she has to hear abuses of other castes as she belongs to the lowest caste. Custom is that she cannot take out water from the well, like the people belonging to other castes, and has therefore, to depend on some gentleman who can give her water. At last Pt. Kali Nath agrees to get water for her. He gives his full attention to taking a glance at the zestful youth of Sohini, though his body has numerous wrinkles due to old age. Skipping all others who had gathered to take water, he turns his attention towards Sohini and pours water
into her bucket suggesting that she should come the next day to his house to clean the courtyard. When she goes to clean the courtyard, he molestes her. Subsequently, she repels his advances. Pt. Kalinath, having no option accuses her of polluting him and collects the crowd of the high caste people. In the meantime, Bakha also comes there as he has been deputed by his father to sweep the streets. He sends Sohini back home to avoid the insult and listens himself to the abuses of Kalinath. Sohini comes back home and says bitterly to his father: "We are merely dirt because we clean their dirt."

In the afternoon, Bakha attends the marriage of his friend Ram Charan's sister - a girl of somewhat higher caste to whom he could not marry because of caste prejudice. Ram Charan is a washerman's son, and Chhota, Bakha's another friend, is the leather worker's son. bakha forgets the differences of caste, and eats sugar plumes together with them, and goes to play hockey with them in the evening. Havaldar Charan Singh makes company with Bakha without any complex and also gives him a hockey stick. They play Hockey against 31st Punjab. Bakha hits a goal. In the game a boy is seriously injured. Bakha helps him to bring him to his house. According to boy's mother Bakha pollutes him and her

house, too. When the returns home his father also scolds him for being eloped from the house for long. Frustration weighs heavily upon him and he finds peace neither at home nor outside.

Bakha is frustrated by caste prejudices. Possible solutions to get rid of these problems are suggested to him by a Christian missionary who advises him to adopt christian faith which will enable Bakha to escape humiliation and torture on account of caste prejudices. Bakha listens to Gandhi ji who advocates eradication of untouchability, and who also exhorts him to keep dirty habits at arm's length.

Though, Untouchable is a minor colassic published three decades ago, yet it has continued to attract critical attention for the problem cited in it still have to be solved and still have relevance. Untouchable opens quietly on an autumn morning and by the time evening approaches the author has been able to build his hero Bakha, an eighteen year old sweeper who cleans the public latrines. "Get up, oh you Bakhya, the son of a pig." After finishing the task of cleaning, he returns to his hut. In order to quench the thirst for tea he again proceeds to sweep the market street and temple courtyard. On the way he buys sweetmeat for four annas. While enjoying the sweetmeat he forgets to call out

4. Untouchable, p. 15.
"posh, posh ... posh sweeper coming" and accidently touches a Hindu. He is given much abuses and slapping by the man whom he has polluted.

Anand gives a glimpse of the attitude of the upper Hindu caste people towards the sweeper boy belonging to the lowest of the low castes. The behaviour of Pt. Kalinath towards Sohini, the sister of Bakha, is extremely callous, cruel and despicable. It is symbolic of injustice and tyranny perpetrated by the upper caste people in general on the unfortunate class of people of the country. What is ironical and therefore shocking is the fact that they do not mind casteism when they perform unmoral deeds on the miserable and helpless low-caste people.

Untouchable is the most powerful novel written by Anand. The whole novel is based on happenings in a single day in the life of Bakha. All the events that happen before Bakha's eyes have a psychological bearing on Bakha, the protagonist. He suffers from an unbearable mental turmoil. He gets peace neither at home nor outside home.

Bakha, different from others, has numerous dreams in his life. He is a boy of modern, free India. By nature he is a sensitive boy. He understands the rough behaviour of Hindus. He cannot understand why people are so unfair and
tyrannical with those born in low-caste families; why they do not realize that the low-caste people, too, are made of flesh and blood as are their fellow creatures and, therefore, should be treated as human beings. He understands that he does some useful work for the society, so he is a part of society. He performs his duty well, a duty that every one cannot do. Still he is a neglected person of the society. He had also worked in the barracks of Europeans and had known that the sepoy did not hesitate to touch him. But treatment of the caste Hindus is much different. "The outcasts were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper class would consider the water polluted." More than this, for water, which is the very basic need of a person, they had to live on the mercy of caste Hindus.

Most of the Hindu children touched Bakha willingly at the hockey game and wouldn't mind having him at school with them. "But the masters wouldn't teach the outcasts test their finger which guided the student across the text should touch the leaves of the outcasts' book and they be polluted."  

5. Untouchable, p. 26  
6. Ibid, p. 44.
One day while eating the sweet purchased from the fair, being overjoyed, accidentally he touched a man. He was given a sharp slap and abused for not having shouted that he was an untouchable. A massive crowd gathered around, all abusing him. Since then Bakha had to alarm the people by saying 'posh, posh ... posh' so that they should be away from him so that their blood was not polluted by the touch of his body.

There was a time in the childhood of Bakha when he fell ill. Lakha his father rushed to Hakim ji to save his son's life. But being untouchable he had to maintain a distance. But at last Hakim melted after a number of petitions, gave his treatment to Bakha and with great difficulty he was saved.

The sweepers whose job is to clean the place for others, live in a locality that has never known hygiene or sanitation. Even for water which is the basic necessity, they have to live on the mercy of others. This merciless attitude of the upper caste against the sweepers leads us to think that had the air sweepers breathe been in the control of the people belonging to the upper caste, they would have held up the supply of it.

Bakha lives in peace neither in home nor outside home. He starts his daily life early before dawn with the fear
that he would get rude command from his father. One day Bakha starts taking rest on a platform in front of the house of a caste Hindu. He is touched by an upper class man who is immeasurably enraged by this incident and showers bitter abuses on Bakha for taking rest on a platform. This treatment of the upper caste man gives Bakha a rude shock and his mind is shaken. And in the evening his sister becomes a victim of a caste Hindu. This gives him another unbearable shock. Wherever he goes he meets with humiliation and hears words like 'polluted' and defiled'. Sometimes he tinkis: "What I have done to deserve all this?"

The term 'outcaste' is thought somewhat a confounding word, especially when untouchables have gradation system among themselves and their honour is measured by caste. There are a few castes whose touch does not pollute the upper caste people but they too cannot take water from them. Similar is the case in connection with marriages. Such marriages where the man is from a low breed and the woman is from a high breed are prohibited. A Brahmin can many a woman of a Kshetriya; a Kshatriya can marry a woman of a Vaishya, and a Vaishya can marry a woman of Shudra, while vice-versa is not possible. The custom of touching a Mulsim to redress an unholy touch not only sounds ridiculous but reveals the absurdity of the system. Such a clumsy system of our society

is very different to explain properly and irony is that whereas in India we take pride in sticking to this system, nowhere else in the world exists such a rubbish system.

Saros Cowasjee says: "The Hindu religion is responsible for this fiendish segregation of humanity." This is right to some extent because the practice of religion is very different from what actually the religion stands for. The practices are basically the consequences of socio-political compulsions. But, on account of this we cannot blame directly the religion on which the fundamental life of a human kind is based.

Untouchable has been regarded as a small classic because it highlights the factors that are a nuisance to Indian society in general and Hindu community in particular. The novel runs through a theme: relation between untouchables and high caste Hindus. The thought of untouchability cannot be abolished from the Indian society unless man believes in humanity. Even if we want to love all we cannot - life is too short to love.

Bakha has thinking like a machine. It is clear from his negative reaction when the Christian missionary talks of 'sin' and his positive reaction to the sweet eloquence of

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Gandhi ji. He feels that solution offered by Christian missionary and Gandhi ji are illusory - and the third solution to adopt the flush system enabling the sweepers to keep away from cleaning latrines will take a long time. He has, in him, an achingly longing to live with dignity. The poetic realism of Anand develops into a classic perfection. The entire action of the novel centres round the one event of a sharp slap on Bakha's face and it is from this event that the rest of the action of the novel springs.

The technique adopted by Anand is documentary which contains the succession of a series in a day in the life of Bakha. The day is declared as 'Unauspicious day' for him. A few crucial incidents such as abusing, hurting and slapping raise his feelings to the level of climax. It is ironical that the blood of the upper caste Hindus is not polluted while they slap the so called untouchables or molest the girls belonging to the low caste community. The manner of the novel has the cleanness and unity of structure, entire action of the novel takes place within 24 hours.

Technically, Untouchable is perhaps Anand's most perfect novel, though it happens to be his very first attempt in this genre. We can take for example, the novel's mode of presentation of events. The story is not flat in the
sense that we do not get a mere catalogue of the things that happen to Bakha. Every shift in the scene is accompanied by a short description of the changing weather during the day. The description of the natural scene is significant in that it contributes to an evolving rhythm which corresponds also with the shift of the emotional state of Bhaka. The narrative style of the novel is predominantly realistic or naturalistic. However, Anand also works through some poetic strategies; there is a remarkable use of imagery in the book which Anand scarcely makes use of in his later fiction with the same degree of seriousness. This gives the novel its extraordinary power and beauty. Anand invariably employs the poetic and symbolic strategies. This is very much possible because of interior monologue.

The description of Anand's skill is one of the important steps. Several descriptive passages are charged with suggestive significance. For example, seeing the first glance of the temple, Bakha is amazed:

They seemed vast and fearful and oppressive. He was cowed back. The sense of fear came creeping into him. He felt as if the Gods were staring at him. They looked so real although they were not like anything he had ever seen on earth.9

9. Untouchable, p. 49.
This passage gives a realistic but a highly suggestive appeal. Since Anand describes the scene through Bakha's consciousness, even such things as stone images take a new colouring. God look fierce, hard and oppressive. Further, it acquires another dimension when the suggestion is also built into it that these Gods are like the hard-hearted Brahmins, the people who worship them. In this way, a seemingly objective-looking description works at more than one level. We can see such passages throughout the book.

Anand's thorough grasp of human nature is yet another factor which contributes to the authenticity of the world he creates in the novel. Human nature, Anand knows, is made neither wholly of the dove nor entirely of the serpent: it is a complex composition, compounded often of contraries. That is why he does not portray all outcastes as unadulterated angels nor all caste Hindus as irredeemable devils. This can be seen in handling of the protagonist, Bakha.

The heart of Untouchable, however, is not in its manifest social plea for the abolition of untouchability. It lies, rather, in the kind of person Bakha is. It lies in his trustiness and in his still unquenchable wonder at life. In the last section of the novel, Bakha comes upon
a proselytizing English priest whose words, with their emphasis on sin, meant little to him. But the elegant cut of the Sahib's trousers was a different matter. How wonderful that was and how he would like such clothing for himself. A little later, while listening to the lecture delivered by Mahatma Gandhi on the untouchables, the 'Children of God', Bakha's warm heartedness responds to the personal eloquence of the speaker's words. He wanted to break in to tell Gandhi, "Now Mahatmaji, now you are talking." Bakha was a harizan (child of God). Finally, on this memorable day, Bakha over-hears a Congress-wallah and a poet speaking passionately about how the introduction of the flush toilet would allow the sweepers to "free from stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society." Such talk amazed Bakha. He imagined - Could it be possible? And he goes on thinking: "I shall go and tell father all that Gandhi said about us ... and all that the poet said. Perhaps I can find the poet on the way and ask him about his machine." 

The identity of Bakha can be brought back spiritually and materialistically. The first solution is suggested by a Christian missionary, to convert Bakha into a christian boy. The second solution suggested to him is to escape from

11. Untouchable, p. 175.
12. Ibid, pp. 177-178.
degradation by adopting flush system in our country. The second seems to be more important as to convert into another religion will not lead to a suitable solution to escape from caste prejudice. This type of idea, in fact, comes to those who really do not understand the true value of religion. Bakha also listens to Gandhi ji who tries to experience his awareness and suggests fight for the right. Gandhi ji emphasises to take water from the well and go to the temple to bring the betterment of the downtrodden and ensure them a better status in society, an spiritual redemption they have been denied.

Anand deserves credit even for his thematic choice for his very first novel - a choice which is in perfect consonance with his humanistic concern for man as man, irrespective of his social status.

To have chosen a mere untouchable adolescent as his protagonist to project the pathetic predicament of a vast segment of Indian society, which has for centuries been the victim of cruel contempt and heartless exploitation at the hands of hypocritical society, is a daring act which established Anand as a pioneer fictionist with a burning social consciousness, indeed a step ahead of his illustrious predecessors and contemporaries such as Sharat Chandra, Tagore and Premchand.13

The condition of an untouchable in India in the pre-Independence era was no different from that of the American Negro since he was subjected to the same kind of classification for which his American counterpart had to suffer for centuries - a sort of classification that spelt deprivation, exploitation in various modes. The condition has virtually changed after the independence by the efforts of great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and others. However, social discrimination against the untouchables, though omitted upto an extent, still continues in a large part of the country. Anand's Untouchable has the distinction of pinpointing the issues concerning the calculated, deliberate subordination of an untouchable from his childhood onwards, which makes for his harrowing plight. Indeed, it focuses on protest and even revolt against the caste-ridden structure of the Indian society without becoming a protest-novel. Untouchable creates an awareness of and protest against a vehement demand for justice and humanitarian treatment. The projection of the novel is a socio-politico-cultural treatise on the problem of untouchability in a fictionalized form. Presentation of the novel has impressionistic vision of reality in its multiple aspects.

The very structure of Untouchable, has classical purity of form. It brings Bakha's dawning inwardness and
liveliness into sharp relief. The novel has only a few characters, it takes place in a period of less than twenty four hours, and all that happens leads to and follows from the climatic incident of the slap in Bakha's face. Ironically enough, the very cleanness of the structure of the book focuses, not so much on Bakha's work, as on the minds and sensibility of those among whom he lives. The dirt-minded lecher of a temple (the priest) and cruel townsmen and the malicious, gossiping women with awareness of their falsely superior upper caste are in striking contrast with Bakha. It is not Bakha who pollutes them so much as is their own fear of being polluted, a fear that corrupts and dehumanizes them. About certain quiet, sculptured scenes in the novel, such as Bakha's being consoled in his sadness by the pressure of his friend's hand. Anand has explained, "I meant symbolically to show that such small tendernesses among people in private lives are the catharis of human existence." Anand's creation of his very first novel gave pace and direction to future novelists.

Anand's **Untouchable** transcends the formulaic exploration of untouchability as prevalent in Indian society. The novel, though centering on the day-long experiences of its protagonist, Bakha, strives to relate them to those of the dispossessed of the earth, and in the process realizes a remarkable and rich mosaic of meanings.

that can be read into untouchability as a social phenomenon. The novel is indeed infused with what may be called "the philosophical science of man."\textsuperscript{15} A day in bakha's life does not focus so much on the socio-politico-empirical aspects of a country as on the psycho-spiritual faculty of an individual, since it is Bakha's responses from his inmost being to humiliation and embarrassments that are brought into focus. It may be an ordinary day in any one's life but Anand has made it a very remarkable day. Also, this rises above a mere flat representation of the untouchables. The implication is that the day, though ostensibly like any other day in Bakha's life, stands out as an example of the life of the untouchable in India. The selection of the events is dictated by Anand's interest in the basic premises on which the life of the untouchable is built. The premises relate to the social, political, cultural and economic existence that postulate the untouchability in India. Anand's narrative strategy is to present a double vision of the condition for the untouchables. His use of fantasy is subtly subordinated to a strongly realistic programme. For instance, while waiting to receive bread from a kindly lady, Bakha lapses into a kind of reverie which has the effect of obliterating the distance between fantasy and reality, memory and desire. It defines not only Bakha's nature and

\textsuperscript{15} Balram Gupta; Perspective of Indian Fiction in English (Bareilly : Prakash Book Depot, 1974), p. 15.
character but also points out the interlocked issues of fact and fiction, myth and meaning, appearance and reality.

In spite of the ironic implication that untouchability is perpetuated because of the kind of work that the untouchable perform, Anand's solution of equipping latrines with the flush system emphasizes the need for formulating a radical approach to the problem of untouchability. On the face of it, it invokes a mechanical means to resolve a deep rooted psycho-social problem which need not necessarily be taken at its face value, since Anand is as much aware as anyone else of the incongruity between the means and the ends in this regard. This solution is intended to convey the possibility of eliminating unequal human contacts and relations through the use of mechanical means since work seems to confer status and even defines a man's personality.

In the next novel Coolie, Anand turns towards the modern Indian society. With the publication of this novel Anand's range and scope widened and attained the height which he could not scale in Untouchable.

Coolie portrays an artistic setting of Pre-independent India. The novel includes characters both from Britain and India. The segregation of India by the western people is vividly shown in this novel. The problem of class is universal, but developing countries like India require a new
management of society. The division of Indian society is conditioned by values, inherited from her colonial past. The division of the people in different classes is basically decided by the amount of money one possesses. Money, thus, has become the primary source of happiness in human life and determines the status of the individual. Anand's projection of the class system indicates the exploitation of the poor by the rich, normally called the capitalists. Though Anand does not like any kind of exploitation yet the economic exploitation, according to him, is the worst type of exploitation. Coolie deals with the economic exploitation of one man by another, of the lower class by the upper class. Since India got independence, the wealth and power concentrated in a few hands. The microscopic minority consisting of a few, called capitalists, dictated the term to the majority consisting of the poor and the deprived. In order to keep the body and soul together the poor had to work under their masters, the rich, who subjected them to exploitation and persecution.

Coolie portrays the tribulation of coolies in a class ridden society. After India had attained independence the succeeding Indian officers got the same position and status as the preceding rulers, the Englishmen, and started ruling over the country as dictators. They acquired all the wealth
and property and led the Indians to live like crawling creatures growing under their feet. When the Britishers ruled over India the people were bound to bear their ruthlessness, but it became unbearable when Indians started ruling over Indians.

The ancient period explains that the life of an individual was measured by his being born in a respectable caste, but Coolie explains a class which is categorized on the basis of money and wealth. Munoo, the protagonist of the novel, is Kshatriya by caste, still he suffers a lot. He realizes sometimes that there are only two castes, the rich and the poor, and irony is that there is no connection between them. The capitalists treat the coolies as if they were mere cattle. On increasing their (Coolie's) income sahibs feel as if they had increased the standard of living of the coolies. They feel that the sheds are enough for them and they would show their sympathies with them. Even on one's death they show their utter disregard to the weal and woe of the hard working coolies. What pains a sympathetic heart more is the fact that the world seems to be going like that. The capitalists are callous and exploitative thoroughly unconcerned with the noble values like love and sympathy for the poor and downtrodden. C.D. Narasimhan remarks: "Death has ceased to frighten these poor - they

are past all fright, it is life that is a threat, and death is release." 17

Coolie is the odyssey of Munoo, an orphaned village boy from Kangra hills who sets out in search of livelihood. First, he is tortured by his uncle and aunt at the village, Bilaspur; later on as the house servant with the family of a sub-accountant at Shamnagar. Getting push and pull from there he goes to Daulatpur to work in a pickle factory and later on, as a coolie in the bazar of Daulatpur. Thereafter, again in search of livelihood, he comes to Bombay where he works as a labourer in a cotton mill. Here the dispute between labourers and capitalists is quite reflective. From there in an injured position he is brought to Shimla by a European lady. After his convalescence she sues him as her rickshaw puller. This overburden causes him strain and leads to a tragic end of his life. Thus, throughout the novel the scene shifts from one place to another carrying the same misfortunes for the poor boy Munoo who is treated by his masters not better than a sub-human being.

Coolie carries not a special indictment of an individual but is against the society - the society as a whole. In Untouchable the main theme is caste prejudice but in Coolie evil is wide-spread and comes in the forms of

greed, selfishness and inhumanity. The root cause of all the ills and evils which the poor are confronted with is poverty. Munoo realizes "all servants look alike. There must be only two kinds of people; the rich and the poor." Poverty is an all pervasive disease spreading throughout the country and infecting every web and woof of the fabric of the whole of society. Munoo is a victim of this evil of poverty. He is an miserable creature. His life at his uncle's and aunt's house is fully bereft of love and compassion. His condition becomes even worse when he shifts from his uncle's house to Babu Nathuram's where he assumes the job of a household servant. Babu Nathuram's house appears to him like a mad house inhabited by mad people quarrelling and shrieking all the time. Love and cordial relations seem to be alien to the people in that house. Happiness is a stranger to them as they refuse to be happy. They are callous and cruel. The man who gives solace to Munoo is Chhota Babu. He is happy there because he wants to be happy.

Coolie pictures the various experiences which Munoo undergoes with the exploiters at four different places. The novel is remarkable for its large scope and variety of characters but the whole picture moves around Munoo. It turns out to be of a wider range than Untouchable where the

whole theme involves only one centre point, caste. Munoo, being innocent, suffers because of indispensability of his work. A coolie has no such job assurance as a sweeper has, he is always afraid of becoming jobless. Such is the case of Munoo. He shifts from one place to another in search of his dream to be settled safely and happily with some job at one place. Bakha, in *Untouchable* suffers because of caste, but Munoo suffers for want of status; a status which he wants to attain but is unable to attain it as it is money alone which can provide that status to a man.

In a way *Coolie* can be said to be a picaresque novel. In a picaresque novel the hero moves from one place to another in search of his identity. Munoo, as the main character, is on the move from his village to the city of Daulatpur, or to the much larger city Bombay on the west coast and finally to the North and in the end to Shimla. Munoo has learnt more tolerance than he could bear. He never finds rest. Throughout the novel he is restless.

On his move to Daulatpur in a different, crowded and more hectic life than one at Shamnagar, Munoo, saw "unlike anything he had seen before, unlike anything he had ever imagined ... an adornign bird, a queer street bird with straight wings, leaving a steam line of smoke in its trail across the blue sky."^19^ He thought that he had entered into

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a world of "wonderful life in a new world he was entering." But in reality his wonders did not turn out as he had expected.

Munoo, had gone through more schooling than Bakha, in Untouchable, upto the fifth class. In this way he is more sensitive to the injustice he is subjected to by the society as he sets out from his house for a better place. The tyranny of class system brings Munoo at a disgraceful point and finally it becomes the cause of his death. Bakha, being the lowest in caste suffers emotionally, spiritually and physically and Munoo, though a Kshatriya by birth, also suffers in the same manner.

Munoo's desire to grow up remains suppressed. The fascinating lines, - "Munoo would have liked to shave his beard with a sharp razor of his master ... he wanted to become a man." 21

Seeing the top-bottom difference among the human beings he always questions to himself, "why are some men so good and other bad - some like Prabha and elephant driver and other like Ganpat and the policeman who beats me at the

Railway Station."²² While he raises such a question he tries to recognize himself and to establish his identity.

"The class system - a permanent theme in literature is in a way inseparable from the caste system so far as the Indian context is concerned since both of them have proved to be exploitative and subversive of human dignity."²³ The innumerable divisions and sub-division of caste are such an evil which has condemned a large section of society in our country. The other evil, the class system in Coolie is no less than the caste problem. Its impact on the social panorama is much more damaging to social cohesion than that of caste system - "Class has certainly proved more divisive than caste in Indian society because it is able to affect every section of society at the economic, cultural and political levels."²⁴

Inspite of the fact that our country, in terms of population, is the biggest democratic country in the world, the fundamental rights of citizens are yet to be retained. Our society has been divided into two major classes, that is, the rich and the poor. Munoo sometimes thinks "There are

²² Coolie, p. 62.
²⁴ Ibid, p. 31.
only two kinds of people in the world; the rich and the poor, ... and between the two there is no connection." The economic reason, in the modern time, is the biggest reason to survive. Without economic well-being a man's life is like that of a small creature.

On a panoramic view, the factor that affects the poor boy Munoo is class rigidity. The novel is remarkable because of its large scope and variety of episodes. However, the focus is on Munoo and the pathos is sustained by the emphasis on the innocence of Munoo against the merciless, mechanical rhythm of society. It is the first time in the history of Anglo-Indian history that a writer like Anand tries to lift the image of Munoo like a boy at the level of a Hero.

Unlike, Untouchable, Coolie does not highlight the caste problem. All the people including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs discuss and talk about their ideas with one-another and share hubble-bubble with one-another. Even the sweeper takes bribe to clean the latrines for the use of others. In fact, class problem is more complex than caste problem. In a sense, a coolie is free to move but a sweeper has to live in a boundary. But at the same time the coolie has no secure place in the society. He has to roam here and there is

25. Coolie, p. 64.
search of his identity. He is ruthlessly exploited. Everywhere he has the fear of losing his job: "He symbolises the disinherited and the dispossessed of the earth whose tragic life indicates man inhuman to man."\(^{26}\)

Coolie exhibits the four different phases of suffering in the life of Munoo. He is exploited at all places. In this way only exploiters change while the exploited remain unchanged. Munoo, throughout his life remains unhappy and is made to realize his misery due to his poverty. He makes all his effort to live a happy life but unfortunately because of the unwanted treatment by the upper class of society, his desires are not fulfilled.

Owing to four distinct exploiters Munoo passes through a very miserable condition. His journey across the country presents a vivid picture of society. He finds himself broken with both body and spirit. His journey through life - sleeping in city streets, dwelling in slums and living at the edge of starvation - finally lead him to his tragic end. His aunt, Gujri, abuses him all the time. She even beats Munoo more than she beats her cattle. His uncle is also a very cruel and ruthless person. He brings Munoo to his employer so that he can get something and get rid of his responsibility. Everywhere Munoo has to live a miserable

life. At every place he is made to realise his identity. At Shamnagar, Munoo's uncle Dayaram manages to procure a job for him as a servant in Babu's house: "You are their servant and they are big people." Thus, at every stage and at every turn of life Munoo is aware of distinction between the Master and the servant. He is not allowed to join the marriage procession as he is unaware of the way they eat in plates and other modern fashions. His daily routine is to clean the vessels; sweep the floor, fetch water, wash the glass and in exchange to get a heap of abuses. These are the various facets of the exploited, monotonous and tortured life of Munoo. Life to him becomes an unbearable burden. He does not understand properly what makes a superior man but he understands fully well that he is inferior.

When Prabha takes him to Daulatpur and adopts him as her son, the bleak and airless pickle factory is lighted by her genial nature as she thinks that she has got a son. The parental care that he receives, he fails to receive for long, as Ganpat, Prabha's husband is callous and cruel. When Ganapat is absent from the factory all feel that there is "Peace on earth and good will upon every man." When

He the novel shows another face of life. Though property plays an important part in the life of a man yet it

is not always the cause of human suffering. Economic burden too causes a person's suffering. When an extra economic burden falls on Prabha on account of Munoo's living with her, she also showers her displeasure on him and makes him uncomfortable: "I am through with such scum as you. You are not my class. You belong to the street and there you shall go. I spit on you." Munoo now decides to leave Prabha and go to Bombay.

Munoo is brought to Bombay by another man Samaritan. Seeing the wonder city, his illusion vanishes and he comes in contact with reality. In the corner of the road footpath, Munoo sees a man "Pillowing his head on his arm, shrinking into himself as if he were afraid to accepting too much space." He sees the miseries of others and thinks that his way of suffering is no different from that of the millions who hail from his class. The way he suffers is not exclusive to him but there are many who, unfortunate like him, treated the same path of suffering. People seldom if ever lend a helping hand to the suffering. He finds only Prabha and the Mahot, who have tasted the bitterness of indulgence once, willingly lending a helping hand to the afflicted. Now Munoo understands the miseries of city life. He can follow the Mahot, "The bigger the city is, the more cruel it is to the

30. Ibid, p. 179.
sons of Adam ... You have to pay even for the breath that you breathe."{31}

The next employer he finds in a cotton mill, which is another kind of hell for him. Coolies are brutally treated here. "The coolies work with their sweat and blood while oppressors discuss the weather over a cup of tea."{32} Anand has shown a vivid picture of coolies and their inhuman treatment. Money is the only thing which can provide status to a man in society. It decides human relations in our society where the virtues of a man without money remain unacknowledged. Money can make a man a master or a servant. Munoo's uncle is so fond of money that after the death of Munoo's parents he thinks to get Munoo employed somewhere and thus be a source of his (uncle's) income. No doubt money serves if it is used in a proper way but it has also evil effects - Ganapath nourishes a grudge against fate, because his father had gambled away all the money. He himself is not away from this habit and spends money on gambling and women. He succumbs, thus, to the evil effects of money, Munoo soon realizes that money cannot be the only criterion for the basic concept of human happiness. Infact, the value of money is well understood either by one who has no money or by one who has it in abundance.

31. Coolie, p. 177.

32. The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand : A Thematic Study, p. 47
Child labour is another part of the social cruelty. Making children work under abominable conditions for many hours is really very cruel of the society. The parents of such child labour think that by increasing the number of children they will increase their family income but this truth remains unacknowledged. The more the number of children the more the stuff for feeding.

Callowness between coolies and capitalists, who are mostly whites, is also quite revealing and so the East-West relationship has also a remarkable value in the novel. The class consciousness of the British expresses itself not only in their dealings with the natives but also with one another:

... a caste system more rigid that ours. Any Angrezi woman whose husband earns twelve hundred ruppes per month will not leave card at the house of one whose husband earns five hundred. And the woman whose husband earns five hundred ruppes looks down upon the woman whose husband earns three hundred. The rich don't really want to mix with each other.33

The last chapter of Coolie represents the plight of the coolies in different ways. Rickshaw drawing is an art which requires a lot of skill. It often leads to premature deaths. The exploiters just take coolies for granted. Even a kind hearted woman like Mrs. Mainwaring is unaware of the difficulties in rickshaw-pulling. Coolie represents all the cadres of the society starting from coolies to autocratic Englishmen. The variety of the ranks of people is basically selected to highlight the contrast among the various classes, class by another class.

Two Leaves and a Bud, which further dramatizes moral issues, shows a tremendous dramatic power through the counterpointing of good and evil and through a conscious manipulation of characters and incidents. The novel is therapeutic in effect, although the effect seems rather contrived. Gangu, the hero of the novel, leaves his native village in the Punjab and journeys to distant Assam to take up a job with Macpherson Tea Estate owned by Englishmen. He is accompanied by his wife, Sajani, and by his daughter and
son, Leila and Budhoo. He is past middle age. His children, of course, are young-compeers of Bakha and Munoo. Sajani feels a glow of wonder at the prospect of commencing a new life in the plantation. Gangu, however, feels "a vague perturbation in his soul, the ache of an unapprehended doom." 34 Narain, one of the co-workers in the plantation, strikes the keynote when he says: "I suppose it was in our kismet. But at home it was like a prison and here it is slightly worse." 35 Gangu and his family learn this the hard way. First a dizzy spell of malarial fever breaks him completely; as soon as he recovers, the contagion kills his wife. Gangu receives a severe jolt. He has no money even to arrange a funeral and has to run from pillar to post. When he goes to Charles Croft-Crooke, the manager of the estate, he is blamed for spreading the contagion, and is instantly turned out of his office. In the meantime, discontent, which is life in the plantation, is aggravated by the brutal


35. Ibid, p. 34
behavior of Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager. Gangu finds himself involved in the strife. Beaten mercilessly by Reggie Hunt's men, the workers stage a demonstration before the manager's office, but are forced to disperse at gunpoint. Airplanes bring in the armed militia, and the workers are terrorized into submission. Any uneasy peace returns, but the event leaves bitterness. De La Harve, the physician, who is engaged to Barbara, the manager's daughter, is asked to quit as he sympathizes generally with the workers' cause. Life then returns to normal, at least temporarily. Consequently, the governor visits the estate, and a tiger hunt is arranged for the occasion. In the meantime, Leila, who has grown into a comely maid, attracts the attention of Reggie Hunt, who, in a mad frenzy of desire, follows her upto her house. Unable to appease his hunger, he acts like mad, shooting Gangu at point-blank range as he appears on the scene. He beats a hasty retreat as soon as Gangu falls dead on the spot. A trial follows in which the killer is declared "not guilty".

"I conceived Two Leaves and a Bud as a poem in suffering," said Anand in a letter to J.F. Brown, adding: "I admit that it is the most bitter of my novels, but it is poetic. Were it a literary reportage, it would be hundred times more bitter." 36 It is difficult not to take Anand at

his own word, but the question is: can poetry affect or alter, to any appreciable extent, the basic reality of pain? Does it not further intensify the effect? The truth of the matter is that **Two Leaves and a Bud** is neither authentic reportage nor a poem in suffering. Its sensitized and to some extent truthful delineation of experience is much too peripheral and casual to be truly poetic. It is flashy and episodic in the extreme, whereas true poetic rendition implies an integrated and functional view of life. The sufferings of a Lear or even a Tess have the whole weight of poetry behind them, leading to purgation and illumination. Gangu and his family suffer because God has ordained that they should. They are mere scapegoats sacrificed at the altar of narrow racial and class prejudices.

**Two Leaves and a Bud** bears a superficial resemblance to E.M. Forster's **A Passage to India**, so far as the plot is concerned; but the analogy does not go any deeper. The two strands of the plot, consisting of the life and fortunes of the Indians and those of the English, run concurrently, but they are never closely interwoven into the texture of the novel. There is no evidence of a subtle modulation of perspectives as in Forster's novel. Forster brings out the full import of the gulf existing between nation and nation, race and race, feeling and feeling, and nearly reconciles all in a simultaneous double vision. Anand, on the other
hand, touches width rather than depth of feeling. He devotes his entire energy to a faithful representation of facts on the physical plane of occurrence. Like Forster, he, too, uses symbols which go a long way to heighten the poetic effect of the novel. He shows Leila caught in the web of a python, but this requires an imagination different from the one that is needed to evoke a Marabar Cave with its echoes. Close fidelity to details is Anand's special forte.

Like the previous novels, Two Leaves and a Bud may be regarded as a brilliant piece of naturalistic fiction. It has little or no use of irony, which alone could encompass the whole range of feeling from the sublime to the ridiculous. It leans rather on pathos, making it to do the work of irony. It must be conceded, however, that it succeeds in transmitting an overwhelming sense of passion which gives it its telling dramatic force. Comparing it with the previous novels, Iyengar says: "If Untouchable ... has a sort of piercing quality that is akin to the lyrical; if Coolie, with its enormous range and multiplicity of action and character, has an almost epic quality; Two Leaves and a Bud may be said to be essentially dramatic novel." The evaluation is apt and discriminating. The scenic tension in the novel touches high points of drama. Melodramatic

devices, multiple points of view, dramatic telescoping of action and character are contributing factors toward building moments of dramatic tension.

As for characterization, Anand is more at home in handling the Indian than the English characters. This is understandable, for, when he draws the latter, he strays into regions not fully known to him. The portrayal of Reggie Hunt, for instance, as an embodiment of lust, evil, and cruelty, fits too well into the moral design to be entirely convincing. The same can be said of De La Harve, who symbolizes moral qualities, but exists, all the same, in the realm of abstractions. The core of realism is somehow missing in the portrayal. The Indian characters, on the other hand, are realistic and lifelike; they seem as alive as persons we meet on the streets in our daily lives. In the absence of sharp differentiation of psychological traits, the figures in the novel appear less convincing than those in Untouchable or Coolie. It is perhaps not unfair to suggest that Two Leaves and a Bud is more an extended moral allegory than an exercise in creating believable human figures.

Anand's next novel, Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, marks a return to the primitive and universal aspect of human experience. It rejects completely the use of
ready-made myth or symbol as means to express the modern disillusionment which is the basis of the strength of many modern novels. On the contrary, it leans almost exclusively on realizable, concrete experience to create archetypal forms. The novel, thus, is a prototype of transformation, and perhaps gives glimpses of the direction Anand's art might take in the future. Anand's understanding of life has never been in doubt, but here he probes the very nature of pain, central to existence. The basic, irremediable, irreplaceable human situation is firmly grasped, and the "why" and "wherefore" of life itself are questioned. Furthermore, the Lament raises questions the implications of which can perhaps best be grasped in terms of existential thought.

The story of Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts is more in the nature of a dirge, a lyrical lament, moving with relentless pressure toward a point of no return. A young consumptive, Nur, looks back at life with mixed feeling of regret, rage, and anguish. The present with its trailing consequence of futility and waste merely prolongs the nightmare. Although death is around the corner, he finds a crumb of comfort in Stoic resistance to it, wishing to live and to suffer. He looks forward, but there is nothing to look forward to, except the yawning abyss. His father, the hardhearted confectioner, is absolutely callous to his suffering and even upbraids him at intervals out of his own
frustrations. His mother has been dead for a long time. The only person who cares for him is his ugly, old grandmother, whom he only partially accepts. His wife, Iqbal, though deeply attached to him, is much too gentle and passive to be a source of strength to him. His own sensitivity and intellectual bearing make it almost impossible for him to accept others. The images of the past recur in his mind, as his life slowly withers away. He thinks of his birthtime, of his mother's aching cares, of the brutalities of his father, of his school and college days, of his running after jobs, and, more often, of his present hopeless state. Gama, his classmate in primary school, now turned a tonga-driver, visits him, and they ruminate on past days. Iqbal, his wife, comes to be by his side. His grandmother, his father, and the doctor occasionally come to the sickroom. The day is punctuated by coughs, hemorrhage, and a momentary sense of well-being until the end comes. He dies in the broad, naked heat of the sun.

A detailed exegesis of the novel will show the heights and depths attained by the author who has freed himself, to a great extent, from his earlier strongly romantic and doctrinal notions. His chief province is, as usual, human life and the nature of man; his increasing concern: its misery and beauty. Consequently, an exquisite aroma of reality incarnates itself in this novel, an aroma different
from the heavy, earthy, and mundane realism of the novels of the early phase, not only in theme and characterization, but also in the use of language.

As in Untouchable, so in Lament the events are focused within the compass of a single day - the early dawn to the afternoon, when the torrid glare of the sun shows the body of death, as it were. There is, however, no perceptible progression in action. The hero is rooted to his sickbed all the time. The window opens and closes as he wishes; it is the only opening for him to view the sky and the teeming world of nature. The only human contact he has is with his father, his grandmother, his friend Gama, his wife and mother-in-law, the doctor, and, of course, the worried women ready to howl at the slightest tremor of his cough. Thus, on the surface, there is hardly any movement. Nur wakens in the morning in a broken, gasping state, and he dies in the afternoon. But there is a rich, synergetic movement in his mind, composed of memory and desire, which brings the action to its rounded completion. The stream of consciousness flows like a river, the author taking full responsibility for the direction and flow. The techniques of monologue intervieur and memory digression are successfully used to enforce the plot structure and to reveal the implication of the momentous theme.
The successful characterization of Nur as a morbid, life-negating, death-obsessed hero enforces Anand's claim to be one of the outstanding novelists of the human condition. The disillusionment of the present-day urban civilization which results in the withering of lives, hopes, and joys, finds one of the most powerful manifestations in the figure of Nur. He is not merely an individual caught in the labyrinth of modern life, but an archetype that is intellectually conscious and emotionally more than a match for the forces of annihilation. He goes under but not before he has grasped part of the basic reality of existence. He has gained an insight or two into the nature of life, and that is a priceless acquisition. The knowledge that finally comes to the tragic hero gives him exceptional status.

Nur's position at the very outset is hopeless and intractable:

The body of death lingered on the sick bed, wrapped in a white shroud ...

Waiting in a hot sweat from his half-sleep he could see it lying there, on the giant bed in the narrow front room of his father's congested two-storied house. It was his own body; it looked like a corpse because he had gathered the sheet tight around him at night, and because he was
dying, dying of consumption ... And it was carried through a
door to ultimate freedom from the world.\textsuperscript{38}

The flush on his face is not rich pink, but "with the
shame of rose which has withered before it has begun to
bloom."\textsuperscript{39} The dissolution of his physical vitality is
communicated through the images of withered and withering
things of nature.

His body was limp except for the spine, which ached
increasingly through having to lie in bed day after day for
five months, and hard ribs and collar bone which seemed to
crack as they rose out of his transparent flesh like the dry
roots of a bare still sound at the heart.\textsuperscript{40}

As Nur lay helpless and forlorn on his sickbed, "the
memories of his past seemed to come back to him in their
track as if they were an 'open sesame', seemed to come back
with the force and vivacity of rapiers thrust in the raw
wounds of his heart. For from the first cry at birth his
life had been pain-marred."\textsuperscript{41} Even the exuberance of the
birthtime and the sweet reminiscence of his mother's caress
fade into insignificance as he remembers his visit to the

\textsuperscript{38}. Mulk Raj Anand, Lament on the Death of a Master of
\textsuperscript{39}. Ibid, p. 9
\textsuperscript{40}. Ibid.
dark cemetery where his mother is buried, and a sense of fear grips him. Encircled by doom and obsessed by the thought of death, he makes a heroic effort to cling to life: "No, no, I don't believe in attaining freedom from earthly bonds. I want to be free to live and suffer." The prayer time of early childhood also comes to his mind, when he was made to read the Koran and to pray by rote. He never had faith in the rituals: "Call the faithful to prayer, dog! I hate you all! To incur your wrath I spit in the face of your God." During the spasm of uncontrollable cough, however, he wonders "If the attacks of hemorrhage came because I don't pray anymore." Again, during those fitful coughs, he acquires a transparency which makes him conscious of his own faults:

He lent himself to the soothing warmth of the pillows beneath his head and accepted his helplessness for a while. And now he could see his own faults. His own self-love, his ingratitude to grandma, his malice to step-mother, his pride of his knowledge of books, all danced their ghostly dance before his weakened conscience."

The agony of the moment places him on the wheel of fire, and he voices his lyrical lament, coming from the

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43. Ibid, p. 17.
44. Ibid, p. 56
45. Ibid, p. 21
bottom of his heart: "Oh, Lord, take my life... you will not. Are you educating me like a schol master with punishment...?" The cry from the heart with its fused, syncopated feeling, touches the high point of tragic emotion. This is not mere self-pity but the impassioned wailing of one at death's door.

Among the many treasured memories of the past, is Nur's friendship with Azad, the poet, who had to pay the price of his sensitiveness in an alien, recalcitrant world. He tells Gama about the tragic life of his friend: "But, really, really, believe me", said Nur, 'I know we went mad because the torn and battered soul of India was struggling inside him, because he seemed to have understood the hopelessness of our lot as a poet might. Really, he knew and suffered and understood." He acknowledges his debt to Azad when he says: "It may be that he awakened me to the misery of our human condition and made me suffer but he also released all the stiffed impulses I have never suspected in myself before.... He initiated me into the mysteries of poetry and philosophy." Azad may be taken to be his double, the one going toward madness; the other toward death; both sharing a weakness for poetry, and universal

46. Ibid, p. 33
47. Ibid, p. 37
48. Ibid.
sorrow. What happened to Azad, happens to his disciple, though in a different form. He becomes aware of the plight, engulfing the millions: "But what self-respecting person in India could help being affected by the sordid side of the tragic existence? He himself had kept his mouth shut, but what had he got? Why, he had known as he left college that death lurked for him at the end of the road?"  

Nur remembers, especially, his frantic efforts to find a job. Launched on the highroad of life, he finds himself singularly frail in the face of ordeals. In spite of his graduation from the university with the degree of master of arts, he never graduates to life. As a matter of fact, his self-composed line - "Why did you drag me into the dust by making me an M.A.?" - runs throughout the novel as a refrain. His father's rebuke adds to his store of misery.

His attachment to his wife, Iqbal, is also tinged with regret and remorse:

And even then she had followed him about, like a devoted dog, worshipping him with her eyes, while he, in the panic of fear of fatherhood that hung like an extra load on his already heavy-laden heard, frowned on her, and ignored her utterly, only charging at her now and then with the

49. Ibid, p. 40
deliberate, violent, hard thrusts of a diabolical passion, as if he wanted to revenge himself against her, leaving her high and dry in the writings of dissatisfaction, without a word or gesture of consolation. ... And when she had proudly presented him with the gift of a little red-faced girl child, he had felt like murdering her and the child, and had gone out reading among the tall valerians of the city garden, its towers and lawns. 50

But he understands now that it was not lack of love, but the gestures of utter frustration that had engulfed his soul, poisoning the very roots of his being. The enemy was poverty:

He might have loved her, filled her with his whole soul rather than give his soul to her piecemeal in bouts of desire. ... But poverty ... how it had hardened him to life, how it had made him insensitive to the colors, the shades, the forms of things, to the thoughts, the feelings of people, till he had no contact with anyone or anything and went irritably through the world without any perception of even the lumps of human existence, to say nothing of the subtle nuances of experience. Poverty had come between him and her. 51

50. Ibid, pp. 49-50
51. Ibid, p. 51
The reality of the present pain obliterates everything. Nur is actually conscious of impending death: "Strange, it's my pain ... the pain I can't understand ... of which I am going to die ... Doesn't hurt really ... I feel no different from what I have felt for months ... a little better, a little worse. ... I must be dying." The crescendo of pain leads to self-knowledge and to serene acceptance of his lot: "He looked into his heart with the inner eye and asked whether there was nothing in all the flux of life that could have relieved his doom, no beauty, no tenderness, no faith, nothing but foiled desire." Self introspection could hardly go any further in this case.

The theme of lament is again and again externalized through the outer curve of action. When Nur gasps for breath under the pressure of acute cough and hemorrhage, the family and the women of the neighborhood chant a dirge of lament:

"Hai, hai," his mother-in-law and her sister cried the more loudly, and beating their heads till the old Grandma came slowly down the stairs and the women of the neighboring houses rushed to the windows of their houses and began to shout, "Is he dead? Is he dead?"

The women's wail grew louder and shriller as his grandmother, his step-mother and the other women of the lane

52. Ibid, p. 54.
53. Ibid.
joined the chorus to their shrieks a violent show of beating their breasts, and smiting their foreheads in a rhythmic sequence attuned to the dirge of Hai hai, Hai hai, Hai hai. 54

The same shrill rhapsody of lament breaks forth, as the hour of his death approaches near: "The women on the top story came screaming down, beating their breasts, their thighs, their foreheads, their cheeks and their bare breasts again and again and cried, 'Hai, hai! Hai, hai! Hai, hai!' The women of the neighborhood rushed and, entering the room, began to beat their heads deliberately, crying and wailing. 'Hai hai!.' 55 The rehearsed lament with automatic gestures and words borders on the ridiculous, but serves to heighten the tragic effect as well. It also provides comic relief by illustrating the absurd nature of death itself. But more important, the anxious women act in the way of the Greek chorus.

The sun, resplendent and life-germinating, becomes the central metaphor in the novel. As in Untouchable, so here, it is singularly relevant to the hero's situation:

Nur looked at the feather dropping from the top of a house across the shadow which cut the fierce sun outside,

55. Ibid, pp. 64-55.
and he saw the shimmering of an azure and scarlet and yellow spectrum of light before him as he had often done lying on his bed. He felt the monotony of his existence and the ceaseless discomfort which his body had endured through the burning sun.  

And again, at the point of death, "Nur lay stiff now, petrified and looking on through misty eyes at the broad, naked heat of the sun." The shadow cutting across the fierce sun, the burning sun which his body had endured, suggest the death wish, the coming of certain death. The contrast between the chilled body and the sun's blaze (heat) shows a subtle variation of the image.

The Lament bears a close resemblance to what is designated as existentialist art. It points us the limitation of human life without choice of action and touches on the philosophical implications of human misery and pain. The novel clearly demonstrates that the human condition itself is perilous and that erosion of contours (the fissures of being) is inherent in existence. The critical and genuine dilemmas of the hero's life are neither solved by intellectual exploration of the facts nor by operating the laws of thinking about them. There are no

56. Ibid, p. 37
57. Ibid, p. 61.
resolutions of the conflicts and turmoils, agonies and tumults raging in Nur's soul. He is confronted with the problem of estrangement in the face of the imminence and finality of death. Anand is not an existentialist like Sartre, Kafka, or Camus, but his deep reflection and intellectual probing into the nature of suffering bring him closer to them. All in all, Lament remains a novel of profound insight and exploration.

In sum, Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts shows the futility of the present type of general education in India. A graduate or a post-graduate who spends a lot of money and a number of years over his education is fit only for a white collar job. The present type of education does not fit a youth to face the hard competition of stare him in the face. Nur, the hero of the novel, who is a representative of an average M.A. of a university, overwhelmed by frustration, develops tuberculosis and dies a dejected man. An unearning Master of Arts is an unbearable burden to the family and the country. This is the tragedy of the Master of Arts.

The series of novels commonly known as the trilogy comprises The Village, Across the Black Waters, and The Sword and the Sickle. It may be taken as a significant landmark in Anand's maturation as a literary artist. It is a
chronicle of Indian peasant life, woven around the life and adventures of Lal Singh from early childhood to maturity. A whole gamut of human experience is encompassed. No area of life is slighted. The triology, thus, has the inclusiveness of life.

The three novels, however, are epic fragments, not unified wholes. The only link connecting them is the figure of its dynamic hero who provides the center of gravity. His vicissitudes at various stages of his career are described. Otherwise, each novel explores different and unrelated themes. It may be possible to trace a pattern of growth and development in spite of their apparent unrelatedness - the epic cycle, for instance, or a possible moral progression. The fact remains that each work is an impressive performance in its own right, having its own specific beauty.

The Village centers around the tremors, rages, and rebellion of Lal Singh, the youngest son of a peasant family of Nandpur. He reacts sharply against all the injustices and wrongs which the simple and innocent village folk have to put up with. Himself a victim of unseemly wrongs, and possessed of the ritualistic fears of the village community, he turns into a rebel. He has to pay a heavy price in the bargain, since he cannot break out of the labyrinth of that eccentric design. After many a vain battle with the forces of tradition, he makes a final decision and goes into exile. While living in his ancestral village, he fights a
two-pronged battle against the moneylender, the landlord, the rabble, and the immemorial way of life which is his legacy. His first major break from tradition comes in the wake of his romantic fascination with Maya, the daughter of the village landlord. She leans on his back in the narrow room of the bullock cart which rolls heavily to the village fair. Conscious of Maya's charm, he feels an ache of rapture and becomes suddenly aware of her. Roaming through the fair, he watches the strange spectacle of ignorance and deceit which goes on in the marketplace. He feels extremely rebellious. As if to appease his growing anger, he eats in a Muslim eating shop, an act not easily permitted by his community. He goes a step further, and gets even his hair, symbol of Sikhism, shorn at the King George Hair-cutting Saloon. When he returns to the village, he is hunted and pursued by the rabble for the supreme act of sacrilege that he has committed. He stands dazed in the welter of confusion as his pursuers smear his face with black paint, and are eager to parade him on the thoroughfare on a doneky's back. In the crisis even his own relatives seem to disown him since they are cowed by the infuriated mob. However, Lalu manages to escape. He goes straight to his father's farm, his only place of shelter and refuge. In an introspective mood, he faces the inner questions: "What was life? What did it mean?" At nightfall, he silently returns home, where his mother has been waiting for him.
Lalu has a comparatively quiet time for a while, but soon he begins a row with the village moneylender for a just cause. When Mr. Long, the deputy commissioner of the district, visits the village, he is pleased with Lalu and makes him the leader of the local troop of boy scouts. This, however, does not please the village landlord, who has a grudge against him for paying too much attention to his daughter. The landlord soon gets an opportunity to take a revenge. He frames him on the charge of stealing three bundles of fodder from his farm and calls the police. In panic, Lalu makes good his escape, leaving the village for good and enlisting in the army. During the period of training, he makes friends and enemies alike. In the course on his training, he is called back home where calamity has overtaken the family. His elder brother is hanged for murdering the landlord's son, and his father, decrepit and heartbroken, counts his days. Lalu returns to duty in the army. Rumblings of war are already in the air. His regiment prepares, to leave for France. The news of his father's death reaches him as he is about to sail? Distracted, he watches the meeting of land and water and, at the same time, thinks of the future.

The Village registers with full force the collision between the adolescent and the adult world. Its basic theme is the helplessness of its hero, half-child, half-adult, in
a predominantly callous world. But the aim here is not to explore the themes of innocence and experience or to probe into the consciousness of the adolescent as in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. The principal objective is to explore the worlds of appearance and reality from the vantage point of the protagonist.

*The Village* is refreshing and original as a work of art. James Henley rightly refers to its "beautiful simplicity." The pastoral motive runs through the narrative and forms the main impulse behind the poetry of the novel:

And walking along this road, Nihal Singh sensed a kinship with the familiar earth. He felt the invisible 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."

Similarly, when Lal Singh is pursued by his tormentors, he returns to his lands - the earth - as the only place of comfort. In a sense, he is rooted to the earth


itself: "That I was born on this land... That my mother gave birth to me while she worked in the fields... that these are my father's fields... I wish I had never been born... I wish I had been born somewhere else, in some city, in some... in any place other than the village." The imagery enforces the pastoral motive to a large extent. Most of the images are derived from the world of nature: the earth, the sky, the river and the sea, the seasons, and growing things. They are not as important in themselves as in their interrelation to the dominant mood of the principal characters. It is the unity of character with landscape that makes The Village so memorable.

The second novel of the trilogy, Across the Black Waters, deals with the futility of war. Lalù, the dashing hero of The Village, is merely the mirror of the scene; his own drama is finished, ranging from his landing in Marseilles to his capture by the German army. He is both an actor and a sufferer, embracing experience as it comes to him. Things happen in the novel on an epic scale: the movement of troops, engagements with the enemy, withdrawals, and reversals. The whole scene is lit up by the lurid light of shells fired from the enemy camps. The soldiers scathe through the burning inferno; neither life nor death has any meaning for them. Strangely enough, they do not even know what they are fighting for. In the beginning, Lalù's regiment is posted near a French farm where he comes in contact with little Andre and his charming sister, Marie.

60. Ibid, p. 98.
As he becomes rather intimate with them, he provokes the jealousy of his superior officer, Sardar Subah Singh. The human drama of love and hatred, jealousy and ambition continues unabated even in the face of certain doom. One by one, Lalu's close friends - Dhanoo, Lachman Singh, and uncle Kirpu are engulfed in doom: death by water, death in action, and death by his own hands, respectively. Subah Singh goes on a patrol in a drunken state. Lalu fails to understand the meaning of it all, and comes from the inferno, bruised and battered:

Instinctively a moanlike sob rose from his throat and with a face contorted by terror, he began to sit up, his eyes half closed, his hands lifted in the air. A bullet went through the calf of his left leg and he fell face forward. He hoped he was not dead. Lifting his eyes, shivering, hissing and sobbing, "Oh God, Oh my mother." 61

Across the Black Waters is a clear departure from the earlier novels, both in range and in technique. Its plot is less coherent than that of The Village, but this is understandable and can hardly be objected to. A war novel, it cannot help focusing attention on the action of multitudes. The narrative moves here with a slow drift, but, at the same time, it covers a wide range of feeling; the

tragic, the grotesque, the sublime, and the ridiculous. The Marseilles section, for instance, describes the soldiers' visit to a brothel, which is an exercise in the treatment of the ridiculous. Subah Singh's rendezvous with death in a drunken state is another instance. Uncle Kirpu serves the purpose of a Greek chorus when he comments on the absurd nature of all human enterprise. Thus, the pervasive gloom in the novel is partially lifted by occasional gleams and flashes of humor.

In spite of its decorous theme, Across the Black Waters lacks the sureness of accomplished art. Anand seems to write out of his depths as he leaves native grounds to describe the global catastrophe. He is, however, at his best in evoking sensuous pictures and in providing broad human content to his subject. But the inner certainty of vision and deep emotional conviction which characterize great war novels - War and Peace, for example - are not there. There is no doubt, however, about the author's pacific sentiment; and the cumulative effect of the novel is powerful.

The Sword and the Sickle places the hero in a tense political situation where it becomes imperative for him to plunge into revolutionary action. His incompatibility with the social world in which he lives gives him the necessary impetus. Emerging from the nether world of a German
prisoner-of-war camp. Lalu finds life hard and intractable. He is denied by the British government the rudimentary benefits accorded to former war conscripts. He has nowhere to go, for his mother has long since died. The only tie he has with his native village is his land, but he has been disposed of it while he was abroad. In consequence, he is thoroughly disillusioned with the society and with the state. Now he has no choice other than the choice of fighting for his rights and the rights of those like him. He makes his decision to launch a career as a social revolutionary. It is then that Maya, his first love, widowed and lovely, reappears. He is fascinated by her as ever, and she gives herself to him in complete surrender. Lalu contracts a runaway marriage with her and lands in a tiny village near Allahabad. There he joins the revolutionary band, headed by the count, who has set upon himself the task of arousing the conscience of the peasantry. Lalu puts his heart into the job, but finds, to his dismay, that the peasants are slow to respond to his call. By and large, the peasants are tied to the old customs and conventions, and even the more conscious among them have no plan or purpose. Lalu's main business, therefore, is to steel their will and prepare them for the much-needed revolution. With the arrest of the count and Professor Verma, the two chief directors of the struggle, a new wave of enthusiasm seizes the peasants. They storm the jail where their leaders are lodged, but they quail as soon as the police open fire. Lalu, himself, narrowly
escapes being shot at but finally surrenders to the police. While in jail, he receives the news that a son has been born to Maya.

Lal Singh, the fiery adolescent of *The Village* and the sensitive observer of *Across the Black Waters*, graduates here into manhood. He is no longer content with reacting to the world around him; rather he takes upon himself the responsibility to change the world. In this respect, there is a logical development in his character. He holds radical views about revolution, rejecting the Gandhian creed of non-violent struggle. Even Gandhi and Nehru, who figure in the novel and talk with him, fail to convince him. His real enemy, however, is his own divided self. He alternates painfully between revolution and the woman he loves, and the two sides of his being "revolve in a furious whirl of the axle-tree." His love for Maya is tinged with regret:

He had not thought beyond the moment and he took her freely, the large swaying movement of his body demolishing the hindrances of her woman's inflexibility, till both their bodies became embroiled in the pulsing warmth of a world where caution and fear and resentment and hate and love mingled all in sweat."^62

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His failure to reconcile the private with the public elements creates tensions within himself, arising from a schism in his own nature:

Perhaps, he felt there was nothing concrete in the outside world to cling to ... he had never really become master of himself, of his destiny and was susceptible to all the weaknesses in his nature. And Maya was his chief weakness, the reflection of the desire to which he had returned from the dreams of the day of disintegration, the fulfilment of all the sensuality in his nature, the first vision of a woman to which he had become fixed and enchanted years ago and from which he had only been freed after his realization of her. 63

The Sword and the Sickle is expressly a novel of social protest, an emphatic document of peasant life caught in the phase of national regeneration. It seeks to achieve its purpose by dramatizing the class struggle and by offering social criticism. The novelist assumes full responsibility as guide and mentor. He imposes a moral order upon the multiplicity and nonorder of experience. By the same token, the author seems to be committed to a way of life and thinking which has a palpable moral design upon the reader. Iyengar has rightly suggested that "Anand, the writer of fiction, has necessarily receded to the background."

The trilogy, then, as a whole, is a comprehensive work. It embraces different and complex areas of life and, in doing so, extends the territories of fiction. "Mulk Raj Anand's major work is the trilogy" says John B. Alphonso. Iyengar considers it "an impressive work." These evaluations are just; the trilogy is indeed a mature work which shows confidence and development in the art of the novelist. As a chronicle, it embraces the immensity and variety of life and shows the chief character in action through a cycle of years. The strange pilgrimage of Lal Singh (nicknamed "Lalu") from Nandpur to Marseilles and back, suggests a symbolic journey from adolescence to youth to manhood. Thus, the trilogy is more of an exploration than a presentation. The major events relate to the hero's central experiences—the reaction to the primordial rhythms of village life, his humiliation and escape; his participation in the global war, his capture and release; and finally, his active engagement in the peasant struggle, and the constant split in his own nature particularly in relation to Maya. These events and related experiences fall into a pattern, and there are details in the pattern. But the thin, hard line dividing art and life is not quite crossed in the novel so as to give it the sanction of great art. Lal Singh, nevertheless, continues to haunt our memory even after we have finished with the book; he is a memorable character in his own right. An authentic voice of his

creator, he is courageous, resourceful, and dynamic. His story registers with full force a sensitive individual's agonies in a decadent society, and it announces a new birth. The triology is, indeed, a creditable achievement, placing Anand in the front rank of the novelists of social conscience.

The Big Heart is a passionate and moving work. It clearly shows the hiding places of Anand as a novelist. Using all the available resources of passion, the novel moves, in controlled fury, to a climactic close which makes a strong impact on the reader's mind. The Big Heart mars the close of a genre of fiction initiated in Untouchable and thus ends the first major phase of Anand as a novelist.

Ananta, the son of a coppersmith, returns home to his ancestral city in Amritsar fresh from his exploits in Bombay where he had taken part in the national struggle for independence. He is accompanied by his sweetheart, Janki, who is slowly drifting toward death because of consumption. Ananta resumes his hereditary profession, but like others of his class, he finds it difficult to make a living. The situation in the trade is none too good. The introduction of modern machinery has already pushed the traditional handicraft into the background. Himself an ardent supporter of machines, Ananta fights a two-pronged battle; first, against the age-old notions of his own fraternity; second, against the owners of machines, Lalla Murli Dhar and Gokul
Chand, who seek to exploit their brethren. He gets the support of Puran Singh Bhagat, the poet, and is constantly cheered by Janki. He organizes the jobless coppersmiths in order to compel the factory owners into giving them jobs. Events, however, take a dramatic turn when some of the disgruntled coppersmiths become violent. Raila, Ananta's close friend, works himself into a terrible rage and starts wrecking the machine. Ananta tries to stop him and even overpowers him, but Raila takes advantage of a temporary lapse on the part of Ananta. In a demonic anger, he batters Ananta's head against a broken machine, causing his instant death.

This is the story in a nutshell, but no summary can even faintly convey the magnitude of the tragedy and its rich poetic implication. Ananta emerges a perfect hero who is also a perfect victim, crushed at the hands of destiny. His only fault is that he is big hearted, humane, and brave. He must die so that others may live. He is, perhaps, the scapegoat of the sacrificial rituals. But he is also a Christ figure, an innocent victim excluded from human society. Like Lal Singh in the trilogy, he, too, is a complex character, but the radical disunities of his being are reconciled in the white radiance of passion. He fidelity of Janki, even when she is consumed by insidious tuberculosis, borders on the sublime. Love, among other things, demands courage, and Ananta has it in large measure. His attachment is final and complete, although the other
mistress, revolution, also claims much of his time and energy:

How he had loved her, almost broken her and eaten her up, as if he were not content for her to remain separate. And he had to see her withering before him daily and withdrawing, consumed by this dread fire of her own. ... For having eaten the full fruits of love, he had plunged into the work for "Revolution" and left her bereft, alone, helpless consigned to the subtle despair of her inevitable doom.66

He builds a sanctuary of love, and his need for response is the greater: "'Oh, take me on your breasts, and rock me in peace. Oh heal the pain that I feel at this betrayal' But like a drug addict he just stood by her bed, as though craving for the intoxication of his love-hatred"67 At the same time, he is a daring skeptic, who questions everything, including God; "God works in a mysterious way", said Ananta ironically, 'In such a heartless way that the ominous owl alone has so far taken pains to answer the peasants in the night. ... God seems to have deserted the world - if ever He were there, helping it along."68

68. Ibid, p. 166.
Ananta knows that revolution will be a far cry unless the coppersmiths learn to unite. He tells them plainly: "Men are the makers of their own deeds, the makers of their own characters, good or bad, and they are the shapers of their own destiny! So come and make your own fate."\(^{69}\)

The world of coppersmiths itself is hopelessly split. The more privileged among them exploit the weaker members of the flock. A life-and-death struggle ensues between the "haves" and "have nots", and tension is generated by the clash of interests in which ancestral memories, customs, and prejudices play an important part. Ananta firmly believes that a new life has to be created, a life in which the machines will not be objects for terror but harbingers of plenty, prosperity, and love. Ananta's sacrifice is the ritual necessarily to be enacted if such a life is to become a reality. The event, which is at the focal point of the narrative, has been vividly described:

After a momentary lapse of grip, Ananta overpowered Ralia and had him helpless under his arms. Ralia seemed exhausted now and his face expressed a calm resignation, as though he admitted defeat; his eyes were closed and the beads of sweat trailed down the forehead and his cheeks. Seeing him thus, Ananta suddenly gave up as though he

\(^{69}\) Ibid, p. 205.
thought that the fight was finished and Ralia had recovered his sanity. At this Ralia sprang up, and gripping Ananta by the throat, overpowered him.

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

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

It is left to the poet Puran Singh Bhagat to comment on the incident: "One man can die, but life can't be extinguished in the world altogether until the very sun goes cold and the elements break up." Furthermore, he extracts a moral from the catastrophic end of Ananta: "But ... even if one is given a short life, it becomes shorter if it is guarded selfishly. On the other hand, think of the beauty, the richness and the joy of living with others, of helping others..."

70. Ibid, p. 214.
71. Ibid, p. 220
72. Ibid, p. 225
The rather roguish, quizzical Ananta is an enormously living character. He meets his doom, fighting for a noble cause and, thereby, achieves his salvation. Living, he provides sustenance for others; dead, he sets pattern of life for others to follow. Matched against him is Janki who exhibits a mixture of the sublime, the sickly, and the childlike. He social status as a mere prostitute does not diminish her evangelical glory. She is eternally feminine in a predominantly masculine environment, the quintessence of the poetic with all the glory and the fragility around her. She aptly described in metaphors: "She seemed to be wilting like a pale white motia flower under the stress of the afternoon heat and her illness." Her frailty has beneath it a reservoir of strength. She is the shrine where Ananta pays obeisance, the harbor where he finds his moorings. When the news of Ananta's death reaches her, she bursts into a trance of grief, comparable to that of Lara when she hears of Yuri's death in Doctor Zhivago: "He is dead ... oh, he was such a noble creature - so much nobler than all those louts! He is dead. ... And all my life ended with his going. ... Everything has ended for me in his death. O God, let the earth open up and swallow me! Otherwise they will destroy me, the vultures who are sitting there." The broken, rasping monotone reveals her agony as

73. Ibid, p. 133.
74. Ibid, p. 223.
deep and gripping as the agony of Lara as she stands by Yuri's coffin. Janki eventually takes shelter in the protective arms of the poet. It seems as if divine mercy has come full circle.

The Big Heart, then, is a moving and powerful delineation of passion in its labyrinth, a human drama enacted within the limits of probability. The action in the novel takes place in the frame-work of linear time, a single day as in Untouchable, but this is also the undying day of man's essential enterprise. The characters are drawn from life; hence, they are convincing and believable. At one end of the spectrum are Ananta, Janki, and the poet; at the other, Murli Dhar, Gokul Chand, and the like. There is Kermo, Ananta's mother, who, like Laxmi in Coolie, says "We belong to suffering", but who cannot condone her son's deep, emotional involvement with Janki. There is Ralia, who, in his frightful fit, not only destroys the machines but also kills Ananta, his friend and compeer. There are hosts of coppersmiths, Communists, religious reformers, and capitalists, but each one of them is sharply and concretely drawn. The pattern of action, too, conforms to the laws of probability. The tavern scene, Ananta's feast, the social tensions generated during the wedding of Murli Dhar's grandson, the wrecking of machines by Ralia, even the endless academic discussions in the novel are tensely and
vividly presented, having a logic of their own. He depicts the tragic, submerged life of Ananta and his fellow workers, achieving a prophetic vision in the process. Anand, presents a somber vision of futurity which unfolds a doom more terrifying and unrelenting than the one which engulfs Munnoo in Coolie. Iyengar rightly suggests: "Once again Anand triumphs because he writes of things he knows - things that, as it were, float in the stream of his blood and ourse through his veins." The novel is unmistakably his masterpiece. The curve of its plot, the momentum of action, the richness of characterization and the clarity of its moral vision make it an orchestrated whole.

Seven Summers is a novel of intense feeling. Here, Anand dramatizes his own consciousness through the first seven years of his life and presents, a soul-searching diary of the real, intimate life known to himself. Anand, feels the terrible need to write about himself, to reveal the inner life lived during his childhood. Its excellence lies in the personal intensity, in the purity and immediacy with which the author records his experiences, dimmed by the passage of time. The novel is an attempt at autobiographical fiction. The exploration of the theme of innocence and experience constitutes its philosophic base. Any

reconstruction of the past implies creative imagination of a high order. The difficulty, however, lies in bridging the gap between the actual experience and its recapitulation. It must be admitted that Anand has largely succeeded in reviving the beauty and the glory of childhood and in explicating the thought and behavior of the child-mind with a personal urgency reminiscent of Elizabeth Bowen and Graham Greene. The mystery and the charm of adolescence come through: "Childhood, oh childhood! How easy it is for me to yield to the slightest happiness and the nearest breath of sorrow in one's childhood! And is there any joy as pure or any sorrow as fleeting as that of childhood? Was it innocence of one's soul or the sheer vitality of one's body?\(^76\)

While the narrator is aware of the emotional distance which separates him from childhood, he retains the particularity of emotions associated with it. His preoccupation is somewhat similar to that of Wordsworth's in The Prelude:

The vacancy between me and those days,
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
That, sometimes, when I think of them, I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other being.\(^77\)

\(^76\) Mulk Raj Anand, Seven Summers (Bombay: Kutub Publishers, 1960), p. 34.

Anand, however, has no mystical or quasi-mystical intentions. His only concern is to explicate the hidden motives of pleasure and pain, for the essential loneliness of the child is fraught with rich fictional possibilities:

It is true that the lonely child develops an almost adolescent sensitiveness under these circumstances and creates fantasies for his own delectation, but the burden of his very effort, though profitable in the long run, is heavy to bear when the tender soul has constantly to jump from the dreamy existence of the garden bower to the world of reality which is made up of the parental routine of meals and siestas.  

The interaction between dream and reality, fact and fancy is not as casual as it might seem to a sensitive child. The novelist's purpose in *Seven Summers* is to show the interacting veins of life and imagination as they operate on the mind of the child. Like Marcel Proust, who re-creates the remembrances of things past in the mind of Swann, Anand, too, arouses the sudden, vivid recollections of childhood in the consciousness of his hero. Living in the present, he scans the sea that is the past and, like a deep-sea fisherman, comes to shore fragments of memory, using these coherently to achieve his artistic needs.

The child-hero of *Seven Summers* is truly a memorable character. He possesses the universal traits of a sensitive adolescent, remarkably open to experience, and seeing the world not through a glass darkly, but as fresh, undivided, and eminently beautiful. The narrative takes on the quality of his perceptions, successfully recording events and impressions, physical and symbolic actions in effect, the whole range of sensations in the theater of the mind. It not only registers, the concrete, normal everyday facts of existence but also modulates into subtle poetry. The hero's love for Aunt Devaki, for instance, is expressed through sensuous imagery:

I bathed in the glow of her beauty, tense and excited and bound up in a great love for her. And I felt that neither the milk and sugar of my mother, nor the curd of aunt Aqqi, nor even the sweet burnt grass of little mother Gurdevi, could surpass the mixed smell of motia and molsari flowers which was my aunt Devaki.79

The sensuous effect here is unmistakable. Carried to the logical limits, it leads to a healthy eroticism as in this passage:

Gentle as the sound of breeze which stirred the tops of casuarina trees was her voice ... hard as two mangoes

79. Ibid, p. 28.
were her breasts as she pressed me to her bosom to soothe me, thrilling as the cold raindrops were the kisses she showered on my face, and never can I forget the singing voice made hoarse by the way she bent her profile over my forehead.

Love and latent sensuality are perhaps the basic motivations of the child-mind. Anand's narrative frequently refers to these. The sensory and sensuous notations, at times, invite a comparison with D.H. Lawrence; at other times, they evoke a keen relish for the poetry of the earth reminiscent of Keats.

*Seven Summers* not only initiates the hero to the hallowed land of romance but also brings him back to the earth. A child's thirst for experience is insatiable. Every experience is a fresh signpost and, therefore, eminently desirable, whether it pleases or hurts him. A visit to the sparrowhouse in the company of his father to watch the birds pleases the hero immensely and transports him to the region of ineffable bliss:

Soon I could hear nothing except the isolated groans and cries of animals and the itinerant rhythm of a parrot's speech. And I suddenly felt lighter than air. I had the

80. Ibid.
sensation that I was floating upwards in the sky. Then the dark whorl of the evening descended upon me and closed my eyes, and I felt as though the light of the spark lit into me by my father's sing-song had lifted me on high with its strange raucous music and transplanted me to a city beyond the sky. 81

On the other hand, when he gets beatings from his teacher in the school, he sinks to the utmost depths of degradation and pain: "I shrieked aloud and fell tottering at the master's feet. A river of tears flowed down my face, smarting where the five fingers of the master had imprinted themselves on my cheek, my blood boiling with anger and fear and resentment and pain." 82 Even the child's love for his mother is tinged with desire: "I felt linked to her in a love that was simple and immutable and beautiful and sad. I put my arms round her neck while she wept silently and I clung to the tormented warmth of her dark face." 83 Again, while convalescing after a serious injury, he apprehends more clearly than before the deep tremors of his love for his mother:

My mother invariably gave me hot milk that made me sick. But I was grateful enough. Especially at such moments, when I knew that she was neglecting Shiva to come to my

81. Ibid, p. 54.
82. Ibid, pp. 103-4.
side, I felt I should never love anybody as much as I loved her, for she had not slept for nights when I had been near death and had never opened her lips except to say: "May I become your sacrifice." Only the child can comprehend the mother's courage and sorrow.

The child also feels the tremors of desire for Rukmini, the twelve-year-old daughter of the physician, who presses him to her bosom. He becomes aware of the hidden sexual urge:

She was a slender fawn-like creature, with an unwashed neck but with a heart-shaped face which shamed the warmth of gold with its tender bloom. And her long black hair fell into two plaits on her shoulders, matching the color of her almond eyes. It was curious that I should have become conscious of physical desire so early, but as I clung to her neck and felt the pressure of her budding breasts, as I rested my cheek against her cheek and felt the touch of her long hands, I became aware of a strange and wild rapture much as I had faintly felt in being fondled by my aunt Aqqi and Devaki.

The psychological motivation of the child is further explored in relation to his playmates. Discarded by them

84. Ibid, p. 79.
from the game of mock-warfare on the ground that he was younger than them, he tries to force himself on them. His need for self-assertion is so great that he runs headlong to the top of the hill which is the imaginary fortress to be conquered, and he pronounces himself the victor: "I rose to the crest of the hill, my ambition poised in the rhythm of my body, though my limbs were heavy with fatigue and my breath came and went quickly. And as I stood on the top of the hillock, I shouted: 'I am the conqueror, I am the conqueror." 85

Seven Summers, in some ways, like Rosamond Lehman's The Ballad and the Source or Joyce Cary's A House of Children, captures the lost glory of Eden. It is a quiet book, set in a low key, but having rich emotional implications. At the same time, it is remarkably transparent and serene. It may not have the passionate intensity of The Big Heart, but its appeal is surely timeless. This is so because the nature of experience it seeks to communicate is universal and timeless. The hero of Seven Summers is a child of yesterday, today, and tomorrow; there is nothing in him that is not for all time. He is alive to experience to the very marrow of his bones. In as much as a constant reordering of feeling goes on in his mind, the cumulative effect of the novel is one of unceasing exploration.

85. Ibid.
Private Life of an Indian Prince explores some "terrain inconnu" of passion in the life of an Indian prince, leading to madness. Maharaja Ashok Kumar of Shampur, commonly known as Prince Victor, wages a futile battle against the forces of democracy unleashed in post-independence India, but mainly against his own tormented self. He resists the Union government’s pressure to merge his little state into the Indian Union, but he ultimately succumbs and signs the instrument of accession at a specially arranged meeting with the home minister in New Delhi. His fatal flaw, however, is his romantic infatuation with Ganga Dasi, an illiterate and scheming woman. He oscillates between the contrary pulls of love and hatred in relation to her, and the split in his nature is constant. Meanwhile, the affairs of the state are in a virtual mess. Anarchy is let loose as both the feudal landlords and peasants turn against him. The local politicians begin to fish in the troubled waters, and strife and intrigue are in the air. To add to the prince’s discomfiture, his sweetheart, Ganga Dasi, takes another lover. His cup of misery full, he embarks on mad and fitful ventures. Dispossessed of his kingdom and deserted by his mistress, he proceeds to London. While in London, he somehow manages to get his rival, the lover of Ganga Dasi, murdered at home. The act, however, recoils on him, and he does not get a
crumb of comfort. He plunges into the very nadir of despair, drifting into the abyss of nothingness. He ends, ultimately, in a lunatic asylum, his mind forever crazed.

Private Life of an Indian Prince is Anand’s venture into perilous seas. His art, keyed so long to the tenets of realism, moves toward the exploration of subtle psychological states, dream, and fantasy of his principal character. This demands changes in technique and treatment, leading to further difficulties. The camera eye is provided by Dr. Hari, the personal physician of the prince. This requires the balancing of two points of view, that of the hero himself, and the more critical one of the narrator, who sees things largely as the hero does, but also more, and acts as a Greek chorus. His acts of seeing and feeling on behalf of the reader are well performed. Thus, the narrator, Dr. Hari, himself becomes an object of interest, a sentient character capable of acute perception and judgment.

The ambiguity of focus in the narration, however, does not lead to ironic treatment, because, as friend and well-wisher of the hero, the narrator seldom maintains esthetic distance. Nor is the "stream-of-consciousness" method used to present a skeletal diagram of the mind in Private Life of an Indian Prince. Dostoevski’s insight into his characters epitomizes the rent in human nature, leading to the abandonment of the logical and the sensible in favor of the saintly and the prophetic. There is no such effort in Private Life - no etching of life in its depths. Prince
Victor's regress from unabashed sensuality to total lunacy is easily comprehensible. Anand is able to show the disordered life of the prince, and this is his chief preoccupation in the novel. His probings into the atavistic disorder of the psyche arise from the same concern. Private Life, nonetheless, is a spectacular work, though it has no pretension of being authentic history or biography. The decline of the princely orders has been sincerely depicted as part of the social phenomenon in resurgent India. But the tragedy of Prince Victor leaves us rather cold. Although Ganga Dasi is his fatal Cleopatra, his excessive concern with sex and consequent drift to insanity cannot be taken as real tragic flaw, capable of producing a cathartic effect in the reader. Nor is the narcissism of Prince Victor linked up with enduring human passions. Rather, he represents the self-negating, destructive id as a symptom of modern disorder. His suffering springs from a perverse will and has nothing to do with the spiritual torments of Ivan or Prince Myshkin:

"You look sad," I said as I handed him the tumbler of whisky.

"Torn open by these women and ..." He did not finish his sentence.

"Anguish, remorse, guilt - all spring from the birth trauma and childhood," I said waxing philosophical.
"However they spring, they lead to misery," Victor said, impatient at my detachment, "The thing is that one suffers." 86

The rent in Victor's soul can be explained only in relation to his consuming passion for Ganga Dasi, a passion without hope of reprieve:

I feel that I have descended into a dark night where the only thing I can see is the light she brought into my life. ... You know when I first had her, I wanted my union with her to last for ever and for ever and wanted to shut out the whole world from my gaze. I wished to be with her in an unending life in the having palpitting passion I shared with her, as she came to me, a golden girl, shrieking with desire ... and yet I was afraid then that it may not last. And now I think of that moment and am imprisoned in the misery of it, and nothing seems to exist outside. 87

As the tie with the golden girl snaps, he finds himself in the murky waters of hell; "Where have you gone? Oh, where have you gone? I want you! I am dying for you... Why have you done thus? Why? Why do you want to destroy me?" 88

His attachment to her is final and irrevocable. He would regain his lost poise, only if she came back to him:

If only - if only she could come back, I would take her to some enchanted island, to Kashmir, to Southern France, and I would lead her to the sea, or to some rock, where no one could see us, and where everything would be enchanted as in a fairyland, and there I would have her under the blue sky. In the magic of that air she would sleep in my arms, clinging to me as she always slept during our seven years together, a little child wanting protection and love and care.  

Victor, unable to perform the act of renunciation that is needed, prolongs his nightmarish existence. He lives amid the wreckage of what he once believed in as the most reliable. He has no option but to face the trailing consequence of passion. His drift toward insanity is inevitable, although the knowledge that comes to Lear never comes to him. "Don't hold me, swines! Don't hold me! I want to fly. Oh, let me be a needle! Thunderbolt! Mountain goat! Horse! Woman is the beginner! The valley is green! And there grows root. Strike up the band for a rhumba! Darling, darling, darleeng ... ohe, ohe, where are we!"  

89. Ibid, p. 219.  
90. Ibid, p. 320
There is meaning in his crazed utterances, all related to his erotic passion, but the tragic depths are not quite sounded. His schizophrenia moves us to considerable pity but fails to achieve a cathartic effect. The madness of a Lear or a Hamlet, on the contrary, is lit up again and again by the glimmer of self-knowledge which is denied the prince. Victor is gifted with none of the spiritual candor that Dostoevsky so effectively gives Alycsha Karamazov. "My intention is to portray a beautiful soul", claims the author of *Brothers Karamazov*. Anand's Victor is neither good nor evil, but something in between, standing at the great divide of undifferentiated passion and insanity. No wonder that even the narrator is overcome with an eerie feeling:
"It was futile to stay any longer in the unchangeable Saturnalian realm over which the mad Maharaja established his new dark kingdom."  

The loss of sympathy for the hero is suggested by the image. Only Maharani Indira, the neglected wife of the prince, stands by him in his hour of need.

The development of Mulk Raj Anand as a novelist follows a definite pattern. While the earlier novels show a sense of horror and disgust against social and economic ills, the novels of the middle period show a greater concern

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91. Ibid, p. 329.
for and with the human heart. It is, however, in the later novels that a healthy synthesis of the social and personal concerns is achieved. Thus, the art of Anand gradually gains much in confidence. Like many-colored glass, it reflects the various lights and shades of experience. The movement from the early to the later phase marks increasing selfassurance and mastery both in vision and technique. While the later novels retain the passion for social justice, they sound greater emotional depths. The human condition is accepted as something natural, without any trail of bitterness or resentment. This accounts for a critical discrimination in form and technique. The naturalistic method, employed in the earlier novels, gives place to the later more complex and varied mode of presentation, in which myth and archetype, metaphor and symbol, irony and satire play prominent parts.

The Old Woman and the Cow is an effort to purify human conduct through a return to the primitive and mythical aspects of human experience. Thenovel explores dimensions, the full impact of which can be grasped only in the light of the modern experiment as a whole. Like James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Ernest Hemingway, Anand, too, uses the mythic parallel to renew the recurrent aspects of life and to show the basic similarity inherent in them.

Like the novelists of the West, Anand, too, is conscious of "the problem of human sensibility in the
present complex, the tragedy of modern man. He, therefore, "aims at heightened communication of the most intense vision of life through a new myth." The remarks of Anand are indeed very relevant to his own method in The Old Woman and the Cow. In a dedicatory note to Sardar Jafri, he says:

The story of The Old Woman and the Cow has been narrated here from the urge to retell in my own manner. The spark that lit the fire that has raged in the book came from your hearth, many years after Nekrasov had left the smoldering ashes of his epic poem in me. The novel has partly been inspired by a reading of "The Peasant Woman" written by the nineteenth-century Russian poet, Nicholai Nekrasov; but its chief source is the story of Sita in The Ramayana - the story of the heroine who is banished by Rama because she had spent some time in the captivity of Ravana and because people had doubted her purity.

Gauri, gentle and good like a cow, is given away in marriage to Panchi, a temperamental youth of the village of Chota Piplan in the foothills of the Himalayas. She puts up with everything at her husband's home and settles down patiently to a life of unremitting toil, hunger, and pain.

93. Ibid, p. 90
The situation, however, worsens because of drought and famine. Gauri's meekness makes her vulnerable to abuses and beatings at the hands of her husband. Even her chastity is doubted. She pleads innocence in vain. She is sent back to her mother's home in the village of Piplan Kalan. A worse fate awaits her there, as her mother, under the evil influence of her uncle, Amru, sells her to "a respectable old man" who takes her to Hoshiarpur. Unable to win her love by courtship, the old lecher tries to outrage her modesty; she firmly resists and angrily leaves the house. She finds shelter in the clinic of Colonel Mahindra and is employed as a nurse. Her beauty provokes Dr. Batra, the colonel's assistant, who attempts to rape her. Her own resilience, however, saves her from the nearly impossible situation. Later, she is restored to her husband through the agency of her now penitent mother. Colonel Mahindra, for whom Gauri has the highest respect and admiration, gives her a helping hand, but the union with her husband proves to be a temporary affair. Panchi's ambivalence torments him still. Prompted by the village gossip, he demands proofs from her of her chastity. Gauri would prove her chastity if she could, but the mother earth would not open her womb for her as she had done for Sita. In the moment of crucial decision, Gauri walks out of Pnachi's life, though she is bearing his child in her womb. She returns to Colonel Mahindra's clinic and resumes her job as a nurse.
Gauri, born under the shadow of violence, shame, and defeat, represents truth. She is the incarnation of Sita, as it were, in an infir, evil, and degenerate world. Jack Lindsay comments: "Here the key-pattern lies in the tale from The Ramayana of the wife who is banished because she had innocently lived in another man's house. Gauri ... breaks through. The blind circle is ended. The woman who is banished becomes the woman who herself rejects the narrow world of subjections and fears that enslave Panchi despite his better self." But the analogy goes further. Gauri is the modern version of Sita, not the self-effacing goddess of The Ramayana. The earth swallows her up, vindicating her honor. But this does not happen in the case of Gauri, however much she might will it! Hers is the glory of making a choice between alternatives. She prefers to break the labyrinth of an eccentric design rather than live in perpetual shame in her husband's house who wantonly mistrusts her. She battles her way out of the confines of her narrow, encircling world to a position of unbelievable strength. It is truly a pilgrimage of hope and faith that she undertakes. She sets an example for others to follow. The inner transformation of Gauri is achieved with grace and courage. She is, undoubtedly, one of the most memorable female characters in the whole range of Indian fiction.

95. The Elephant and the Lotus, p. 29.
"Gauri is like a cow, very gentle and very good" - so runs the familiar term of praise for her. She is generally patient and for bearing. When Panchi asks about the identity of her would be child, she takes, more or less, a passive stance:

Gauri looked up at him shocked and indignant and hurt. Then she realized her helplessness, accepted his anger silently, hoping it would pass, like all the previous storms. But he stood up, came toward her with upraised arms, shouting: "Whose is it? Mine or someone else's?" Whose could it be?" she shrieked. Then, softening, she appealed, "Don't be cruel and don't doubt me! I ask you with folded hands."

He quivered at the sight of her weakness and solicitude; but turned his face aside and covered it with his left hand, only shouting: "Go, go, get out of my sight. Go to your mother, the whore! She can perhaps earn enough to feed you and your brat. Your uncle Amru has the food."

She fell at his feet, begged with hands joined before her forehead: "Don't send me away."96

At her mother's she nurses the agony of separation from her husband whom she still loves; she is consumed in

secret yearning for him. Her wailing lament is piercing and haunting as her mother sells her to the old Iecher:

"What are you doing if you are not murdering me!" Gauri shrieked, almost tearing her throat so that the whole world may hear. And her face glistened as she uplifted it to delivery her challenge, her eyes shining like diamonds. "Is this not murder? you will repent afterward when you have to face your God! So don't do it. Mother, you who are my mother! I am begging you."97

But in the moment of crisis, she is firm and erosionless like a rock:

He rolled back like a colossus and enveloped her with his arms, reaching out to her face.

The girl fought back with the resilience of the strong village woman, exerting her legs and her body and her arms together.

He had the advantage or his weight and breadth and overpowered her, almost choking her. But he also had the disadvantage of his belly.

Gauri pushed him off her by a violent wriggle and, then, thrust him away on the floor. Breathing heavily now, and frightened lest he should come back again, she lay waiting

for his next move. "I am guided by the Goddess! So do not come near me. Or you will burn." She warned him. 98

Later, in a more critical situation, she resists Dr. Batra with a firmness of will that baffles understanding:

And now he was whispering audible nothings to her:
"Oh, my dear, my life..."

She was defeated. And she could feel his rising ardent flesh groping for her and, cunningly, wantonly thrusting itself between her legs. She was suffocated, but conscious.

From some unplumbed depths there arose in her, however, Kali, the energy of sheer negation, the hardness of whom she had brought against Seth Jai Ram Das. "Go", She shrieked. 99

She can even tell her husband: "If you strike me again, I will hit you back." She tells him the last word before she quits:

"There is nothing to tell him", said Gauri with tears in her eyes, "He turned me out and I have come back to him— as pure as I went away."

What is the proof of your purity?" Panchi bawled, "Not your tears and your whinings." ... 

98. Ibid, p. 152.
Gauri extricated herself from Hoor Banu's grasp and, bending, with her hands joined before her, said, "I have been true to you."\(^{100}\)

Her heart rends with pain because she still loves Panchi as no woman could. She, however, does not flinch from taking a decision at the crossroad of her life. She tells her neighbor, Hoor Banu, what she proposes to do: "He is not foolish. He is weak, spoilt creature! He pretended to be a lion among the men of the village! They are telling him that Rama turned out Sita because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana! I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out and be forgotten of him."\(^{101}\)

Gauri symbolizes the strength and purity of Sita. She prefers to walk out of Panchi's life as calmly as she had come into it and thereby relives the momentous experience of Sita in her own life. Born under the shadow of an evil star and facing the cruel strokes of destiny, she manages to retain her dignity. She is an epitome of excellence, strength, and virtue.

If Gauri is the modern version of Sita, Panchi is Rama lost. His love for Gauri is tainted with a tender voluptuousness and remorse from the very beginning.

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100 Ibid, p. 282.

He noticed more often the curve of Gauri's body, the hard compact breasts, the thin waist, the heavy hips and shapely legs and the bloom of youth which glowed on her face. He felt the longing to go to her and catch her, but the guilt of his brutality during the drunken bout prevented him from doing so, and he merely sat watching her, excited and luminous, with longing for her and yet inhibited by the shame in which the feeling of guilt wrapped itself.\textsuperscript{102}

Panchi, however, fights his own divided self. He is torn between love and strife; his loyalty to Gauri matched against his allegiance to the villagers. The author shows time and again the images of Panchi's mutilated self:

Panchi looked away from her, and he felt that to go right down to the depths of his suffering and plumb the pits of ascetic pain was the only kind of resignation that suited the mood of despair. He sensed that the whole village, in fact, the entire countryside would be bound up in the lethargic tedium of a sad, dull life. Existence would be cluttered up with sighs, groans, typhus, scurvy, the itch in the loins with the copious sweat, and the malicious gossip, about his theft of mangoes as the latest sensation. ... And he righteously felt the contradiction of life: the burning own youth and strength, of his strength, of his ability to

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p. 75.
do things, his capacity to eat and love and roll in the shades of the mango groves. 103

Left to himself, he is surely in love with Gauri. When she is restored to him after a long absence, he expresses the true voice of his feeling: "I have known darkness. Now you have come and set me on fire again." 88 His utterance gets even more passionate as he burns in desire for her: "I fretted and fretted ... I beat my head against a wall one day in despair. ... Now I can breathe. ... But first let me hug you. ... Come, come to me, Gauri ... I want you." But passion does not last, and the other side of his nature, tormented and tormenting, asserts itself, throwing away the felicity for ever. He is neither constant nor wise and, like a base Indian, throws his pearl away. In sum, he is a foolish, passionate young man who is more real than Gauri—wrong headed and faithless, but very human, hence real.

The Old Woman and the Cow creates the legend of a heroic peasant woman in a small-minded village. It has a definite epic strain to it. The closeness to Nekrasov's poem does not in any way diminish the richness and beauty of its original conception, based on the Sita myth which is woven like a central jewel into the whole design. The novel
suggests continuous parallels and links between the primitive past and the desolate present and thereby presents the most absorbing image of the human condition.

The Road is a variation on the theme of Untouchable, which it treats with greater stylistic maturity and finesse. The graph of development is not an ascending straight line, but a spiraling curve. A fine absorption in realism makes Untouchable the moving thing it is. Germinating in pain and leading to and ending in despair, it achieves an intimate and inimitable vision of the human condition. The Road, on the contrary, shuns the highroad of realism to take to the devious ways of allegory and symbolism. Conceived as an emblem of social freedom and release, The Road has a formal beauty comparable to the spontaneous, rich and haunting beauty of Untouchable. Whatever it loses in intensity, it gains in allusiveness, symbolism, and linguistic purity.

The story centers around the young outcaste, Bhikhu who, unlike Bkha in Untouchable, is an active crusader. With the help of his brethren, he sets out to build a road which will connect the village with the town and which will be used for carrying milk. Thus, he is engaged in meaningful social action. The higher castes, however, will have nothing to do with the construction of the road. They would not even condescend to touch stones, which they believe are contaminated by the touch of the outcastes. Bhikhu and his
friends hew the stones from the quarry against tremendous odds. And, they are continually subjected to pressures and insults. They have, however, a powerful ally in Dhooli Singh, who helps them continually, at the cost of alienation from his caste and even from his family. When the "twice-born" burn the huts of the outcastes, unleashing a reign of terror, Dhooli Singh stands by them in the hour of their need and shelters him in his house. In the meantime, the construction of the road goes according to plan. However, when the road is completed, the builders are forced to leave the village. Bhikhu walks out of the cramped village and moves toward the road which will not only take him to Delhi, the capital of India, but also to the sunlit avenues of the future where there would be no castes or classes.

The symbolism of the road is obvious. Bhikhu takes the road to the unknown, his symbolic home.

The humanist content is the core of the novel. Bhikhu is not the lone figure on the road to freedom. He has behind and with him the whole tribe of outcastes; in fact, the whole resurgent humanity. The road is essentially a pathway to salvation. Bhikhu attains the ideal in a wholesome way, emerging as the mentor of his class. He is a mythic figure without the benefit of a myth. His essence is the essence of the world; hence, separateness and withdrawal are no longer
necessary as in the case of Bakha in *Untouchable*. He is passionate, creative, and self-sufficient, not the helpless victim to be mutilated, displaced, and defaced. The climactic scene toward the end of the novel amply proves that he is ever in presence of his own essence:

Bhikhu stretched out to his full height again, till the landlord's son cowered back. He wiped the smear of blood his torn lip, turned round deliberately, swallowed his spittle, and walked out of the hall. He did not go toward home. Instinctively, he went in the direction of the road he had helped to build. And in his soul he took the direction, out of the village, toward Gurgaon, which was the way to Delhi town, capital of Hindustan, where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste.\textsuperscript{104}

It is evident that Bhikhu works out his own salvation with diligence. The road thus stands for the way out of the hell one has built for himself. Bhikhu visualizes a heaven which may not yet be attainable, for custom, superstition, and habit hang like a dead weight, clouding one's vision. the golden dream of a classless society may remain in the realm of possibility. At least, Bhikhu makes an honest effort to transform that dream into reality. The hero

represents the authentic voice of his creator. As the mouthpiece of the creative idea underlying the novel, he stands at two removes from life; he has none of the human naturalness that characterizes the hero of Untouchable. Artistically speaking, the symbolic design of the novel interferes with the reality of characterization. The core of the novel lies elsewhere—in the dramatization of the social conflict. There is endless oscillation between servile acceptance and the spirit of rebellion that shapes the soul:

"Son, we are at rault", Laxmi said, "Join hands to them, Don't fight. ..." And she turned to the superior ones, saying: "Have pity on Bhikhu. He is a hot-headed boy! And we will not get to the temple if you think he will pollute it."

"Ma—what are you saying?" Bhikhu protested.

"Son, we are chamars," She tried to persuade him, "And they are twice-born."

"One is a leatherworker by profession and not by birth! Bhikhu shouted. 105

"There is no intellectual imposition of the symbol on the material. ...," says Jack Lindsay, "Instead, we have a

105. Ibid, p. 4.
natural dynamic relation between the actual situation and its total meaning, all canalized in the image of the road."
The symbolic configuration in the novel is far too obvious, but moral contours of characters get blurred in the outline. Dhooli Singh, however, appears convincing as a real human being. He is a rebel against the immemorial pattern of life with all its shams and conventions, his rebellion calling for extreme sacrifices and fearlessness. He could stay conveniently with his family and class, but his deep passion for truth and justice would not let him. He embarks on a course of action which alienates him from his wife and children, as it also does from the high pantheon of his class. He oscillates between family ties and public zeal, but in the crucial moment of decision, the balance shifts in favour of the latter: "Come then', he said, suddenly, impetuously, 'Come into the house ... come. The woman of God is gone to her proper place, the temple! And I shall be an outcaste forever. ... So the house is yours. Come, my sons and daughters."  

This is a decision which makes not only his own life rewarding but also the lives of others. Ultimately, it also brings his family back to him. In a novel that sacrifices character to symbol and, to some extent, life to art, the portrayal of Dhooli Singh is rich and complex in the extreme.

106. Ibid, pp. 53-54.
The Road, then, is a brilliant piece of symbolistic construction. It stands out as a fresh landmark in the art of Mulk Raj Anand, considering the distance it has traversed since the creation of Untouchable, especially with respect to its artistry and symbolism.

Death of a Hero deals with the life and death of the Kashmiri hero, Maqbool Sherwani, during the calamitous days of Indo-Pakistani confrontation in that enchanted valley. The brave Kashmiri people fight the tribal invaders from across the border. Fired by patriotic zeal, Maqbool appears on the scene as a hero of tradition, working according to approved social norms. But more characteristically, he is a poet whose mission is to fire the imagination of a whole people. He becomes an eye and a voice to, of, and for his people, finally embracing the kind of death which comes only to the brave, who aspire and attain to the condition of life in death, as it were. In a way, he resembles Christ in his deathless love, for like Christ, he is singled out for crucifixion, the cross being his crown. While the heroism of Bakha, Bhikhu, Lal Singh, or Gauri is tinged with an inward darkness which struggles to externalize itself in action, that of Maqbool Sherwani has the glow and radiance of unrepressed joy. It springs from unbounded love for his country and his people. Maqbool has no choice other than
fighting the monsters and dying in the process. He even challenges religion and God if they are used for evil purposes: "But is there an Allah? Yessuh Massih was aa real person and suffered for mankind was crucified." Magbool accepts the reality of Christ for the very human attributes he represents, not his divinity. As against this, there is the false religiosity of the barbarians who have no qualms of conscience in killing the innocent and in perpetuating fresh acts of carnal outrage and plunder. Their prayer before the Almighty with automatic gestures and nuances has absolutely no meaning. Ahmed Shah, the lawyer, speaks the language of the raiders when he says:

"In order to destroy anarchy", thund'red Ahmed Shah, pale in the face, "we will also resort to anarchy and violence. I believe in reasoning with intelligent men, not with fools! I want union with Pakistan. ... I believe in a Central Muslim State, which will be a counter to communism in the north and the Bania Hindu Raj in the south. ... And we can connect up with our brethren in the Middle East and revive the glory of ancient Islamic democracy in a world ridden with belief! The poet Iqbal himself preached this. How should the village idiot pretending to be a poet, know the intricacies of our design, the concept of Muslim federation!"


Maqbool Sherwani's breathtaking adventures and escapades form the dramatic center of the novel. He not only opposes the hard, communal line with all the resources at his command; he also asserts his burning patriotism during his dialogue with Khurshid Aanwar, the commander of the invading troops:

"You are not God!" challenged Maqbool, desperate like an animal at bay and boiling with a violent inner fury.

"No, but listen - I give you a choice: You can have as honorable a place in the brotherhood of Islam as Ghulam Jilani and Ahmed Shah here. Or you will be handed over to our forces to meet the justice due to spies and traitors!"

"I am neither spy nor traitor! I put Kashmir above everything. I have some principles."\(^{109}\)

Later, Maqbool tells Begum Jilani: "When death is opposed to life, then life must oppose death. I know there will be much bloodshed and ruin in this way, but the urge for freedom cannot be suppressed."\(^{110}\) As he is talking, the house is surrounded by the enemy, and he manages to escape anyhow through the old strategem of using a woman's veil. He rushes home to see his family in this hour of crisis. His meeting with Noor, his sister, is tense and poignant. His

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\(^{109}\) Ibid, p. 52.

\(^{110}\) Ibid, p. 57.
speech is punctuated with the accents of most intense poetry, as he tells her of his dreams and destinations:

"But", she said with her own small-voiced humour now that father was out of audible distance, "Your cup is full and overflowing."

"Oh, Saki", Maqbool repeated the hackneyed phrase of poetry, "Bring me a new hot cup of salt tea." He looked at her and began, "All the way to Srinagar I was obsessed by the thought of writing a poem on the terrors of death. But when I got there I saw so much of life that my fears fell away from me. It is a question of faith, of belief in ourselves, and in the struggle. And then we can hope to be free. ... We shall have to suffer, and suffer, but that is how men grow become men." 111

Maqbool is soon surrounded by the raiders in his own house, but he makes good his escape by scaling the roof. He runs into the fields but cannot go any farther since he is shot in the heels. Even at the moment, his mind is intent on the thought of those who will die after him:

Allah! Where was Allah? Why was he always against the innocents? There would be no salvation unless the religion

111. Ibid, p. 68.
of fate went by the board and the soul became alive. Noor's face was like a crumpled flower before his forehead - as he lay helpless! And his mother's drawn face, uglied by fear ... at the back of his head. But his father's face did not appear! Anyhow, how could God punish them so?

In the dark, cavernous hell of the prison, his mind reels back on the memories of the past. The present is unbearable, the future bleak and uncertain. He scribbles in his notebook: "My little sister, Noor, we shall not see each other."

A trial follows in which the conducts his own defense in a kind of broken language, transmitting emotion:

"Truth has no voice", he began by chewing the words in the bitter froth in his mouth to himself, so that his lips did not open and no voice could be heard, "only lies flourish for the while. I have no face, I have no speech. I cannot move you. This land which gave birth to me, this land which is like a poem to me - how shall I explain my love for it to you? From out of the valleys has arisen for centuries the anguish of torture. And we are trying to emerge from the oppression to liberate our mother because we know her each aching caress ... and you have come and fouled her and wounded her. How could any of us stand by and not protest against your cruelty."\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. 72
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, pp. 84-85
Ahmed Shah, the counsel, rejects his plea outright: "I demand immediate death for him. He is a self-confessed rebel! And he is unrepentant." He resists all temptations and embraces his martyrdom, the fitting crown for the brave. He is shot at twice, his body collapsing in a heap and blood gushing forth as from a fountain. Ahmed Shah orders that the word "traitor" be inscribed on his shirt with his blood. When the conquering Indian troops enter Bermuda the next day, they find Maqbool's body tied to a wooden pole. They search his pockets and find a letter addressed to Noor, his sister. The memorable words speak for themselves:

I have to write and tell you, so that you can tell everyone that I have never been anything but an aspirant to poetry. All my dreams will remain unfulfilled, because I am going to face death. But here, in our country, the most splendid deeds have been done by people, not because they were great in spirit, but because they could not suffer the tyrant's yoke, and they learned to obey their conscience. And conscience, however dim, is a great force, and is the real source of poetry ... In our beloved Kashmir today, no one can be human without listening to his conscience, and the orchestra of feeling without voices which is our landscape. And everyone who listens is being true to our heritage of

114. Ibid.
struggle. ... And with the certainty of death before me, I can renew my faith in life. I shall love life with the last drop of my blood. And I want you to cherish this love of life, because you are young and will understand this love. ... I kiss you tenderly on your forehead and on each of your big black eyes. 115

Maqbool Sherwani, however, is not a purely fictional character. That he was a patriot and poet who sacrificed his life for the sake of his country is a matter of common knowledge. Anand has chosen to magnify the image of his principal character in fictional terms. The haunting inwardness with which he dramatizes the ecstasy and anguish of Maqbool touches the level of the sublime. It is surely a difficult undertaking for the novelist. The author runs the risk of either idealizing his character or of presenting a pale shadow of actuality. It is to Anand's credit that his hero emerges as a credible human figure. Even the minor characters seem convincing and lifelike. The theme of the novel is far too sublime and noble to admit of abstract, allegorical figures.

Death of a Hero is truly an epic of modern India, covering events which are fresh in national memory. But the novel's real thrust lies in an intensely poetic, if also sad, appeal which gives it the status of a tragedy.

115. Ibid, pp. 92-94.
In all his novels he appears as a social critic. The society he has seen and observed is the field of his work. Thus the problems, economic, social and political have directly and overwhelmingly influenced the art of Mulk Raj Anand. In the most direct, open and obtrusive manner he has dealt with these problems in his various novels.