CHAPTER 4

NOVELS OF MISERIES

This chapter discusses Anand's first three, and perhaps his most famous, novels, (Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936) and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937), which deal with the miseries of the poor and their failure to get out of them. Regarding how these novels came to be written Anand observes:

'I remember that I began to dream of writing about the poorest of the poor whom I had known ...' 1.

It was as though the underdog whom he had intimately known, had become the passion of Anand's heart, and was struggling within him to find expression in his writing. Anand confesses:

'I could not, of course, sense the suffering of the poor directly because I had always been comparatively better off. No, mine was a secondary humiliation, the humiliation of seeing other people suffer. I do not know to what extent envy of the rich on my part was disguising itself as a hunger for social justice. Perhaps there was an element of this. Also the inadequacies of our life in India may have contributed something to my pre-occupation. But I do not apologize for this because it is not easy in the face of such wretchedness and misery as I had seen in India to believe that material happiness and well-being had no connection with real happiness and the desire for beauty. So I sought to recreate my life through my memories of India in which I grew up, with a view to rediscovering the vanities, the vapidities, the conceits and the perplexities with which I had grown
up, indifferent to the lives of the people around me. I felt guilty, for needless suffering was no matter for complacent pride or gratitude.

In these three novels the central characters are conceived as 'negative-heroes' who evoke a sense of pity because of their innocence, and inability to fight against the suffering inflicted upon them by the society. Quite often, they are even denied the right to live as human beings. Speaking of Bakha Anand says:

'The tragedy of my hero lay in the fact that he was never allowed to attain anything near the potential of his qualities of manhood.'

This is equally true of Munoo who is condemned by the iniquitous system to remain small, abject and drab, despite the potentialities in his make-up. The peasant in Two Leaves and a Bud succumbs to fatalism, but he is not without tenderness. These three novels present a comprehensive picture of exploitation of the poor who are defenceless, and the tyranny of the feudal and colonial systems.

I

UNTOUCHABLE

This 'little classic' which had to undergo severe and prolonged throes, finally appeared in 1935. Commenting on the genesis of this novel the author says:
The book poured out like hot lava from the volcano of my crazed imagination, during a long weekend. I remember that I had to do finger exercises in order to ease the strain on my right hand. And I must have slept only six hours in three nights while writing this drama. And even during those six hours, I kept on dreaming about several strains in the central character of Bakha, almost as though I was moulding his personality and transmuting it from actuality into the hero of nightmare. 1.

The novel embodies its creator's deep concern and profound love for the underdogs of the Indian social structure. In 'The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie' Anand recalls a particular incident revealing Bakha's kindly nature which urged him to write down the story of his intense experience:

'...The fact that he carried me home when I had been hit by a stone thrown by Ram Charan, the dhobi boy, without caring about what my mother would say about his having polluted me by his touch, was one of the many instances of his love for physically weaker people. And I acquired the appreciation about his being a 'noble savage', a fundamental character whose greatness lay in his weakness - which appeared in his docility, even in his abjectness to which he was forced. And in view of this, I developed a guilt about him which compelled appeasement.' 2

Apart from his reading of Rousseau's idea of the 'noble savage' and Arthur Rimbaud's A Season in Hell, as well as Picasso's pictures of the 'Blue and Pink Periods', the works which influenced him most in writing this novel were; Gorki's
Creatures that Once Were Men (1901) and The Lower Depths (1902) and Joyce's Ulysses. Like Gorki he picked up his hero from the lowest dregs of humanity and like Joyce, he dramatised the events of a single day in the life of Bakha. In 1932 while reading Gandhiji's Young India he was impressed by the Mahatama's genuine feeling for the outcasts as revealed in the narrative about a sweeper called Uka. He decided to meet the Mahatma in his Ashram and read out his novel to him. Another incident that had fired his imagination against untouchability occurred on the P. & O. boat. The British passengers, in particular the Assam tea planters, treated Anand and other Indians with contempt! This made him realize for the first time, what it was like to be an untouchable. But he was amused to see that the Maharaja of Alwar who was travelling first class in the same boat, regarded all whites as untouchables, and refused to shake hands with them except with white gloves on.

During that voyage itself he began revising the book with increased indignation.

In the Sabermati Ashram, Anand took a vow to clean latrines once a week, not to touch liquor or look at women with desire as long as he stayed in the Ashram. Here he re-drafted his novel with love as its main motif. The symbolic act of cleaning latrines made a deep impression on him. He had learnt the gospel of dirty hands in Europe and by making Bakha remove the dung he wanted to show that it was no better or worse than any other work. Anand had begun to consider work as 'worship' and all labour as conducive to creativity.
This point of view makes him say, 'I could see that the Godlike body of Bakha had been matured by the exercise of his muscles as much as by his sensitiveness to the epic poem of Waris Shah. I began to prognosticate that human being can achieve importance to the growth of body-soul through cultivation of the whole personality.' In moulding the character of Bakha Anand was greatly influenced by Gandhi. He observes, 

'I am sure, however, the warmth towards Bakha, which has made this character lovable to many people may to some extent, have emerged from my warmth towards the person of Gandhi.'

The book, after having been rejected by nineteen British publishers, finally found its way to Wishart Books Ltd., who agreed to publish if Forster would write a preface to it, protecting it from being called dirty. And Forster did provide the most impressive preface: To give a sample of it:

'... the book seems to me indescribably clean and I hesitate for words in which this can be conveyed. Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution, it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it.'

Soon after its publication, the novel gained immense popularity and was translated into a score of world languages. Most critics agree that Untouchable is Anand's most consummate work.
Bakha, the central figure of the novel, is a re-creation of a childhood playmate who excelled in games, and despite his illiteracy could recite whole cantos of Waris Shah's Heer-Ranjha. Anand has successfully revealed the contradiction between Bakha's inherent qualities, and the depths of degradation into which he was condemned to sink because of his birth.

The novel is an absorbing study of a sweeper boy who is fed up with the uncongeniality of his home and its environment and his status as a sweeper. At first Bakha wants to ape the Tommies who happen to be the first to treat him as a human being.

In creating his character Anand had a special advantage about which Forster rightly remarks:

'No European, however, sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha because he would not have known enough about his troubles, and no untouchable could have written the book because he would have been involved in indignation and self-pity.'

Anand could maintain the necessary detachment in his novels, so essential for creative writing, because he wrote about people who did not belong to his own caste or class. Although untouchability has in our own time, lost much of the force, it still remains a potent religious and social problem. Even if this social evil is totally effaced from the surface of our country, the novel's significance will never diminish,
and it will always remain a powerful portrayal, of 'man's cruelty to man'.

The novel opens on a chill autumn morning with Bakha, a young lad of eighteen, strong and able-bodied, 'the child of modern India,' as Anand, symbolically calls him, is fretting and cogitating over the unsuitability of his home because he has had a glimpse of English life and manners while working in the latrines at the barracks of the Tommies. Bakha is prepared to sacrifice a good many comforts for the sake of what he calls 'fashun'. To rise above his humble status, and to distinguish himself from other sweepers he is prepared to bear the inclemency of the cold nig nights with an old blanket given as a gift by some British or Indian soldier. Queer thoughts rage in Bakha's mind as he still lies in the bed. He longs for English clothes in order to look like a sahib. But when the fantasy breaks down, a stark realization dawns upon him: And he knew, of course, of course, except for his English clothes there was nothing English in his life.' His very impulse and endeavour to distinguish himself from the rest of his community make him conspicuous and earn him the envy of his friends in the outcaste colony. His father's abusive reprimand, 'Get up, Ohe you Bakhya, Ohe you son of a pig', hurts his sophisticated nature. He feels that his father has no right to abuse him when he is doing all the work. There comes to him a recollection of his dead mother when he
has to forgo the luxury of the hot tea every morning. Since Bakha belongs to the world of his 'English clothes and 'Red-lamp' cigarettes with which his mother had no connection, he does not experience any intensity of sorrow. Anand has breathed into her affection, kindness and generosity associated with motherhood.

He often thought of his mother, the small, dark figure, swathed simply in a tunic, a pair of baggy trousers and an apron, crouching as she went about cooking and cleaning the home, a bit too old-fashioned for his then already growing modern tastes, Indian to the core and sometimes uncomfortably so (as she did not like his affecting European clothes), but so loving, so good, and withal generous, giving, always giving, mother, giver of life, Mahalakshmi. 8

The passage indicates Anand's deep love for his own mother.

His reverie broken, Bakha is back at work cleaning latrines. He shows rare skill and dexterity in his dirty job, managing to keep himself comparatively clean. His physical energy is simply marvellous.

He worked away earnestly, quickly, without loss of effort. Brisk, yet steady, his capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like constant water from a natural spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like glass. He must have had immense pent-up resources lying deep in his body, for he rushed along with considerable skill and alacrity from one doorless latrine to another, cleaning, brushing, pouring phenoil. 9
Bakha draws sympathy and admiration even from a casual onlooker who is led to remark:

'A bit superior to his job; not the kind of man who ought to be doing this.'

After finishing the second round of his duty Bakha returns home thirsty, only to find that there is no water in the pitcher. Sohini goes to the caste-well to fetch water while Bakha surveys the only English style item, a chair, he has so far secured as a partial fulfilment of his desire to live like an Englishman.

Havildar Charat Singh, impressed by Bakha's skill and ability promises to give him a new hockey stick. This happy news lessens the sense of misery caused by the nature of his work.

Although Bakha appears ridiculous in his slavish emulation of the Tommies as he sturts about in artillery boots, discarded trousers, puttees, breeches and regulation overcoat, with a 'Red Lamp' cigarette between his lips, he is only following the practice of imitating the Tommies common among children of pre-independent India. It also shows his dislike and dissatisfaction with the degraded life of his living. In Bakha's rejection of the few homely comforts for the sake of 'fashun' lies the undercurrent of the author's censure of his hero.

Although our sacred scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, consistently teach us to treat all human beings as equals, the Hindus have evolved a vicious caste-system in which a large section of people are branded as untouchables, and are condemned to perpetual humiliating treatment. What is most agonising about their lives is that they are at the mercy of 'Caste-Hindus' even
for the essential requirements of everyday life.

To return to Sohini, problems such as 'how a round base can be adjusted on a round top, how a sphere can rest on a sphere', are of no significance to her. She balances a vessel on her head and runs towards the caste-well to fetch water. Her physical charm is no less admirable than her skill and devotion to duty. Anand gives almost a photographic representation of her beauty:

' She had a sylph like form, not thin but full-bodied within the limits of her graceful frame, well-rounded on the hips with an arched narrow waist from which descended the folds of her salwars and above which were her full, round, globular breasts, jerking slightly for lack of bodice, under her transparent muslin shirt.' 12

Dr. Saros Cowasjee sees in this portrayal of Sohini the reproduction of the sculptured images of Konark and Khajuraho, but laments that she was condemned by birth to be an outcaste and suffer mortification. In Bakha's suppressed passion for his sister lies the natural weakness of human male for the youth ful charms of a woman.

The plight of the outcastes at the well awaiting the mercy of some one is indeed shocking

' They crowded round the well, congested the space below its high brick-platform, morning, noon and night, joining their hands in servile humility to every passerby; cursing their fate and bemoaning their lot, if they were refused the help they wanted;
praying beseeching and blessing, if some generous soul condescended to listen to them, or help them. If a hypocrite like Pt. Kali Nath lends a helping hand to these outcastes, it is not because there is any inherent goodness in him but only because he feels that the exercise at the well might do some good to his chronic constipation, or that, he may quench the thirst of his lascivious eyes for a pretty face. Attracted by the beauty of Sohini, he fills her pitcher first remarking falsely:

'You have been patient and the reward of patience, say the holy books, is supreme.'

The real miseries of Bakha begin when on that fateful day he sets out for the city to sweep the street for his father. The essential jollity of his nature is brought out by means of a few dexterous strokes when he appears in the sun-shine from the dark and gloomy world of the outcaste colony, where among its inhabitants only silence, the silence of death fighting for life prevailed,' with his basket under one arm, his broom under the other and in his heart a song as happy as the lark's.

The sun imagery figures prominently in the novel, perhaps because the novelist wants to contrast life with death — in-life to which the untouchables are condemned. The sun represents the potentiality of life, and is a key symbol in the novel:

'He looked up at the sun. He caught the full force of its glare, and was dazed. He stood lost for a moment confused in the shimmering rays, feeling
as though there was nothing but the sun, the sun, the sun, everywhere, in him, on him, before him, and behind him. It was a pleasant sensation despite of the disconcerting suddenness with which it had engulfed him. He suspended, as it were, in a region of buoyant tenderness and hummed a tune. 16

Bakha's stepping into the world of sun-shine is symbolic of his struggle to get out of his miserable plight, to overcome the barrier of caste and to live a life of joy and equality.

His desire for a respectable life is further expressed in his instinct 'to learn to read and write'. And it is this feeling that again distinguishes him from the rest of his brotherhood, including his younger brother Rakha and his father Lakha.

As he proceeds, he sees a corpse which reminds him of his mother's saying: 'It is lucky to see a dead body when one is out in the street.' 17 But it proves otherwise. Bakha's emotional crisis reaches its climax when in this town of Buland Shahar he receives a series of shocks which bring him to an awareness of his condemned status as a sweeper. First, he receives the Red Lamp cigarette - flung at him as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing round the corner of his shop. Bearing this affront patiently, and maintaining his joyous mood, Bakha hesitantly purchases four annas worth of Jalebis. Enjoying them he moves ahead looking at the sign boards. Absorbed in his own pleasures, he unconsciously touches a Hindu merchant. This mistake of Bakha is potent enough to ignite the explosive caste prejudices. The merchant starts cursing and abusing Bakha bitterly.
'Do you know, you have touched me and defiled me, cock-eyed son of a bow-legged scorpion! ... Swine dog, why didn't you shout and warn me of your approach.' 18

The sudden and torrential abuses of the merchant arrest Bakha's movement. He is overtaken by fear and embarrassment. His awareness of his depraved status in society, now almost paralyses him:

'Bakha stood still, with his hands joined, though he dared to lift his forehead, perspiring and knotted with its hopeless and futile expression of meekness.' 19

The dread of having committed some grievous sin seizes Bakha's heart and smothers his speech. Through gestures alone and explicit innocence on his face, he begs the pardon of the merchant. But this appears to have no effect. Bakha finds himself in an awkward situation surrounded by an abusive crowd. Even the children who are supposed to be meek and innocent, taking advantage of the occasion, do not fail to abuse the innocent Bakha:

'Ohe, son of a dog! Now tell us how do you feel.
You who used to beat us.' 20

These privileged children unknowingly complicate matters for him.

Bakha evinces a strong will to explode the vicious myth, but years of suppression saps his vitality:

'His first impulse was to run, just to shoot across the throng, away, away, away, far away from the torment. But then he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulder would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton like bodies
of the onlookers, but a moral one.\textsuperscript{21} Anand seems to convey that the moral bondage imposed by society is more powerful than mere physical prowess.

Bakha has to endure 'an endless age of woe and suffering' because of his low birth. The merchant \textsuperscript{2} deals a sharp, clear slap on Bakha's face, and disappears into the street nearby. Bakha wishes to retaliate but his tormentor is nowhere to be seen. This utter humiliation, as well as the sympathy shown by the Muhammadan tonga-wala, draw profuse tears from his eyes. He wonders why he, his father, and other untouchables are constantly abused for no fault of theirs. The answer comes to him naturally enough, and along with it the abhorrence for his job:

"They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too. That's why I came here. I was tired of working on the latrines everyday. That's why they don't touch us, the high-castes."\textsuperscript{22}

The word 'untouchable' reverberates in his mind and the awareness of his pitiable plight dawns upon him. But Bakha is optimistic about a better order of things which may improve his lot. With hope in his heart, Bakha moves ahead.

The most dramatic episode in the novel is Bakha's visit to the temple to sweep the courtyard. His inner conflicts, helplessness, despair, blighted hopes and agony are delineated so realistically that he gains an individuality of his own and takes charge of the narrative. His dormant religious instincts are
aroused by the rhythm of the morning service which is going on in the temple. To have a full view of the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon placed at different places in the temple, Bakha has to muster all the strength of his soul and ascend the steps which terrify him. He mounts the first two steps as one under a spell, but suddenly conscious of his own degraded position, retreats with equal haste to collect the litter. The more sacred a thing is, the greater it is a source of fear to Bakha. Passing through a series of humiliating experiences, Bakha has now become fully conscious of his 'evil' influence and dreads everything that comes his way. Describing his tortured mind Anand says:

'The temple stood challenging before him, ' and then it ' seemed to advance towards him like a monster, and to envelop him.'

But the strength of his will reasserts itself and with a sudden onslaught he had captured five steps of the fifteen that led to the door of the temple. The word 'onslaught' makes the temple a dreadful monster advancing to efface his existence. The desire to break the barrier of caste is supreme in Bakha's mind but the age-long suppression has made him weak and fearful. A subsequent impulse almost places him at the threshold of the temple door, from where he gets a clear view of the sanctuary. Bakha's sensitive heart enthusiastically responds to the 'Arti' being sung in chorus by the throng. The melody of the hymn moves him profoundly and lifts him to the
mood of ecstasy:

'His blood had coursed along the balanced melodic line to the final note of strength with such sheer vigour that his hands joined unconsciously and his head hung in the worship of the unknown god.'

His reverie is broken by the shouts of 'Polluted, Polluted' uttered by the temple priest. The land beneath his feet seems to slide away. Bakha is greeted by the congregation with abuses and curses for defiling the temple and the morning service. To Bakha, however, there appears to be nothing more dreadful than the sound of the word 'polluted'. Soon he sees the figure of a woman whom he recognises to be Sohini. This baffles his understanding first, but later he comes to know about the priest's immoral advances towards her. Bakha is gripped with uncontrollable rage. Grinding his teeth he bursts out, 'Brahmin dog! I will go and kill him'. But he is checked by Sohini. Bakha is no longer a vanquished outcaste. The cowardly 'twice borns' flee in terror seeing Bakha taking long strides towards them. If only Sohini had not restrained him, he would have given them a git of his mind. The hypocrisy of the Brahmins and other caste-people comes under constant fire in this novel. Every detail in this scene is perfect and reminds one of Forster's Marabar Caves. Bakha's failure to seize the opportunity for direct action against his oppressors is consistent with his generally submissive and diffident character.
Anand wants to show that Bakha, though he is a superb specimen of humanity 'rising like a tiger at bay,' is a tiger caged by the age-long conventions. With a smouldering fire in his heart, he goes to beg food of the housewives in the town, for he knows that when he returns home his father's first demand would be for it.

Hardly has Bakha recovered from one shattering shock in the morning, when he receives another which completely unnerves him. Anand assails the superstitious women who gladly give anything to a false sadhu but grudge a 'roti' or two to a sweeper. Bakha receives small pieces of thin 'roti' thrown to him from the fourth storey of a house along with abuses for defiling it. Here Anand counterbalances the misery of Bakha with a flow of sympathetic words from another woman who says: 'My child, you shouldn't sit on people's doorsteps like this.' 25

The dark and dirty conditions in which Bakha and his family live enhance the miseries of Bakha. Anand, in very compact phrases pinpoints the subhuman existence of the out castes:

'Sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene had lost all meaning for them.' 26

Though there is little hope for Bakha to get out of his present sufferings, he derives solace from his pitiable dream:

'There appeared before him the vague form of Bakha clad in a superior military uniform, cleaning the commodes of the sahibs in the British barracks.' 27
Bakha is tortured by the contrast between his own degraded life and the life of 'splendours' he has seen in the British barracks. The desire to live like the Tommies makes him hate everything, his home, his street, his town. Bakha is struggling for emancipation from his present status and having grown out of his native shoes into ammunition boots and with other fashionable items of dress he had built up a new world, which was his heaven, if for nothing else, because it represented a change from the old ossified order and stagnant pools of the lane near which he was born. 28

Since no other character in the novel, save Bakha, appears to rebel against the miserable life of the untouchables, he cannot be called the spokesman of the outcastes. Bakha is no fatalist as others of his tribe are, and has a sensitive enough mind to probe into the high-caste Hindus' hatred for the untouchables. They think we are mere dirt because we can their dirt. 29

There is a fundamental difference between Bakha and his father Lakha. Whereas one shows the will to retaliate for the wrongs done to him, the other embodies the age-long servility inherited from his ancestors. In response to Bakha's complaint about the ill-treatment from the high-caste people, Lakha says: '... They are our masters, we must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind.' 30 He also tells Bakha how as a child he had nearly died for want of medical attention. As an untouchable he could not get the required medicines. Ultimately
the Hakim took pity and came to his house to cure Bakha. Rakha, the brother of Bakha, is again a true representative of the outcasts. His clean shaven head, his feet dragging a pair of old ammunition boots laceless and noisy and too big for him, his ever running nose, his dirty face on which flies congregated to taste the saliva on the corners of his lips, make a living portrait of an outcaste. Bakha and Sohini stand in sharp contrast to Lakha and Rakha. They represent the two different aspects of human nature, one struggling to effect a change, and the other accepting the 'status-quo' without murmur.

The midday heralds for Bakha many happy incidents. The kind treatment Havildar Charat Singh accords Bakha by giving him tea and asking him to bring live-coal for his hooka, puzzles him. He begins to think that the Havildar might have forgotten that he is a sweeper. But Babu Char Singh does not make any distinction between Bakha and himself. The warm sun-shine of the afternoon is quite in tune with Bakha's own happiness. The Havildar's gift of a new hockey stick fills him with joy and gratitude. His heart has become a nest of singing birds. This rare and unexpected favour shown to Bakha makes him overwhelmingly grateful.

He was grateful, grateful, haltingly grateful, haltingly grateful, stumblingly grateful, so grateful that he did not know how he could walk the ten yards to the corner to be out of the sight of his benevolent and generous host. The whole atmosphere was charged with
embarrassment. He felt uncomfortable as he walked away ...\textsuperscript{31}

Notwithstanding his joy Bakha's mind is full of doubt and fear. Was it some mistake due to which he received such a privilege? Would he have to return it? But another thought resolves the conflict:

'I am mad to think that he was forgetful. So kind a person, and I think this about him. I am a pig to do that.' \textsuperscript{32}

What M.E. Derrett has to say on this incident is worth quoting:

'Notice the analysis of the states of mind of the young boy, overwhelmed by that rare thing, kindness; full of youthful energy, overcome by the joy of possession, afraid as only one with few possessions could be of possible loss or injury to it, incredulous of the whole quick succession of events, and in dread of the fearful possibility of some mistake. The author's identity with his character seems complete, his humanity communicates itself.' \textsuperscript{33}

In the hockey match that evening, between the boys of 31st Punjabis and those of the 38th Dogras, Bakha playing for the latter, scores a goal. The little boy who had taken the initiative in organizing the game is not allowed to play for fear of being injured, and remains a spectator. The very first goal infuriates the captain of the 31st Punjabis, and a free fight between the two rival groups follows. The little boy is hurt by a stone thrown by Ramcharan, the dhobi boy. Because
of profuse bleeding from the injury in the head, the boy falls down unconscious. When Bakha, urged by his natural sympathy and kindness for the weak, carries the child to his mother, instead of gratitude, he is greeted with curses and abuses by the woman for defiling the boy and her house. Bakha is shaken by a sense of helplessness:

'I only get abuse and derision wherever I go. 'Pollution, Pollution,' I do nothing else but pollute people.'

When Bakha returns home with a heavy heart, he is berated and abused by both his father and younger brother for loitering and neglecting his duties. His cup of misery spills over. The smouldering rage ignited by this last undeserved abuse, sends Bakha away to the plain. He asks himself: What have I done to deserve all this?' The sun serves a dramatic purpose in the novel because the hero's progress is measured by the movement of the sun in the sky. The afternoon sun brings him near a possible solution:

'As he moved over the fringe of flat earth facing the plain, the rim of the upturned sky was taking on the gold and silver hues of the afternoon sun, and the world lay encircled in a ribbon of crimson. Here he slackened his pace, for it was here that he had felt the first glow of the early morning sun creeping into his bones. It was through this plain that he had gone out to the world, full of the spirit of adventure.'

Bakha unexpectedly meets Colonel Hutchinson of the
Salvation Army who tries to persuade him to adopt Christianity which observes no caste distinctions. But Bakha is baffled to learn from the missionary that Christ died only to save him. He is also given to understand that he must confess his sins. Bakha does not like the idea of being called a sinner for he has committed no sin that he can remember. He feels that the religion which was good enough for his forefathers is good enough for him. He follows the missionary to the Church not to listen to his sermon but to get a pair of trousers. The contemptuous attitude of the missionary's wife towards the natives, is in itself enough to prevent Bakha from accepting Christianity. The hateful words 'Bhangis and Chamars' stab his sensitive soul here also, and he concludes that, inspite of all the teachings of Christ, the English themselves have not been able to get rid of hatred. According to Haydn Moore Williams, Mr. Hutchinson and 'cruelly', his wife have been caricatured. But it would be wrong to think that there was any dearth of people like Hutchinson and his wife in the British days.

After rejecting the solution offered by the missionary, Bakha moves towards the Gol Bag where Gandhi is to speak on untouchability. The Mahatama's appearance in the novel is significant as it serves two important purposes. In the first place it perhaps enables Anand to pay his debt to this great soul, and secondly it helps him to point out the bad habits and customs of the untouchables, in the words of the Mahatama himself.

Surrounded by flags, and amidst shouts of devotion, Mahatama
Gandhi begins to exhort the people:

'I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism.'

Bakha is pleased to hear this. 'Untouchables,' continues the Mahatama, 'should realize that they are cleaning the Hindu society. They have therefore, to purify their lives, they should cultivate the habits of cleanliness ... some of them, they are addicted to the habit of drinking and gambling which they must get rid of.' He further asks them to cease to accept the leavings from the plates of 'high-caste' Hindus— they should receive only sound and good grain and not rotten grain, and that too, only when it is courteously offered. This disturbs Bakha very much because if the leavings and the grain given contumaciously are refused, the untouchables are sure to die of starvation.

The final words of the Mahatama: 'Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow!' move him deeply. But Bakha arrives no nearer to the solution he is seeking because of a Gandhi's speech. However, by equaling social evil like untouchability with an important religious issue, Gandhi invests untouchability with seriousness and magnitude as a problem. This is an uncanny way of the Mahatama, reaching the hearts of the people and winning them over. Bakha is no exception.

The third solution, which appears to be the one nearest to his heart, is offered by a poet, Iqbal Nath Sarshar. He holds that caste should be determined by the profession of a man and not
by his birth. When sweepers change their professions, they will no longer remain untouchables. They should accept the machines which I clean the dung without any one to handle it flush system. This catches his fancy, but till the machines come he has to find consolation in Gandhi's teachings. He wishes he could meet the poet and know something more about the machines. The author maintains absolute objectivity by making his hero find out the solution to his problem himself. He is to what he says in 'The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie', I believe in posing the question rather than answering it. 38

Forster has in his preface to the book defended the last scene as a necessary climax probably anticipating some of the adverse criticism. He observes:

'Some readers may find this closing section of the book too voluble and sophisticated, in comparison with clear observation which has preceded it, but it is an integral part of the author's scheme. It is the necessary climax and, it has mounted up with triple effect. Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now of the Mahatama, now of the machine. His Indian day is over and the next day will be like it, but on the surface of the earth if not in the depths of the sky, a change is at hand. 39

Among the reviewers who could not agree with Forster are those of The Evening News who simply called the conclusion
' unconvincing', of the *Star* who thought it 'so simple as to seem almost comic' and of the *Glasgow Herald* who said: 'It is an ending that might have been dispensed with. ' Anand has not given any specific solution to Bakha's problem, and has only suggested the possibilities. Bakha has to make his own choice.

Dr. Krishna Nandan Sinha views the book as an exquisite piece of sustained poetic realism:

'Untouchable then, is a phenomenal success as species of realistic fiction which yet retains the strong overtones of the universal ... Untouchable, all in all is a brilliant example sustained poetic realism. Although it employs a low mimetic form of fiction, it also has esoteric poetic flights and a breadth of metaphor uncommon to such a form.'

Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar compares Anand with Dickens for the pageantry Anand has presented in his book and his exposition of the evils of the orthodox Hindu society:

'Untouchable, strikes us as the picture of a place of a of a society, and of certain persons not easily to be forgotten: a picture that is also an indictment of the evils, Anand (it must be conceded) has been effective as Dickens himself.'

Professor C.D. Narasimaih speaks of the lasting value of the novel as a human document:

'The book will remain a human document long after untouchability as a social evil calling for a reformer's tractate has ceased to be a problem of the Hindu society.'
Dr. M.K. Naik observes:

'In Untouchable Anand's fictional genius sprang up fully armed like Pallas Athene from the head of Jove.' A3

About Anand's achievement R.T. Robertson remarks:

'The achievement of Anand in his first novel is not the fierce preaching of a message solely for his own society but the enunciation of an archetype of the colonial condition and of its resolution in a harmonising of the rebellious individual into his own and only culture.' A4
II

Coolie

Anand's second novel Coolie, published in 1936, is more ambitious and comprehensive, as it encompasses a broader area of human experience than his first. Regarding its origin Saros Cowasjee observes:

'In an unpublished article 'Musings on Munoo', Anand tells us that he was provoked into writing this novel by the partiality shown by Bonamy Dobree, T.S. Fliot and K.de B. Codrington to Kipling's hero Kim.'

However, it must be added that the inspiration and encouragement which Anand derived from Herbert Read, Eric Gill, John Strachey and Philip Henderson, also went a long way in shaping the novel in its present form.

Munoo, the central character of this novel, is a reproduction of Anand's play-mate who used to work in a pickle factory in Amritsar. He is an archetypal figure, frail and defenceless, in a relentless hostile world. Romantic in conception, Munoo is portrayed as a victim rather than as a rebel, and is therefore, capable of arousing pity and rising to tragic heights.

The novel, which is highly unified in structure, narrates in a picaresque manner, the adventures of Munoo, an innocent hill-boy orphaned at birth. The novelist traces the growth of his hero's consciousness in five stages and at five places; as a vivacious, innocent, dispossessed peasant boy in the village
of Bilaspur in the Kangra hills; as a virtual slave in the household of Babu Nath Ram in Shan Nagar, a town below the hills; as a worker in a small primitive pickle factory, and as a coolie fighting for work in Deulatpur, a bigger city for away from the hills; as an overworked mill labourer in the British owned George White Cotton Mills in Bombay, and finally as a diseased and exhausted house-servant and Rickshaw-Puller in the employ of a nymphomaniac Eurasian, Mrs. Mainwaring in Simla, among the hills once again. The action spreads a little over a year, beginning when Munoo is fourteen and ending with his death in his sixteenth year. The characters are diverse and are taken from every walk of life. They are both English and native, rich and poor, cruel and kind, and eccentric and rational. The scenes are depicted on a very wide canvas. Sociological concern is no longer limited to caste (as in Untouchable), but to broader issues like poverty, exploitation, corruption, feudalism and colonialism. Munoo resembles Bakha in his passivity and sensitiveness, his humiliation and suffering, his love of machines, his desire to emulate Englishman and their manners, and his impetuosity. But their fates are different. Bakha is hopeful until the end of a change in his status, whereas Munoo, in spite of all his potentialities dies aspiring for life. The theme of classical inevitability in the tragic structure of the novel, is not governed by super-human factors as in classical tragedies, but by heridity and environment. This brings it close to naturalistic writers like Zola and Dreiser.
The novel opens with the shrill crescendo of Grijri's abusive cries to which Munoo seems to be inured. The scene is set in the beautiful Kangra hills for which Anand has even to this day a deep fascination. The pastoral setting of Munoo's early home is brought out in the very opening scene:

'Munoo ohe, Munooa, oh Mundu! shouted Grijri from the verandah of a squat sequestered little mud hut, thatched with straw, which stood upon the edge of a hill about a hundred yards away from the village in the valley. 2 (a) And then again:

'And her gaze travelled beyond the mango-grove to the silver line of the river Beas, and roved angrily among the greenery of the ferns and weeds and bushes that spread on either side of the stream against the purple gleam of the low hills.' (b) Munoo is grazing his cattle on the banks of the beautiful river Beas which re-appears with idyllic charm and splendour in Seven Summers, Morning Face and Confession of a Lover. The barrenness of Grijri which is chiefly responsible for Munoo's ill-treatment at her hands, recalls the sterility of Anand's own sister-in-law who had accorded a similar treatment to him himself in his childhood.

It is not fate, but the brutality of a moneylender called Jai Singh, which is responsible for the miseries of Munoo's childhood. He has grabbed the five acres of land belonging to Munoo's father which was the only means of livelihood for the entire family.
Munoo is eventually compelled to abandon the comparatively benevolent and sheltered life of the village to earn a living for himself, as his cruel uncle does not like to support him any longer. Munoo dreams of a new and prosperous life for himself in the world outside, but contrary to his hopes, he is exploited, betrayed, and finally destroyed.

A bare-footed walk of ten miles along the burning pathway scalds Munoo's feet, but he ignores the inconvenience because of the prospects awaiting at the journey's end. Of all the novelties his eyes meet, he is attracted most by the railway engine. His early love for machines seems to be enhanced by this new wonder. There is contempt in Dayaram's remark that 'It is only the rustics in the villages who graze cattle and plough the land.' It is his vanity of being a servant of the British Government that makes him utter such derogatory remarks on peasants. Like the lost child of the story of the same title, Munoo knows that his desire to have ice-cream will not be fulfilled and suppresses it. His absorption with the dog-dolls results in near-collision with a bicycle rider and earns the abuses of his uncle. The sympathetic shopkeeper consoles Munoo: 'The proper way to treat abuse is to let it come in one ear and go out the other.' This, simple statement, reveals the wisdom of the heart which Anand emphasises so much in his writings.

Munoo's unending miseries begin with his employment in the house of a minor bank clerk, Babu Nathu Ram, who belongs to the middle class Indian society of 'social climbers'. His shrewish,
vindictive wife is much more harsh to Munoo than Munoo's own aunt had been. The curses and abuses she showers on her own daughter creates terror in Munoo's heart. He soon foresees the impending doom. Transgressing all norms of decency and propriety, this woman sends him on errands, the moment he arrives at her home, disregarding the explicit indications of fatigue and hunger on the boy's face. The contrast he notices between the treatment given to a new comer in the town, and in his own village, pains him so much that he weeps over his lot.

Although Munoo helps in cooking the food, he does not know who eats it and where. The irony is that the servants in such houses cannot share the food they prepare. Like outcastes they are fed on the remains. The treatment accorded to Munoo is no better. He is given a piece of stale 'Roti,' and a mosquito-infested corner to sleep in, and a ragged blanket to cover himself with. Not knowing where to respond to the call of nature, and unable to control himself any longer, Munoo rushes to the wall outside the house and sits down there. He is terror-stricken when he hears Bibiji calling him. When she actually discovers him she bursts out in fury:

'Vay, shameless, vulgar, stupid hill-boy! May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you die! May you fade away! We did not know we were taking on an animal in our employ, an utter brute, a savage.'

She is also worried about the possible damage to her 'family prestige.' What will the sahibs think who pass by our door every
morning and afternoon! The Babuji has his prestige to keep up with the sahibs." Anand ridicules the middle class Indian Babus who sacrifice all human values at the altar of servitude to the Sarkar. Munoo's reaction to Bibiji's curses for the innocent offence about which he had no control, is touchingly described.

"Munoo felt the blood rushing to his face. His brain seemed to be submerged in darkness. He wished he could disappear from the world somehow. For the first time in his life he felt ashamed to be seen relieving himself in the open."

But, Chota Babu, a handsome, well-built young man treats the entire incident humorously. He provides an interesting contrast to his insidious elder brother and malicious sister-in-law. Shiela too laughs at the uproar created by her parents.

Munoo is attracted by the gramaphone played by Chota Babu. He makes bold to enter the drawing room where he prances on all fours like a monkey to amuse Chota babu and Shiela. Bibiji cannot tolerate that a servant should play with and join the laughter of his superiors.

Munoo's growth from innocence to consciousness is very rapid. His self-will assert itself, as a reaction against Bibiji's ever cursing tongue. He denies having spoiled anything although he feels he is telling a lie. His curiosity is aroused by many things in the house, and when he asks about the safety razor, Chota Babu banteringly remarks: "If you will be good enough to go and bring me a towel ... I shall give you not a machine but a blade to cut your throat with."

Such good-natured
remarks bring out the open and generous nature of Dr. Premchand, and endear him to Munoo.

In spite of all his sufferings a faint ray of hope of betterment lingers on in his mind. But, as we shall see, it comes to nothing.

From his own uncle also Munoo gets scoldings instead of sympathy when he complains about the cruel treatment he is getting from Babu Nathuram and his wife. He aspires to be like Chota Babu and live a life of splendours. But due to the adversity of circumstances he becomes an ineffectual pawn in the chess-board of destiny. Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah closely observes the circumstances in which Munoo is placed and rightly remarks:

'In the circumstances, sheer survival must be looked upon as a triumph of the spirit, the very will to live must be reckoned as strength.'

Munoo's zest for life, his irrepressible curiosity and his warm-heartedness make him a lovable character.

The episode of the visit of a maladroit, bewildered, English Sahib to the house of Babu Nathuram, is a bitter attack on the incompetence of the ill-educated English Sahibs who assume a position of importance in India, as well as on their exploitation by of the helpless Indian people/creating a body of sycophants, consisting of the middle class Indian Babus. Munoo is instrumental in shattering Babu Nathuram's dreams of arriving at another mile-stone in social status. Munoo trips while bringing in tea,
the only thing Mr. England has agreed to take, after repeated requests from Babu Nathuram. The china is shattered into many pieces, Mr. England guesses the disaster. The entire edifice that Babu Nathuram had built up, by his servility is broken like the china.

Munoo is scolded and cursed by Bibiji for the failure of Babu Nathuram's plans. But Dr. Premchand, sympathising with Munoo, blames it on the fastidious taste of the Englishman, and the obsequious behaviour of his elder brother. It shows that only an unbiased mind can have a sound judgement.

Bibiji's curses and abuses 'seize Munoo's soul in a knot of fear'. However, Dr. Premchand's jokes revive him temporarily. But before the joy of his boyish spirit can return, Bibiji gives him a sharp, clear slap on his cheek which is supplemented by Nathuram's threats to kill him. Commenting on the deep stifling sorrow of the boy Anand says:

'It was not the first time that Munoo succumbed to sleep stifling his sobs and cries.'

After this incident Munoo wants to run away from his miserable existence as a servant in the house of Babu Nathuram and from the atmosphere surcharged with sharp abuses and constant bullying. Dayaram, who is hardened into cruelty 'by his love of money, fear of poverty and the sense of inferiority that his job as a peon in the bank gave him,' offers him no solace. On the other hand when Munoo demands food, new clothes and a pair of shoes from his salary, Dayaram throws him out in the street.
saying: 'I have neither sympathy nor food for you.'

Inspite of his extreme suffering Munoo is capable of asserting his individuality. Grinding his teeth in fury, with a heart replete with hatred for his hard-hearted uncle, he decides to run away. However, the fear of being caught and beaten subdues him and he returns to Babu Nathuram's. But he is burning with a desire to take revenge for his uncle's cruel treatment. 'He says to himself 'I will flay him alive. I will tear him to bits while he is asleep. I will murder him.'

His sojourn at Sham Nagar makes him realise that the poor constitute a much larger portion of the world than the rich. It is not caste but money that decides the status of a man. Munoo observes

'Whether there were more rich or more poor people, there seemed to be only two kinds of people in the world. Caste did not matter. 'I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Varma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The babus are like the sahib-logs, and all servants look alike; there must only be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor.'

Anand has endowed his hero with a kind of vivacity despite his miserable existence. His warm-heartedness and zest for life make him sometimes forget that he is a menial, and that he should not try to be the equal of his superiors. Munoo thus 'sweeping aside the barriers that separated him from his superiors
by the utter humaneness of his impulses, by sheer wantonness of his unconscious life-force. 12, bites the cheek of Shiela, Babu Nathuram's daughter like a money without any bad intention. But the Babu and his wife view this act through their own depraved natures, and beat Munoo. ' Like a whipped human who seeks escape, ' Munoo stows away to Daulatpur.

In the Sham Nagar episode, Anand attacks the exploitation of the poor by the well-to-do. The English also exploit the Indian Babus, infuse abject servility in them, give them titles of false prestige which lead them to look down upon their own country-men. The English thus degrade the very human nature of their subjects. These babus, who employ the poor Indians, ill-treat them and feed them on remains, and pay them so miserably that they cannot keep their body and soul together. At the same time they take-out the maximum possible work from these wretches.

At Daulatpur, Munoo no longer remains a 'wide-eyed fool' but learns to support himself and others. His understanding expands in proportion to the varied life with which he comes into contact. At Daulatpur, Munoo, takes shelter in the house of a generous pickle factory owner, Prabha, who has attained this status by starting as a coolie. His wife being childless, treats Munoo as her own son. His first satisfying meal he gets here. It was as Anand says, 'the most sumptuous meal he had eaten since the feast on the death anniversary of his father and mother, which his aunt had given three months before he left the hills.' 13
This initial happiness is soon destroyed by the iniquitous Ganpat who ill-treats and even abhors Munoo who has to work under appalling conditions in the dark and dingy, jam and pickle factory, where, "it seemed the wind of the heavens never visited this world, and the sun never entered it, except through the nail-holes and chinks and slits in the sheets, where it crept like snails." 14

In this scene Dr. S.C. Harrex not only sees the influence of Zola, but also the symbolism implied in it. He observes:

' The factory setting is Zolaist and intentionally symbolic: ' he descends into the inferno of the factory' (p. 98). Situated at the end of Cat Killers Lane, a narrow sordid little gully chuck full of rubbish which festered in the shade by the congested gutters' (p. 69) the factory is 'sunk like a pit in the bowels of the earth' (p. 71), it seemed the winds of the heavens never visited this world' (p. 72), this dark underworld full of the intense heat of blazing furnaces and the dense melodorous smell ... dust and ashes' (p. 94), One senses through this ambiguous imagery of death and damnation, and through the steam and stench of decayed fruits, that there is the paradisal world gone away, and this impression is reinforced by the raptilean undertones; by the references to 'a monstrous python with a flowing beard ... two snakes which had apparently died quarrelling ... reptile with a mouth at each end' (p. 95)

In such a setting Ganpat can be readily accepted as a kind of Satanic figure, a cruel fiend significantly referred to on most occasions as the goat face. We are given a two pronged sociological explanation of
his evil; he was born rich but ejected from his class. The allegorical innuendo might seem blasphemous to a devout Christian. 15

The factory workers, particularly the old, emaciated, and dim-eyed women, Maharaj and Bonga, the colossal and idiotic figures and the deaf and dumb coolies remind of Zola's portraits and provide the necessary pathos. This experience of Munoo is not also unlike Young David's experience in the wine-bottling factory.

Except Dr. Premchand, the town-folk we have so far met appear to be treacherous and avaricious. The feckless but generous Prabha, though a factory owner was originally a hill-man and a coolie. Ganpat who belongs to the city, is depraved and wicked.

Sir Todarmal, a Dickensian grotesque who emerges with considerable comic power 16 has become a man of importance because of his anti-national activities and loyalty to the Raj. He sets his son against Prabha, when the latter becomes bankrupt owing to the perfidy of Ganpat. Through the character of Dr. Morjari-bank Anand reveals the disdainful attitude of the Britishers towards the natives. Sir Todarmal, like babu Natharam, signifies the extreme servility and lickspittling of the higher middle class Indians.

Munoo loses all his natural hilarity in the presence of the goat-bearded loathsome Ganpat. But he finds solace in the company of other coolies. Anand wants to show that real comradeship can exist only among the coolies and labourers.
The only thing that relieved these fits of depression was the silent comradeship which existed between him and other coolies. 18

Munoo is tormented by the desire to grow up fast so that he can help others. This is reminiscent of Anand's own desire to grow up to be free from the bondage of the elders, when he was a child. It also contributes to the deep feeling of pity that is aroused at the end of the novel. The unfortunate boy is cut down before he is sixteen, with all his desires to grow up.

The grotesque pickle factory at Daulatpur, and the relentless George White Cotton Mills at Bombay, remind the readers of the initial scenes of Gorki's Mother. Through very telling phrases such as 'dark recesses of the subterranean cellars' Anand conveys the whole idea of the conditions in which the labourers worked in the factory. The terrifying presence of Ganpat is a source of abject misery to the workers, whereas in his absence 'there was peace on earth and good will among men.' 18

Owing to the obnoxious working conditions in the factory, Munoo falls ill and receives motherly affection and care from Prabhati. In her embrace he feels the budding of his adolescent love for her which is similar to the love he felt for Shieh. Munoo's increasing maturity as a lover, becomes evident for the first time in this scene. An artistic touch is given to this new development:

'A memory different from the recollection of his mother's embrace, yet like it, but with an extra element of reaching out, the unknown. A memory which
stretched from the innocent joy of a child's learning from one woman the need to know another, a memory of love travelling from faith, trust and care, along the curves of desire, into the wild freedom of a love which is natural, which acknowledges the urges of the heart, which seeks fulfilment, like the animals and which mocks at the subterfuges of religion and the limitations of morality.¹⁹

Prabha's inability to pay the loans he had raised during his partner's absence lands him in police custody. At this time his partner was away collecting dues with the evil intention of deceiving Prabha. Prabha returns home dejected and gloomy aching with fever caused by the merciless, unjust and inhuman flogging. Broken completely, not only by his bankruptcy but by the depravity of human nature, Prabha observes: 'I wish I were a coolie still and not in a business.'²⁰

Tulsi and Munoo go out in the night to sleep in the grain market so that they can earn a living for their benefactor in the morning. Nothing can be more miserable than the pitiable plight of the coolies who lie pressed against each other like corpses in the domain of the animals where the dung and the urine constantly emit an offensive odour, where the mosquitoes let loose their reign of terror and where the raised ends of the bullock-carts look like 'so many crucifix' foreboding eternal persecution of the struggling millions.

In the morning when the shops open the coolies swarm round the shops and beg 'Lalajis' for jobs. Opportunities for employment are so meagre, and the number of job seekers so great that the coolies cannot earn a subsistence wage. What Anand wrote four
decades ago is still true today. In fact it has an added relevance because of the growing unemployment among the educated classes.

Staggering under a heavy sack of grain, Munoo stumbles at the door-step inviting further angry curses from the shopkeepers. He is chased away from the market like a thief or a brigand. He stops in the shade of a big house to feel the cool breeze and collect himself. He thinks of Tulsi carrying the weight with a sigh: 'Lucky Tulsi! He will earn four annas today and I shall have nothing to take home to Prabha.' He is filled with bitterness and rage because of his frail body and rebukes himself: 'When I will grow up and be a strong man?' But the tragic fact is, that his desire to be a strong man is never fulfilled, and he dies a premature death. Yet his weak frame houses a strong will which cannot allow him to go home without having earned any money. He asks himself:

'Do I die or what? Get burnt up in a speck of ash and evaporate into complete emptiness? How is that I go on breathing? What is the separate thing under my skin which exists apart from things in my head.'

Prabha's deteriorating circumstances force him to take refuge in the hills. Leaning on the shoulders, Tulsi owing to extreme debility, Prabha, for the last time, surveys the whole house and finds nothing but the trunk and the bedding with which he had come to the city. All other things he had acquired later are gone. Prabha's case emphasises the great truth which we either forget, or dismiss as a cliche:

'It is as it should be. Man comes to this world naked
'and goes out of it naked and does not carry his goods away with him on his chest.' 24

Commenting on this statement Dr. Cowasjee remarks:

'In Prabha's simple homilies there is an indescribable power. This is because the author brings home to us—in a complex world—the familiar truths which we have either forgotten or dismissed as cliches. Though himself a Doctor of Philosophy, Anand early gave up metaphysical speculations for what he calls 'the wisdom of the heart'. And in this rather than in man's intellectual appreciations, lies human happiness and survival.' 25

For doing the job of a coolie in the railway station without a licence Munoo is manhandled by a policeman. But he resists and refuses to be cowed down like Prabha. He angrily asserts:

'I am not like Prabha who will let himself beaten. I shall die rather than let him beat me. I shall live up to the name of my race.' 26

Munoo wanders for some more time doing one job or the other until he befriends an elephant trainer from a circus from whom he learns about his company's proposed journey across the black waters from Bombay. This stirs his own secret love for Vilayat and its people:

'He will be going to Vilayat beyond the seas to where the sahib-logs come from...I cannot go there, anyway. I am only a coolie but I will go to Bombay. Probably I might earn enough money there to go beyond the black waters.' 27

With the help of the elephant-trainer he steals a ride in
the circus-special. Although he is apprehensive of the frustration of his plan, like a resolute lad that he is, 'he felt as most determined people feel when they have once conceived an idea, that the frustration of his plan would be death.'

He goes through the two thousand mile journey to Bombay under a 'merciless' and 'malevolent' sun. Munoo is full of gratitude towards the elephant driver who, during the journey, takes more care of him than his animal. In the face of ever increasing suffering, Munoo is capable of retaining his essential good nature and faith. He wonders:

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

To the naive mind of Munoo the railway train appears to be a wonderful invention which defies the vast earth and the vaster skies, as it moves on. As he alights in Bombay he grows paniccky because of the strangeness of the city, and the uncertainty he feels about his future. He is warned by the elephant driver: 'The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adams. You have to pay even for the breath you breathe. But you are a brave lad.'

Munoo marvels at the new wonders his eyes meet in this great city— a city of shocking contrasts. After seeing the rich in their palatial buildings and the poor in the streets begging for jobs and alms, Munoo, belonging as he does to the latter category, speculates over his own chances of survival in the city of his dreams. His fortuitous meeting with Hari acquaints
him with the squalor of the slums in which the poor bear the burden of their lives. As the cavalcade consisting of Hari, his wife, their two children and Munoo, moves ahead in search of a place to rest at night, Munoo happens to see a coolie who lay huddled, pillowing his head on his arms, shrinking into himself as if he were afraid to occupy too much space.\textsuperscript{31} This gives him the first great shock of this wonder city where coolies sleep in streets. The life for the poor here Munoo realizes, is no different from that of Daulatpur, except that it is more perplexing and sordid and miserable. The coolies, here sweat all day and get only pavements only for a few hours of repose at night. After a long search, Munoo and his friends spot a vacant place at some distance from a half naked woman who is wailing. When questioned, she tells Hari pointing to the spot they had found, in a voice smothered by sobs:

' My husband died there last night.'
' He has attained the release', said Hari.
' We will rest in his place.'\textsuperscript{32}

Hari evidently means that human existence in this world is a punishment and death a release. Commenting on the pathos and the significance inherent in such simple comments Professor Narasimhaiah says:

'I see in these simple sentences the wisdom of an old living culture which has sustained our peasantry through centuries of misery and manifesting itself now in an uprooted peasant in search of a factory job. Death has ceased to frighten the poor—they are past all fright; it is life that is a threat and death is a release as Hari puts it.'\textsuperscript{33}
In the congested street flanked by high mansions, Munoo experiences difficulty in breathing and wants to run away to some open place, but fearing he might disturb the half-asleep world, he restrains himself and awaits the dawn. Those who do not wake up early are awakened by the arm of the law. In the world of the poor even the little ones have to work hard to earn a living for the family. What a gulf between the rich and the poor! Is there no hope of a just society of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi? Hari brings out the unfortunate truth when he says: 'They should begin to earn their living, then only we can make both the ends meet.'

The ten mile journey of the cavalcade brings it to the gate of George White Cotton Mills where a Kabuliwalla stands as the symbol of tyranny. Jimmy Thomas, the foreman, personifies the British exploitation of the Indian labourers. He bargains with Hari about the pay and demands a monthly commission. Since Munoo has not heard of any such a thing, he resents it. But Hari says: 'Paying a commission to the foreman is a question of preservation.' The foreman has also erected small cottages to let to the coolies at an exorbitant rent. In the nearby market, the shopkeepers pounce upon the coolies as if they are their prey. Everyone who gets a chance tries to exploit the helpless and poor labourers. Munoo and his friends move to their prospective abode, only to find the hut a dark and dingy place, so small that neither Munoo nor Hari can stand erect, and the grass nourished by water has grown all over the floor. The dampness emits a fetid smell. Munoo
remembers with nostalgia his own mud-hut in the village which provided healthy living conditions.

Laxmi, the young wife of the aged Hari, embodies endurance and obedience, the fundamental traits of Indian womanhood. She relieves the reader's mental strain with the flashes of her beauty.

Inside the factory the workers have to toil like machines ceaselessly, from dawn to dusk. The midday break they get is a mockery of the very term 'leisure.'

Dr Harrex has to offer the following interpretation of the George White Cotton Mills scene:

'The mills are intended to symbolize the degrading domination and exploitation of the Indian proletariat by British imperialism. The labourers, including wives and children, work an eleven-hour day; factory conditions are barbaric, facilities and wages quite inadequate. Sir Reginald White, President of Company, the English foreman and the Pathan guards are ruthless parasites.

At this point in the narrative Anand invests the Machine with symbolic and thematic significance, drawing upon most of its literary attributes in the realist novel. Munoo's earlier manifestation of the wonder at the machine, his excitement at hearing a gramophone and seeing a 'steel bird'—are succeeded by terrifying and sinister experiences in industry. The ethical ambivalence of the machine becomes fully apparent: the machine's potential for the promotion of the common good, as envisaged by Munoo has been perverted by the self interest of the powerful few. The machine is the demon of
industrial inferno; man is its slave and not its master. The theme is conventional but Anand exploits it with telling effect.  

Munoo goes away to the hospital with his injured child. Munoo feels utterly lonely and thinks of himself as a bringer of misfortune and sorrow. Soon after his birth his parents died. He brought misfortune to Prabha and is now bringing ill-luck to Hari. He curses himself: ‘Why don’t I die? He even thinks his death will rid the world of an unlucky person. Munoo’s despair and frustration are powerfully described:

‘He felt torn, and hunger gnawed at his ribs like a rat, a big slimy rat, whose very sight was sickening. The demons out side him and in him crowded round his head, diffusing his thoughts as the collision of waves diffuse into froth. The tiny skiff of his soul tossed to and fro on the soft sunspeckled edges of this foam, as if it were threatened with extinction by an unforeseen storm.’

This is one of the finest passages in the novel which brings out the inner conflict and helplessness of Munoo, and in a wider sense the exploited masses, who are exposed to the remorseless injustices and cruelties of the world. But Munoo does not succumb easily to his miserable lot which he defines by the sheer force of his will power. He asserts: ‘I want to live, I want to know, I want to work...I shall grow up and be a man.’

Munoo witnesses the miserable plight of the poor who are callously neglected in the hospital. What to speak of human beings when even nature seems to punish them by inflicting more
miseries, by sweeping away their huts and belongings through torrential rains. As Hari and his family accompanied by Munoo emerge from the hospital, clouds begin to gather in the sky, and within no time there is fierce lightening, followed by dreadful thunder, and heavy rains. Anand gives a weird treatment to this natural phenomena in vigorous prose:

'And then there was a mad charge of wildly neighing horses, whose steel hoofs struck fire on the cobblestones of the heaven's surface as their riders, driving the shafts of their spears into their prey, caused large drops of rain, to fall like cold blood from the injured bodies of hunted beasts.

The rain fell, long, sharp, sudden, vertical, solid rain, vast and unceasing. It flooded the thirsty land with a terrific sweep of pent-up energy, so that neither man nor beast could stir.'

Ratan, a co-worker, a wrestler and a friend of Munoo, comes to their help by giving them a room to live in.

Among all the coolies, it is Ratan alone who is courageous enough to defy Jimmy Thomas, the wicked foreman. Others bow obsequiously before him and bear every humiliation. Mr Little, the manager and Sir Reginald White the President of the Cotton Mill also symbolise British exploitation of the Indian masses. Sir Reginald declares the mill on 'short week', which results in a call for strike given by Sauda Sahib, a communist leader.

There may be a tinge of caricature and exaggeration in the English characters in this scene as Morris Brown says:
'They have not the terrible impersonality which most of the book has...'. But it has to be remembered that they are minor characters and presented as they would appear to common people as objects of awe and tyranny. One is reminded of the monstrous proportions that wicked people acquire in Dickens, when they are viewed by victimized children.

Munoo's adolescent sexual urge gets a further impetus from his visit to Piaji Jan, a prostitute, with Ratan. With his sexual feelings aroused but unsatisfied, Munoo returns home to find Laxmi waiting for him. She understands his misery and takes him to her bed consoling him: 'We belong to suffering, my love.' Thus Laxmi becomes Munoo's first mistress.

Anand saves the novel from political propaganda, by leaving the decision to the workers as to whether they should go on strike. The reaction of the coolies to their problems is brought out with reality and insight:

'They knew that they had to slave hard, that they were being sweated and fleeced, that they were being starved to death slowly, but they thought of their immediate necessities during a strike, of food their children would want and of their own hunger.'

A little later, the rumour of the kidnapping of a coolie's child by some Pathans, sparks off a Hindu-Muslim riot, in which innocent people of both groups are killed. Munoo himself escapes death by the skin of his teeth. The frightened and horror-stricken Munoo is knocked down by the car of an
Anglo-Indian woman, and is taken to Simla where he might regain his identity after the horrors of Bombay.

Since Anand has dexterously maintained the cause and effect sequence of the incidents throughout the novel, especially in the Bombay scene, as Richard Cumberland's objection raised in his book Henry (1795), 'Political discussions should never be admitted in a novel as they are sure to set down to author's account, let him assign them as he will,' does not sound true in this case.

The refreshing greenery of the steep hills of Simla reminds Munoo of his own Kangra, hills and he begins to feel that 'he was in his proper element.' The eccentric Mrs Mainwaring adds Munoo to his flunkeys at board, and probably at bed though it is not mentioned. The passionate blood of her Indian grandmother, her brownish hue and her desire to be considered a pure English woman, are in severe conflict with each other. Her deep-seated inferiority complex is revealed in her attempts to appear like a true British lady. Munoo is made to pull a rickshaw for his mistress up and down the steep hills. The hard labour involved in the job afflicts him with almost continuous fever and coughs streaked with blood and increasing debility. Mohan advises him to abandon the job if he wants to survive but Munoo does not pay much attention to him. Before long Munoo breathe his last still longing for life. A young boy full of promise is inexorably crushed under the coolie's fate.
Dr M.K. Naik finds w two major faults with the novel:

1. 'The inner development of Munoo is totally neglected.' (43a)

2. 'The brief final part...appears to be an anti-climax.' (b)

Dr Naik's objections can be examined in the light of the novelist's aims in creating the character of Munoo and the limits to which he wanted to develop it. Certain influences in Anand's life have been extremely significant in shaping his outlook on life and the world. One such is exerted by poet Iqbal through his poem Israr-a-khudi (Secrets of the Self).

All other problems Anand has dealt with in his novels are but the ramification of only one theme: the individual's self realization. There are various stages in the attainment of this realization. Anand's hero is at an early stage of development and hence we cannot anticipate the inner development of his character. Professor D. Riemenschneider rightly remarks here:

'Within his limited potentialities Munoo has achieved whatever he could...There is only one strong response from him: his love for life. His simple soul is not given to introspection. Thus from an evolutionary point of view Munoo represents that stage of man where the instinct to live dominates and decides the destiny of man.' (44)

As for the second defect pointed out by Dr Naik, it can be stated that in spite of all his miseries in the final stage of his life Munoo perhaps feels that his secret aspirations have been fulfilled. As a servant of Mrs Mainwaring he receives care and attention and feels himself to be in a higher position than ever before; he is in constant touch with the
glamorous world of the Europeans... After the miserable life he has led so far, he now seems to belong to that dream-like world that he always was looking for. Anand's purpose is evidently to show that poor Munoo, now a victim of delusion. It is quite understandable after what he has gone through. Moreover, this final section contains Anand's bitterest attack on exploitation and the false pretensions of the Eurasians.

What Haydn Moore Williams observes about this novel is a worthy and befitting tribute to the author's creative ability:

'Mulk Raj Anand's intention was to write an angry bitter book, a book to sear our conscience. It emerges as an anguished cry, an indictment of the cruelty of the system, and a declaration of pity for his hero, the betrayed and depraved Munoo. It is more than a social documentary, more than a tract for the times. Coolie has the power to move precisely because of its presentation of a universal human tragedy... The power lies in the pity; that is why the heart of the novel is found in the sections where Munoo arouses the maternal compassion of women and finds consolation in the arms of Lakshmi, the peasant's wife and the eccentric Mrs Mainwaring.'

There is a lot of truth in the above statement. The last scene raises the novel to the level of a tragedy because Munoo, though full of potentiality and zest for life, is not allowed to grow physically, mentally or spiritually. He becomes a victim of society as so many others of his kind. Perhaps the most pitiable thing that happens to him is the belief that he has risen in life because of the 'favours' he enjoys at Mrs Mainwaring house. The writer seems to attach special signifi-
significance to the condition of being a 'Coolie'. It is degrading and destructive. There is something in the very conception of a coolie, especially in the colonial context, which is humiliating and cruel. It may not be wrong to contend that in this novel Anand rises to truly tragic heights.
III

TWO LEAVES AND A BUD

First conceived as a play, but later developed into a novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* appeared in 1937. Because of its bitter indictment of British imperialism, the book was withdrawn from circulation by the Bermondsey Libraries Committee, only a year after its publication. But Goronwy Rees of the *Spectator* praised the author for revealing "with great skill and without insinence... the Indian coolies, exploited starving, cheated, dirty, diseased, as the true heirs of one of the world's best civilizations." He then went on to say: "I have no doubt that Dr. Anand's account of the tea planters is true." This not only attracted the interest of the readers but also the wrath of the President of the Indian Tea Association, who got the book proscribed. This, however, aroused the curiosity of the reading public about the book.

The novel is neither the product of mere imagination nor is it based only on commissions' reports. It is mainly the product of the author's first-hand experience of the conditions of the plantation workers and the tyranny and exploitation practised by their white and brown bosses. In 1929 Anand paid a visit to Assam on Gandhiji's advice to see for himself the plight of the bonded labourers in the tea gardens. He stayed there with a doctor and learned about the earliest Naga raid of 1893, and the Khoreel incident of 1920, along with other tales of atrocities, from the people whom he met. He had
also read a report on such incidents in the news papers. All these contributed to the shaping of the novel. This explains Anand's claim in the preface to the second edition of the book that 'it was a real story which he was writing in thinly veiled fiction, and that he had a first-hand knowledge of the tea estates in Assam and Ceylon. He recalled the painter George Keyt telling him of assistant managers boozing in the company of their coolie mistresses with the 'vulgarity of the old buccaneers in Africa'.

After the publication of the novel Anand received many letters regarding its authenticity. The news papers also flashed details of exploitation quite boldly. In Ceylon a white planter was dismissed from service like Dr Havre of the novel, for favouring the natives. In Jorhat, an English Assistant manager J.D. Young was sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment, for his involvement in the murder of a young coolie girl, with multiple injuries on her body. Regarding the sordid conditions and meagre wages the Whiteley report is an authentic document, and it has fully substantiated what Anand has written in his novel. Diseases like Malaria and Cholera were rampant, and the wages did not exceed eight annas per day for a family of two adults and two children. Even children of four to six years of age were employed in the tea gardens. Buddha, an eight year old son of Gangu is so employed in the novel.

The actual state of affairs so closely resembles those depicted in the novel that Binay Krishna Bhattacharya quite correctly observes:

'The similarity between fact and fiction in this novel, is so very striking that Two Leaves and a Bud almost
became a historical tragedy.  

In a letter to J.P. Brown Anand said:  

'I conceived Two Leaves and a Bud as a poem in suffering. 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.'

Aesthetically considering, the novel does not appear to be a poem in suffering because the few flashes of poetic intensity are overcast by the gloom of melodrama. Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha is of the opinion that the novel

'is fleshy and episodic in the extreme, whereas true poetic intention 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.'

Dr Sinha is partly correct in holding that the book lacks that poetic intensity which characterise Lear or Tess. But Gangu's miseries are not ordained by superhuman agencies, but by the white and brown sahibs and their cruel agents who exploit the poor for their own selfish ends. A film based on this novel was released in 1948 to arouse the indignation of the plantation workers and the general public against the oppressions of the plantation authorities.

Two Leaves and a Bud is undoubtedly a moving tale of the sufferings of the Indian peasants, decoyed into indentured labour in one of the biggest tea estates known as Macpherson Tea Estate...
in Assam. It is at the same time/authentic as well as a deep and intense account of the exploitation of the Indian labourers by foreigners.

Unlike as in *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, there are three important characters in the novel: Gangu, De La Havre and Reggie Hunt. They not only hover over it from the beginning to the end, but also influence the main stream of the narrative. Gangu represents the average Indian peasant, compelled to live a life of abject misery. Dr Havre stands for a section of the British who are kind and sympathetic, and evince a genuine sympathy for the poor. Reggie personifies the worst kind of cruelty and exploitation to which our people were exposed for more than a century. Most educated people, in this country are aware of the brutality of Dyer and his kind. Jallianwala Bagh is the living monument of inhuman and unforgivable aspects of British imperialism. If Anand, through his personal experience, paints Reggie and his like in their real hues, he does no injustice to the English rulers. He does not spare even their Indian lackeys like Babu Shasi Bhusan and Sardar Buta Singh, who get on with the help of flattery and deceit.

Avarice and greed come under constant fire. In the Kali-Yug they seem to be the only Gods at whose altar people sacrifice all their humanity, morality and truthfulness. Anand envisages revolution as the answer to all these evils. At the same time, his faith in the Gandhian non-violent movement finds a powerful expression in the movement of the coolies.
Expressions such as 'life is like a journey' and 'a journey into the unknown', are suggestive of the novelist's mood at the time of writing this book. Gangu and his family are quite happy, living within their limited means. But the temptation of possessing land and a better life, held out by Buta the coolie-catcher, ensnares them in a virtual prison where there are calamities and death, and no hope of release. The dread of the unknown and the uncertainty of life loom large over the aged Gangu as he is journeying across the hills from the north to the extreme east. He is agitated about leaving his home and relations amidst whom he would have preferred to die, and because of the fear that he may jeopardise his own, as well as his family's future in a new and a strange place. Although these thoughts are troubling Gangu and his wife, their children, Baddhu and Leila aged four and fourteen seem to be unaffected by them as they enjoy the journey. The author seems to stress the point here that childhood is free from anxieties and cares:

'They had no appreciation of the pain that lies quiescent under everything, the suffering that men imposed on themselves and each other.'

Buta is a wicked man who left the profession of traffic in women to take up the profession of traffic in men. So is Babu Shashi Bhusan who demands a commission from Buta for registering the coolies. Both of them represent the corruption prevalent in the Indian social structure. The chief motivating force behind these evils is, of course, avarice.
Dr John De La Havre is the most humanitarian portrait in the novel. Through him Anand wishes to express his philosophy of brotherhood and revolution, which Mohan advanced in Coolie and the poet before him, in Untouchable. Revealing the intellectual undertone of the novel Dr Harrex comments:

"...De La Havre's brooding sensitivity and intellectual anguish, his expedient attempt to rally the coolies, his sacrifice of personal happiness, are indicative of the suffering and failure attendant upon the putting into practice of philosophy of human betterment. The result is that the novel contains a secondary level of action which is intellectual and which complements the primary dramatic level of the action."³

The naturalistic viewpoint adopted in the novel is based on the scientific theory of evolution. A man of religion or a philosopher may ascribe the enormous destructive power of the microbes to God or some superhuman agency, but not so a scientist. Dr Havre sees the truth:

"But all chemical disintegration was inherent in nature, he reflected in a rather depressed vein. All the processes of change, colouring unification were complementary to chemical decomposition. And what was true of nature was true of society."⁴

Dr Havre is genuinely concerned about the havoc caused by the epidemics of Cholera and Malaria in the plantation. His plans for improving the condition of the coolies and preventing these diseases are always rejected by the plantation bosses. Worried by the knowledge of the tremendous destructive powers
of these microbes, he thinks that the world is heading towards
destruction. In the idyllic setting of the Assam forests, Dr
Havre alone is capable of looking into the secret threat of
disease concealed in its greenery. He is also very critical of
about the oppressions of the poor Indian masses by the British,
whom he wants to quit India. He declares:

"Why not let the natives run their own show? It is
their country. And we have really no right in it." 10

The doctor's perception is very acute. He alone can see in the
tea offered to him 'the hunger, the sweat and the despair of
the millions of Indians.' 11 The feeling of race superiority is
prominent in every Englishman except Dr Havre. Mrs Croft Cooke
shoves a woman off for the offence of plucking roses, and calls
the natives thieves and liars. Her husband Mr Croft Cooke, the
manager of the plantation, is smug in Englishness but believes
in the simple law that every coolie who worked hard must be
rewarded. Yet, he fails to live up to this ideal.

Dr Havre's inborn good nature makes him sympathetic towards
the coolies and earns for him the dislike of his own countrymen.
Like a social reformer that he is, he wants that the Indians
should try to end their own inequalities:

"...They had a right to rule themselves, but rule
themselves justly by destroying the inequalities of
caste, and class and creed." 12

The English obsessed with their racial prejudices,
always look down upon the black and the brown Indians, and never
think of bettering the condition of the coolies working under them. Even among themselves, the relationship is not cordial. Reggie despises Croft Cooke and others, and they in turn cannot stand him. Dr Navre thinks of all the English as cruel and the exploiters of the poor. Because of his progressive views and sympathy with the labourers, he is condemned by Cooke and his other compatriots.

Gangu's first meeting with Narain acquaints him with the miserable existence of the coolies in the tea garden. Narain too, has been brought here by one of the agents from Bikaner which was in the grip of acute draught. He says:

'There was a famine in Bikaner... At home it was like a prison, but here it is slightly worse... My two elder children died of that famine... I would have liked to till my old fields again and spend my last days among my kith and kin.'

Gangu also has a similar desire. It is almost a universal longing to die at one's native place amongst one's kinsmen. Gangu's hope of a better life is blighted by Narain's revelation:

'You will soon know brother, first water afterwards... The prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless an unbreakable jail.'

As in Coolie, in this novel also, real sympathy and understanding are to be found only among the very poor as a rule. The relationship between Gangu and Narain is an instance.

Among the English characters, Reggie Hunt has none of the
author's sympathies. He is immoral and cruel and therefore, dreaded and despised not only by the coolies but also by his own people. Yet he is a credible creation and probably constitutes a combined picture of Ellis and Verral of George Orwell's Burmese Days (1934) to which Anand's Two Leaves and a Bud bears a close resemblance in both setting and theme. Reggie has a commission in the army, is a good rider, likes Polo and hunting. He overestimates his status as Assistant Manager. Anand ironically remarks:

'And Reggie liked to imagine that he looked like Napoleon Bonaparte, as the emperor had led his armies across the Swiss mountains or at least, as a renowned hero figured in the picture reproduced in the school history book.'

In his love of outdoor life, is reflected one of the reasons behind Englishman's fascination for India. His lust for coolie women is equalled only by his brutality and his hatred of the coolies themselves. He is also ambitious and hopes to replace Croft Cooke as the manager of the plantation.

One of the most touching things in the novel is Liela's awareness of their poverty which prevents fulfilment of her desire to have such trifles as a nose-ring, a necklace, silken glass bangles and a woolen ball. She knows that her whole family does not earn even eight annas a day.

The authenticity of Anand's knowledge is confirmed by Plantation Labour in Assam Valley (1951), which reports about the basic wages of the coolies during 1950. They were as low as eight
annas for men, six annas for women and four to five annas for children.

The modern machine looms large here as in many other novels of Anand. Gangu is surprised to see the 'machine-plough' breaking the fallow land. This makes him think of the contradiction noticed in the British. Their life of splendour made possible by their civilization on the one side and their shocking barbarity on the other. It must be mentioned however, that Anand's deep concern for the suffering Indian masses makes him lose some of his objectivity when delineating the English characters.

As in many of his stories, in this novel also, Mulk Raj Anand's agnosticism comes through. Gangu is not convinced of the existence of God. He feels that the world is a leela, a kind of play. People come, act and then pass away into oblivion. Only the trees/rivers and the forests appear to be eternal, but no human being except the Lama is said to be immortal. He logically concludes that when even the mountains shake due to earthquakes, rivers change their course and trees get uprooted, the immortality of the Lama must be a myth and cannot prove the existence of God. However, he does realize that there is some peculiar force which manifests its presence when some one dies, frustrating all human efforts to save him. He would submit to this power but could not regard it as God. He feels:

'There were only men and life and death fulfilling their own purposes through cross purposes as in a play. It was all play.' 16
There is indeed something unpalatable about investing Gangu with such musings. They can be sustained by philosophers and not by an illiterate uprooted peasant who is fighting for his survival.

Anand evokes the reader's sympathy when Leila, who has gone to the market with her parents, refuses the nose-ring and the bangles she had earlier coveted, realizing that her parents cannot afford them. She says suppressing her desire:

'I don't think I see any bangles I like, a nose-ring will be too very expensive, and a necklace will cost a lot.'

Leila reveals all the modesty and sensitiveness of an Indian girl. She is intelligent enough to realize that her parents can hardly afford to spend money on things which are not necessary.

Anand has always portrayed the Seths, the shopkeepers and the money lenders as unfeeling, and exploiters of the poor. One cannot quarrel with him as the exceptions only prove the rule, and things have not improved since Anand wrote this novel. Seth Dhanu Mal abuses the Tibetan leader in words which speak for themselves:

'Alright, then go and eat the air... You stupid hillman, you cannot recognize a good bargain. It isn't for nothing that God has cursed you all with weak eyes and small hearts. And you have been justly justly condemned by the Almighty to become ugly with the Smallpox that rages among you.'

These Seths have spread a network of retail shops all over the
placation to exploit the workers to the utmost.

Gangu experiences occasional spurts to rebellion. He is outraged by Dhanu Mal's assertion that he would charge the highest rate. He is about to call the Seth a thief or a robber, but he manages to restrain himself. He has resolved 'not to be goggled into running blindly even if he has resigned himself to bear all the burdens heaped on him.' It is clear that money/made shopkeepers and moneylenders like Dhanu Mal blind; they have forgotten all human considerations.

Soon after their return from the market, Gangu begins to groan under terrible pain due to an attack of Malaria. Hardly has he recovered from his illness, when his wife Sajni catches the infection and dies of it. Malaria is mistaken for Cholera, and the coolies are struck by fear of the epidemic which has been claiming a higher and higher toll of human life every year. When Dr Havre and Dr Chunni Lal pronounce Sajni dead, there is a moving piece of pathos:

'Gangu fell upon Sajni with a howl.
Leila shrieked and went towards Budhu.
The boy sobbed as he stood in the doorway.'

Gangu goes to Croft Cooke to borrow some money for his wife's funeral, remembering the words of Buta that the Sahibs are like 'Mai Bap.' But to his dismay he is kicked out for violating the quarantine in which he was placed, following the death of his wife. Bewildered and lost, Gangu comes to Buta Singh who had brought him to the plantation on false promises:
"The Sahib will not give me loan," Gangu said.
I have just been. He beat me for coming out of the quarantine. Oh, friend Buta Ram, if only I had known things were going to turn out this way, I would not have come here."21

These words bring out fully the deep pathos that runs throughout the novel, Dr Cowasjee remarks:

"In these artless words there is all the pathos, the suffering and the anguish of his hero. Natural, unforced, unpretentious—these words are far more humane and more moving than the rhetoric about the murky waters of hell."22

A short but passionate love scene between Barbara, the 'lonely' young daughter of the manager, and Dr Havre follows. There is a prelude to this scene when Barbara is attracted to Havre when they meet in the former's house. But the climax and denouement are abrupt. But Dr Havre's harangues about the plantation coolies and the indictment of the British bore her too much. Instead of love talk she gets speeches. Perhaps Anand did not intend it to be a tender love scene, but an opportunity for the outpourings of the mental agony of the socialist doctor.

The club life of the English is portrayed in order to bring out their dissensions, conflicts and narrow attitudes. It also provides a short respite to Barbara and other English women from the feeling of loneliness. Monica Long in her autobiography Invitation to Tea (1952), has dealt with this theme in detail.
The episode of Dr Chunni Lal's being turned out from the club when he is taken there by Dr Havre, shows the general attitude of the English towards the Indians, while Dr Chunni Lal's silent withdrawal without any protest reveals the degree of suppression of the intellectuals by the British.

Dr Havre's report on the plantation labourers reads like a political tract. He shows a profound sympathy for the under-nourished, unhealthy and perpetually persecuted coolies:

'The black coolies clear the forest, plant fields toil and garner the harvest, while all the money-grubbing, slave-driving, soulless managers and directors drew their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies. Therein lies the necessity of revolution in this country.'

Anand's indictment of the British exploitation of the Indians is very severe, and he lays down that only revolution can solve their problems. Anand seems to propound the idea that there is nothing more horrible in this universe than the cruelty of man to man.

Gangu still cherishes a strong hope for the grant of a piece of land promised earlier. He goes to his mentor Dr Havre for recommendation. Moved by his tale of woe the doctor empties his wallet into his palm. Dr Havre gets a chance for an indictment of British industrialization of India, which has thrown many artisans out of work. He is full of rage against the British for taking advantage of the hospitality and the docility of the Indians. He bursts out:
So the Britons who never, never shall be slave, went and enslaved millions of Asia, went and built up grandiose gothic homes for themselves in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras and barn for coolies to work in, barns, or rather two, three four-storied sheds. These were ostensibly good enough for the niggers, for they did not seem to die when put into them. These coolies did not look as if they would require the breathing space of seven hundred cubic feet that a human being requires. They are underpaid as little as a farthing a day and the British think they are overpaid. They even gave their share of rice to the Tommies and lived on rice-water.

Gangu gets a small piece of land measuring two-fifths of an acre. As a true peasant, still having deep love for the land he tills it with a spade. He is hopeful that the warm freshness will yield fruits. Despite his utter frustration, he feels the sudden pulsation of a wild urge to live.

The death of Sajni makes him intensely aware of the role of woman in life, Leila has now become the anchor of his hope and desire to live. Gangu becomes philosophical when he sees his daughter and other women bathing in the river, and the dip he himself takes makes him ruminate:

'Surely', he thought to himself, 'there is something of the water about a woman. Flowing, always flowing one way or another, and restless like the waves, sometimes overwhelmingly moody, fickle and capricious as a river in storm, sometimes bright and smiling, sometimes soft and sad, but always tender and kind.' Further wishing Leila a long life, he adds, 'She is a blessing. She is Sajni's gift to me, to tend me in my old age.'
Perhaps Anand's own attitude to women is reflected in the lines quoted above.

Even to a casual reader the undercurrent of pathos becomes evident when he finds that every little thing Leila does in the house, which her mother used to do, reminds her of the loss her dear mother.

Many of Anand's women characters show boldness and presence of the mind in times of calamities. Lost in the pathetic rememberance of her mother, Leila is cutting the wood for fuel; she happens to mistake a python for a log of wood and she is caught in its coil. The more she tries to free herself, the more strongly the snake wreathes her body. In a final struggle for survival Leila cuts the body of the snake into two with her sickle after thus vanquishing her enemy she flees towards her home/collecting the fuel. This incident can be symbolic of man's struggle against natural calamities and victory over them. But the point that the author wants to make here seems to be, that when such a crisis is brought about by a human python escape is usually impossible.

Recurrent hardships and sorrows beget a great deal of endurance in Gangu. The author puts the resignation of Gangu's will in a nut-shell when he says, 'to remain silent, to suffer and to stifle the bitterness of his experience to forgive, to cut the canker of resentment out of his heart—that was his inner-most instinct.'
A simple quarrel between two coolie-women is considered as a serious uprising, and leads to Reggie's handling of the situation in a brutal manner, which ends in the death of one of the coolies. Howling and weeping women and children led by Gangu and Narain march to Dr Havre's surgery to complain against the atrocities committed by the Sardars. Dr Havre is agitated when he hears the advancing shouts of the coolies. He feels that some terrible thing has happened.

'These docile, gutless, spineless coolies who never raised their voices except on the days of Holi, who went about the plantations with masks of crass stupidity on their faces, whose habitual submission was never disturbed by any outrage of man, or beast, by hunger, pestilence or slow disease that they should come shouting for him was uncanny.'

This reaction conforms to the real status of the coolies in India.

The tea gardens were the striking examples of the imperialist tyranny and those which were closed after yielding great profits to their white masters, gave three pice a day to the workers. If they tried to return to their native places they were rounded up by the police and imprisoned. Being once trapped here, there was little hope of release. In fact for these labourers 'Life was not life but hell,' not much different from that of the Negro slave.

The joint effort of the coolies to redress their grievances against the supervisor is branded as a revolt. Frightened by this the plantation bosses fortify themselves in the club; Dr Havre does not join them. The police is called from Sylhet,
the military from Manipur, and even the air force from Calcutta. Tweetie is sarcastic about mobilising so much force for suppressing the humble and the oppressed coolies. His reaction to the bombers is 'a malignant thing it seemed, being put to such a use.'

Seeing the droning planes flying low over them the coolies run to the valleys for protection. A pregnant woman, out of fear, falls dead before Gangu, who murmurs: 'Happy death with a soul which had tired of pining in its sorrows.' This is reminiscent of Hari's remarks on the death of a beggar/coolie.

Dr Havre risks his own future for the sake of the workers by leading them to Croft Cooke in order to obtain justice for them. As he leads the coolies along the road,

'he felt feeble and stiff and worn. But he had the consolation that he was acting for the freedom, for personal liberty and private virtues—that he was acting for the lives of these people. He knew that for the moment his cause was doomed, but he believed he might be able to do something, anything.'

Dr Havre is a superb example of dedication to the cause of the oppressed millions. The novelist here, yet again shows the conflict between evil and good. And it is the rule of the age that it is evil that triumphs.

Dr Havre is forthwith dismissed and the coolies are pushed back to their miserable lot. The doctor is shocked at Barbara's attitude towards him and feels that 'a whole world lay like a gulf between them.'
It seems that nature has built up its entire edifice for the welfare of mankind, but only a few privileged exploit it for their own good. They have blocked all means of livelihood for the poor and revel in seeing them die of starvation and disease. Gangu thinks over the fact and observes:

'...Though the earth is bought and sold and confiscated, God never meant that to happen, for he does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and the others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men, and yet many die of hunger, and most live under heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if earth were made for a few and not for all men.'

The tiger hunt arranged in honour of Sir Boyd is meant to show how with false trophies, men like him manage to acquire great prestige, and also to bring out the utter sycophancy of his subordinates to win his favour. The Governor brings about reconciliation between the labourers and their masters by announcing concessions in the fine imposed on the coolies. Anand brings out here the mental condition of a man who is under perpetual strain of hardship and misery:

'When a dull grey misery has become the very atmosphere in which you live day and night, night and day, you not only bring yourself to bear the most terrible humiliations, but you are also indifferent to any minor piece of good-luck, you are neutral, dead, resigned to the passage of time till the clock of your heart stops tick-ticking and you have ceased to exist.'

It would not be wrong to consider the novel as an indict-
ment of money power which inexorably governs the destiny of man. What Narain says is significant enough:

'Every absurdity appears agreeable in a man on whom gold has smiled, even though he looks like a dog and thinks like a donkey.'

The final a catastrophe occurs when Reggie, driven by his immoderate lust tries to seduce Leila. She resists his advances and eludes him away to safety. Reggie, determined to have her at any cost, steals into the coolies lane. There is an alarm, but before Reggie can beat a retreat, he is noticed by Gangu whom he shoots dead. Good succumbs to evil, innocence to tyranny and modesty to lust. Imperialism is depicted in all its nakedness in the climax. The trial of Reggies is also a mockery of justice. Reggie is absolved of the charge of murder and culpable homicide by a majority of the jury, obviously because he is a white. The irony in it does not fail to touch our hearts. There may be nothing that can elevate the character of Gangu to tragic heights, but there is enough in it to evoke one's deep sympathy.

Critics have differed very widely in evaluating the novel. Arnold Palmer, reviewing the book for London Mercury says:

'He (Anand) has produced a novel and not a tract.' The reviewer for Time and Tide, comments: 'Anand has shown once again that a novel need be no less a good novel for being inspired by a purpose; that in the hands of competent literary craftsman, it be can/all the better on that account.' But John Brophy holds
altogether a different view about the book which according to him 'is a left wing propaganda poured white hot into the mould of fiction.' 37

Jack Lindsay is of the view that the novel fails to achieve the comprehensive dramatic grip it aims at. 38 Contrary to this opinion Dr M.K. Naik observes:

'Two Leaves and a Bud has a unified and well developed structure... In spite of its wealth of character and episode, the novel maintains its unity, as every detail is woven round the central theme of Gangu's exploitation. Another outstanding feature is the combination of poetry and irony which runs through the whole novel.' 39

Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha calls the novel a brilliant piece of naturalistic fiction. 40

Dr K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar assessing all the three novels of this series, quite significantly remarks:

'Of all his (Anand's), Untouchable is most compact. Coolie is the most extensive in space and time, evoking variegated action and multiplicity in character, while Two Leaves and a Bud is the most effective as a piece of implied indictment. 41

To sum up, Two Leaves and a Bud is a vivid picture of colonial India and the exploitation of the helpless Indians. There is much truth in Anand's description of a cup of tea as 'the hunger, the sweat and the despair of a million Indians.' One is inclined to agree with him after reading the novel.
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Untouchable

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III

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