CHAPTER 5

NOVELS OF STRUGGLES

This chapter attempts to study the following novels:

Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts (1938), the famous Lalu trilogy consisting of The Village (1939), Across the Black and Waters (1940)/ The Sword and the Sickle (1942), The Big Heart (1945), Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953), The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), The Road (1961) and the Death of a Hero (1963).

In all these novels Anand has depicted the struggles of his heroes against social injustice, based on class and caste, and has emphasised mutual co-operation and love and respect for man as man. These novels also reveal Anand's maturity as a novelist.

There is a fundamental difference between the heroes of Anand's earlier novels and those of this group. The latter rebel against the existing social conditions, while the former succumb to them. Bakha in Untouchable, is not allowed to transcend the barriers of caste prejudices, although he is hopeful about a change in his status in near future. Munoo, in spite of all his zest for life, remains a helpless pawn on the chess board of social injustice and colonial exploitation. All his hopes for a better future are nipped in the bud. There is no attempt at rebellion on his part for bettering his status. He is not even allowed to grow according to his desires. He succumbs to the inevitable lot of the poor in this country. Gangu in Two Leaves
and a Bud is an old ineffectual negative hero who lives a degraded and debased life under the white and the brown sahibs. In contrast, the heroes/the present group of novels do not yield abjectly to the oppressions and injustices but revolt against them.

Among these novels, however, Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts and Private Life of an Indian Prince differ from the rest as they reveal the psychological struggles of their protagonists. If the former deals with the tragedy of Noor, and in a broader sense the vulnerability of modern Indian youth because of the defective economic system and the intolerance of the older generation, the latter brings out an implicit pathos in the raging inner conflicts of an Indian Prince who endeavours to overcome his own frailty and maintain the sovereignty of his state, but despite all his princely powers and privileges, fails on both the fronts and ends up in an asylum. The Old Woman and the Cow, of this group is Anand's only novel with a woman protagonist, Gauri, who pilots her own destiny among many social, religious and moral taboos and an age-long suppression. Further, Across the Black Waters is again distinct from the rest in the sense that it is entirely set in an alien land and deals with the horrors of the first world war, the frustrations of the soldiers, and the ultimate futility of war. The Big Heart, is an episode of the heart and enunciates the theory of 'Bhakti' through the sacrifice of Ananta. The Road suggests the way of emancipation to the outcastes through Bikhu, the Chamar.
Taken as a whole these novels reveal the diverse panorama of Indian life and the degree of struggle needed to reform the Indian social structure.

I

Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts

Mulk Raj Anand wrote this lyrical lament when he got the news of his friend Noor’s death, on the P.& O boat during his voyage from Tillbury to Bombay and published it in 1938. He has modelled this elegy on Lorca’s Lament on the Death of a Bull fighter, and has touchingly revealed the internal strife and agony of his dying friend, Anand read it to Attia Hussain, whose novel Sunlight on a Broken Window, echoes the refrains of Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts. Other distinguished persons to read it were the scientist Zaheer, Bunne Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmad Ali and Dr Zaheer’s wife Sayida. Mrs Zaheer offered to pay for its publication, and it became the first book of the Progressive Writers’ Association. Anand says that Jawahar Lal Nehru read it at a first sitting, and heard the recital in the company of a few of his secretaries and made the flattering remark that it was the best book published by the Progressive Writers. Anand himself added, ‘the intensest if not the best.’

One of the themes of the novel is a burning modern problem, namely educated-unemployment and its effects on an individual’s and family life. It is also Anand’s attempt to show how in the great crisis of life when existence is threat-
ened, the soul attains great powers... 'as Strindberg puts it. Further, he probes the very nature of pain which is central to human existence and tries to tackle the fundamental 'whys' and 'wherefores' of life. However, the author's chief purpose seems to be to reveal the realities of life through the character of his negative hero. It is free from the heavy, earthy and mundane realism of the novels of his early phase, though it is exquisitely faithful to life in theme and characterization.

The novel follows the stream of consciousness method already used in Untouchable, and the significant events are circumscribed within a day. Nur wakes up in the early morning gasping for breath and dies in the afternoon. But an attempt is made to encompass the entire depth and breadth of human psychology between the two events. Commenting on the technique of the novel Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha says:

'The stream of consciousness flows like a river, the author taking full responsibility for the direction and flow. The technique of monologue interior and memory digression are successfully used to enforce the plot structure and to reveal the implications of the momentous theme.'

The tragedy lies in the hero's untimely removal from the surface of the earth. Notwithstanding his intense love of life, Nur reaches a stage when death seems welcome. At the very outset we see the uncongeniality of the environment in which the hero is placed. Nur is struggling to free himself from the cruel clutches of Tuberculosis. But it is an unequal battle and he is fast heading towards the final catastrophe. We are reminded
the many whom Anand loved died of Tuberculosis, for instance Kaushalya, Noor, and Shakuntala. Nur is sick of his painful existence and expresses his contempt for it with resentment: 'No, I don’t want to live. I wish I were dead.' Emaciated and deathly pale, Nur lies in his bed and appears as though 'the body of death lingered on the sick bed wrapped in a white shroud...' He is no longer the master of his own body; it is Death who now possesses it. The awareness of the impending event haunts him but at times he hopes he might survive. He is torn between two powerful emotions; love of life and desire to escape from the agony: 'One side of him urged him on to death while the other held him back to survival.'

There is also his father Chaudhari, whose very presence terrifies Nur: 'The gigantic, padded-faced, wry-mouthed presence of the Chaudhari, terrifying like Nero, seemed inauspicious.' His wrath and abuses hasten the hero’s death.

The ravaging disease as well as the tyrannical father, have caused his 'fine face with the slightly dilated nostrils with brown eyes bulging out of the deep sockets and the indrawn cheeks to flush not with the rich pink if the Sahibs as it had always been flushed since his childhood, but with the shame of a rose which has withered before it had begun to bloom.' The images of withered and the withering convey the disease-eaten emaciated body of Nur and his loss of physical and mental energy. Anand makes the picture more vivid:

'His body was limp except for the spine, which ached
as it had ached increasingly through having to lie in bed day after day for five months; and the hard ribs and collar bones which seemed to crack as they rose out of his transparent flesh like the dry roots of a bare tree still sound at the heart. 8

Lying in this state Nur is wrestling with himself and his terrible illness.

A dying man's perception often becomes acute. Nur visualises his dead mother and the memories of the past seem to come back to him in their track as if they were an 'Open Seasame' with the force and the vivacity of rapiers thrust in the raw wounds of his heart. For, from the first cry at birth his life had been pain-marred. 9 Nur remembers that once during his early childhood he had visited the cemetery with his grandmother and had been possessed by the fear of ghosts and spirits which haunted these places. He has heard people say that death is the ultimate attainment of freedom and wants to escape from his agony. But his desire to live is equally intense, if not more so.

Nur's criticism of religion is very severe. He thinks it is nothing more than a cover for avarice and malpractice: 'God gives the gift of holiness so that priests can obtain their own ends.' 10 He questions the utility of prayer when one does not understand its meaning. His indignation against the Mullahs is aroused by their cry of 'Allah-o-Akbar'. He bursts out: 'Call the faithful to prayer, call them to prayer, dog! I hate you all! To incur your wrath I spit on your face and I spit on the face of your God.' 11
The very conflict in his mind seems to fill Nur with tenderness for everyone, especially for his grandmother, who calmly accepts the Chaudhari's brutality. He goes on to recollect the tyranny of his schoolmaster:

"Men extracted pain from each other then went to cleanse their soul in the Mosque."

Nur has seen the hypocrisy rampant in every sphere of life. His teacher, Master Ishaq, is constantly abusing him for his own selfish ends; the Chaudhari is ever eager to chastise him for the slightest mistakes. His mental agony is again vividly depicted:

"All his young life seemed a spider's web of crimes the skein composed of faithlessness, evil deeds, blunders, brutalities in word and deed, both his own and those of others wrapped round him...And as he tortured himself by self-accusations, his physical strength seemed to fail..."

The friendship of Azad has relieved his agony to some extent. Nur thinks that his own bullock's life has made him mad. He recollects Azad's progressive views:

"The whole world is in search of happiness...but the soul of man cannot bear the suffering. Everyone wants salvation, though the real salvation is here—in spite of the pain...if only one learns to understand..."

The essence of Anand's humanism is to be found in such statements. There is a telling account of how people try to forget the stark reality of death:

"Some form a silent conspiracy to forget it, they
they are imbeciles who build on graft and extortion
and cunning and sheer might and so blacken the souls
in the struggle for self aggrandisement that they dare
not enjoy the gains of their perfidy, and who therefore
combine holiness with business like our Lallas, and
talk of the things of the spirit even as they pass
the hand of satisfaction over their bellies. And then
there are men who are willing to accept a share in
the total gain of struggle for existence of the commu-
nity, who fight and who, though afraid of death, seek
to conquer it...they will...I do not remember the rest.\[15\]

The sun becomes the central metaphor in the novel as in
*Untouchable*. It is singularly relevant to the hero's condition:

"Nur looked at the feather dropping from the top of
a house across the shadow which cut the fierce sun
outside and he saw the shimmering of an azure and
scarlet and yellow spectrum of light before him as he
had often done lying in bed. He felt the monotony of
his existence and the ceaseless discomfort which his
body had endured through the burning sun."\[16\]

When Nur thinks of his own marriage his disgust of the
arranged marriage and his hypocrisies are revealed:

"The two sheep to be martyred before the divines and
witnesses...that poor, silly girl, Iqbal, was as much
a pawn in the game which her father was playing with
me, as I was in the game which my father was playing
with her; her father thought that I would get into
Government Service with my first class degree, and my
father thought that the daughter of a respectable
veterinary surgeon would bring a good dowry. And both
the players were deceived in deceiving each other."\[17\]
While Nur's mind is going through all this his mother-in-law, Iqbal and other women assemble in the room and begin to lament as if Nur is already dead. These sorrowful women seem to serve the purpose of the Greek Chorus and remind the reader of the women of Canterbury in 'Murder in the Cathedral'. Nur's condition does not prevent him from observing the tenderness his wife feels for him. Her very innocence makes her a lovable character:

"Nur looked at her. She seemed so helpless and shy that he felt sick to think he had ever hated her. She seemed so touching in her stupidity that he wished he could hold her in his arms now and make a contact which he had refused to establish between himself and her ever since they had been married...And she seemed to him tenderer than ever, someone he had created, who had hidden the light of her affection and her love in her own distress always, someone who had suffered and yet never shown it by word or deed." 18

Nur feels guilty when he recollects how badly he had treated Iqbal when she told him about their coming child. This new burden in his state of unemployment was unwelcome to him. In a fit of rage he had even kicked her as though it was her ‘faith’. Despite this humiliation and injustice Iqbal

'had followed him about like a devoted dog, worshiping him with her eyes, while he, in the panic of fear of fatherhood that hung like an extra load on his already heavy-laden head, had frowned on her, refused to talk to her and ignored her utterly, only charging at her now and then with the deliberate violent hard thrusts of a diabolical passion, as if he wanted to
revenge himself against her, leaving her high and dry in the writhings of dissatisfaction, without a word or gesture of consolation."

Poverty has always stood in the way of the two lovers and made their lives miserable. In spite of his first class Master's degree Nur has been jobless and this is one of the main causes of his mental agony apart from his prolonged illness. Nur's frustration arising out of his failure to secure a job is touchingly described. His desire for a job has been so great as to wish for the position of a menial:

'so that he could earn a little bread for himself, and Iqbal and the child! But even this last little wish was not fulfilled easily...only days, and unending days, morning, noon and night, and the rub of his father's abuse and curses with every morsel of bread and every bite at a bone...And months...Oh where could one hide one's face?...Where could one go?'

Nur's life has been a struggle for survival, sometimes with faith in the power of prayer to come to his rescue, and sometimes rejecting it as mere superstition. Even in his present condition he thinks:

'I wonder if the attacks of haemorrhage came because I do not pray any more...' But his reason is quick to dismiss such thoughts as superstitious: 'But that was stupid. What was he thinking about? Neither God nor the devil could help him...God had not appeared in answer to his prayers...'

Dr Pochkanwalla, who comes to visit Nur, represents in general the doctors' greed for money and their neglect of the
sacred duty to serve the suffering. After the doctor departs the Chaudhari heartlessly rebukes Nur for wasting his money on the doctor's fee and spoiling his 'izzat'. This final stroke of cruelty perhaps snaps the thin thread which held his life. He vomits blood profusely and desperately invokes his dead mother to come to his rescue. He tries to call his grandma but his nerves fail. He feels that the inexorable angel Gabriel is advancing towards him. By the time the old woman comes near his bed crying 'Nur, my child, Nur wake up...', he has already attained his final release from his burdens. Anand ends this powerful and pathetic story with the same line with which he had begun it:

'The body of death lingered on the sick bed.'

This short novel has received less critical attention than it really deserves. Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha, alone seems to have grasped the poetry behind the human suffering as revealed in the novel. His evaluation of the novel is just and replete with insight which captures the intensity of the novelist's feelings and his exquisite craftsmanship:

'The Lament bears a close resemblance to what is designated as 'existentialist art'. It points out the limitations of human life without choice of action and touches on the philosophical implications of human misery and pain. The novel clearly demonstrates that the human condition itself is perilous and that erosions of contours (the fissures of being) are inherent in existence...In sum Lament on the Death of Master of Arts is a powerful lyrical novel which
surpasses all the novels of Anand in its deep authentic search for illumination. Its lyricism is withal, subtly modulated and exquisitely controlled without an excess of metaphor. The novelist's control over experience is indeed superb in as much as everything else is relegated to the background. The medium yields to the pressure of feeling at every point of the narrative. At the same time an actual effort of a high order had gone into the novel's artistry, the design, texture, character, and atmosphere taking on the resplendent quality of true and inimitable vision.

Mulk Raj Anand's own comment on the story is illuminating. In a letter to Saros Cowasjee he says:

"...In it the man who was aware of the despair of life generally in the beginning, begins to be conscious of his own despair. And knowing that everything is against him and that he is bound to die he wishes to be rid of himself. In the confrontation with death wish, he searches for authenticity. The drama of self-consciousness is staged by him through his memories. And he peels the onion layer by layer. As he realises the hopelessness of his condition, step by step, he also searches almost the whole of his life. Although it is a negative search, he is counterpoised with the more positive figure of his friend Azad. Secretly Nur wishes from his admiration for Azad that he had been like his hero. But he also knows he cannot be now, anymore 'another man'. Only in death will he attain the absolute...Un like the Buddha who says the pain is the essence of the universe, I believe pain can help the growth to awareness. Perhaps the ascetic Indian in me makes me feel this way. Nur was a saint who was sacrificed through the ignorance of his father and his moralist tutor Master Ishaq. The innocence of his
young wife, to whom he was married by arrangement, alone redeems his days of agony, as also the devotion of his grandmother... the destiny of Nur became to me symbolic of the youth in India who are condemned to earn the degree of Master of Arts for respectability... The poetic talent is denied. And the poets accept, in our country, this condemnation and are content to weep away.  

The dominating themes of aspiration, frustration and death make the Lament one of the most moving stories of Anand. The torturing portrayal of Nur's 'Memory and Desire', his alternating despair and hope, his death wish—all contribute to make the novel a very powerful study of human suffering and defeat. Anand is essentially a writer with a social, humanistic and naturalistic approach. Therefore, it may not be very profitable to look for a vision in him as one would in Shakespeare or Hardy. In Anand the reasons for human suffering are almost always social, economic or physical. There seems to be a sense of inevitability and helplessness. Though the frustration, suffering and death of Nur recall the story of Hardy's Jude, the dominating emotion in this novel is pathos which is very different from the tragic feeling which pervades Hardy's novel. The Lament is nearer to that masterpiece of sorrow, 'Riders to the Sea'. Like Synge, Anand also succeeds in avoiding melodrama and sentimentality, notwithstanding the exceeding painful material he is handling. This in itself is a great achievement.
II

The Lalu Trilogy

Between 1939 and 1942 Mulk Raj Anand published the three parts of this famous trilogy which deal with the life and adventures of his rebellious hero Lal Singh, from his early childhood to his maturity. It traces the slow and painful progress of the hero, beginning with his village life. It narrates his bitter experience of the first World War in Flanders and his return to his native country, only to get involved in radical politics. Finally, it reveals his realization of the importance of mastery over oneself, love for fellow beings, and the togetherness of individual men to fight against the ills rampant in the Indian social structure. The novelist encompasses a wide and varied area of human experience in his trilogy. It reveals the author's attitudes and sympathies more fully than any of his earlier works. The external as well as the internal development of Lalu closely resembles that of the hero of the three confessional novels of the author. In these, as in his earlier novels, Anand brings out the problems of modern India—the inadequacy of the capitalistic government, the accursed caste-system, the hypocrisy of religion, the traditional fatalism, the exploitation of the poor by landlords, moneylenders, and government officials, and the ever widening gulf between the rich and the poor.

Unlike the contemplative Bakha, the passive Munoo, and the ineffectual and aged Gangu, Lal Singh is a fiery rebel. He
succeeds where his predecessors fail because of his more varied experience and more frequent confrontation with death. Each part of the trilogy—The Village, Across the Black Waters and The Sword and the Sickle—is an impressive performance in its own right, having its own individual power and beauty.

The Village

The narrative begins with the return to the village of Nandpur, of Baba Nihalu, an old man in his seventies, from the district town of Manabad. He is greeted by his youngest son Lal Singh to whom he talks about the harmful effects of the modern locomotive on the harvest because of its sparks and poisonous smoke. The old man dislikes the inventions of science which for him are devils, and he regards the age of science as the age of darkness. In the very opening scene we feel sense of change, and the atmosphere of uncertainty sweeping over the entire sub-continent. As Baba Nihalu emerges from the country railway station, he hears,

"the engine of the train from which he had alighted shrieked a sudden shrill whistle. The old man started. He paled and then, shaking from head to foot with nervous agitation, he shuffled on his legs as if he had urinated with fear, and finally stopped dead. Involuntarily he looked back towards the station. Then he smiled, embarrassed, glanced furtively around to discover whether anyone could have noticed him being frightened at a whistle which had become familiar enough since the branch line from Manabad had been extended that way, put his hand to his heart and blew a hot breath."


The rich pastoral atmosphere is evoked through a series of subtle images of the sun, the trees, the birds, the dusty roads, the green fields and the grey moorlands. To Anand, the sun has always been the symbol of life, energy and splendour. Baba Nihalu after alighting from the train 'emerges into the neat sun-soaked compound' and when Lalu wants to relieve his father of the weight he is carrying, Baba Nihalu looks up at the sun but is dazed by the vast splendours of the sharp rays which shoot through the sparse foliage of the Kikar trees on the roadway. The pastoral setting is further enhanced by the dusty, rutted, open high way, by the singing of Robin among the chorus of twittering sparrows which recall the atmosphere and the geography of village Daska from where Anand's mother Ishwar Kaur came. The hanging boughs of 'Jamans', 'Jackas' and 'neems', half a dozen stunted poplars, and the snaky clinging creepers, complete the picture of the outskirts of the village. Commenting on the novelist's love of nature Dr Cownjee says:

"Anand's love of nature is second only to his love of man, and with a fascinating detail he describes nature in all its moods. No Indian writer has pictured landscape as vividly as Anand, nor possessed the breadth of his canvas which ranges from mountains to valleys, from the rich golden fields to the parched dried earth." ²

Anand does not forget to mention the oncoming autumn and the poor crops on which depends the livelihood of the peasants. The cheaper rates of the harvest always bring about the doom of the villagers. Baba Nihalu's presentiment of the future calamities is evoked by such a condition and is reflected in his despair:
'I don't know how things will turn out', he fretted, his rapture fading into confused dubiousness.'

If Baba Nihalu stands for the past with all its abhorrence of change and deep-rooted fatalism, Lal Singh is the spokesman of the modern age. He is an iconoclast of the old myths and values.'

'But look how bravely it phuff-phuffs away to the north...I would mind not being a driver and going to Lahore and Bombay with it.'

Foremost among the causes responsible for the miserable life of the Indian peasants is their exploitation by the rich and the elite. Baba Nihalu has lost more than one third of his inherited land to the landlord Harbans Singh. When he seeks to redress this wrong in a court of law, he is cheated by the lawyer Balmukund. Lalu cannot tolerate the injustices of the capitalist system. He grows furious and bursts out: 'Tact or no tact...I will punch their heads and teach them the lessons of their lives. The will take advantage of you.' The life-long struggle of Baba Nihalu against the capitalist system has made him physically and mentally weak, and every fresh confrontation with this evil saps his remaining strength: 'It is strange how every time I go to town I feel nearer death.'

Every Indian peasant is deeply attached to the land where he is born and brought up, and every object of nature fills him with ineffable joy. Baba Nihalu feels the ecstasy of such a joy: 'He sniffed the air as if it were a nectar and gazed upon the landscape as if it were a heaven full of ineffable bliss.' The scorching heat is depicted through a striking image: 'The sun
was licking the sky with a long tongue of fire and blowing and scorching breath across the earth... As Baba Nihalu reaches his home in the village accepting the greetings of the village folk all along the way, Gujri his wife comes to receive him at the door like a true Indian woman. She seems to be Anand's conception of an ideal woman. In spite of the growing poverty of her family and the constant hardships, she accepts and fulfills her household responsibilities and keeps her fine spirit and love. Baba Nihalu is modelled on Anand's own grand-father who had the same name. The cheat Balmukund stands for the lawyer who, with a show of sympathy, exploits the innocent villagers, but Baba Nihalu, because of his own God-fearing nature, trusts him. Lalu however, doubts the integrity of such professionals and remarks: 'Don't send pigeons to carry your wheat, and never be flattered by the attentions of a lawyer or a whore.' The novel abounds in such witty sayings mostly spoken by Lalu. They reveal the practical wisdom of the heart.

In the category of exploiters are Harbans Singh, the landlord, Chaman Lal, the Sahukar, Balmukund, the lawyer and the Government officials who have sucked up the very life of poor peasants with false sympathy.

Lalu disregards the established convention of respecting the religious heads whose righteousness he doubts and questions. He warns his parents and his brothers: 'And beware of a religious teacher who in greed is so gluttonous that he will suck the blood of the poorest.'
The sunny and beautiful Indian landscape is graphically portrayed throughout the novel. Lalu has both physical and moral strength which are evident in his skilful performance of all field jobs and his will to increase the productivity of the land and set the house in order. His innate reformer's zeal develops into his idea of total emancipation of the oppressed peasantry and national freedom. Lalu is determined to prove his worth to the insipid fatalists of his family and the village:

"He would prove his worth to them. He would laugh at their endless woe, mock at them with joke, tease them with an unforced trick or gesture, thrust the tongue of defiance to their wondering faces and shock them out of a greybeard deadness into life. It could be done and it should be done."

This passage anticipates similar ones in Confession of a Lover.

Like Munoo, Lalu too is disgusted with the petrifying drains and squalor around him. He sharply feels the inconvenience of the 'tangled growth' on his head, and decides to have it cut in the town where he is going to visit a fair, in spite of the opposition of his elders. Keeping a 'forest on one's head' means following a 'religion of donkeys, a religion of bullocks'. He questions the relevance of 'the Katch, Kara, Kirpan, Kesh and Kangha' in the modern context. They might have been necessary when Guru Gobind Singh was fighting Aurangzeb, but not now. His love for the English style long boots and clothes is similar to that of Bakha in Untouchable.

Anand carefully observes the movement of the sun and the
changes that affect its severity in the various seasons of the year: 'The sun had lost none of its fire in spite of the approaching autumn and the earth felt hot under his feet.' And it was lowering over the shadows of the mud walls as Lalu neared home and there was slight chilly breeze blowing through the lanes.'

Lalu rebels against the dirty living conditions of the village which always pose the danger of epidemics. The passivity with which the villagers bear the yoke kindles his anger, and he earnestly wishes:

'If only a fire could come and burn these wretched hovels to the ground. He would like to see the village rebuilt with brick, as the houses of the mechanics near the Power House were being built.'

Lal Singh voices his contempt of the religious head Mahant Nandgir who will reappear in Morning Face, in the following words:

'The lecher! He ate sumptuous food, dressed in yellow silks, smoked charas and drank hemp. And if reports were true, whored and fornicated. And he was kept as a holy man, the Guru of the community.'

But Baba Sitalgar is one of the few religious characters for whom Anand has great respect as he is the symbol of Anand's own faith in service:

'For although he seemed as simple as an idiot, the dog-like devotion, the tireless loyalty, the complete abnegation of himself in the service of others that he practised indicated a depth of character that had never been gauged. Sat bachan' and 'at your service' were the only accents that fell from his lips...''
Lalu is in a better position than his friends Ghugi, Churanji and Gulan because he has had a little schooling. Like Munoo he is able to talk to Mr Hercules Long in English. But the traditional attitude of the village towards education is detrimental to the progress of the village. The elders consider it to be not only useless but also positively harmful to a peasant's son, 'for learning spoilsthe boys and enfeebled them, and made them useless for work in/fields by giving them the aims of babus.' This attitude is prevalent even to this day.

Lalu strongly resents the curtailment of his and his friends' adolescent liberties by the elders, and flares up when Ghugi expresses his inability to accompany him to the fair because of certain restrictions:

'They were always forbidding you to do this and that, these elders, always curtailing your liberty. Always frustrating. You could not even laugh in their presence. You had to join your hands gravely and say, 'I fall at your feet'. And they were ridiculous fools, ugly, uncouth lumps of flesh, wide-eyed, open-mouthed simpletons, saying prayers and mentioning the name of God all day, even as they lasciviously eyed the young girls passing in the bazaar.'

Krishan the hero-anti-hero of the autobiographical novels breathes the same spirit of discontent and rebellion.

Lalu quivers with the devastating, oppressive disgust at the cowardice of his friends who cannot raise their voice against the restrictions impinged on them by their elders.
But, at the same time he feels the necessity to grow up soon and fly far away from their grasp to the unknown lands in order to see what worlds there were and what happened in those worlds. 18

For the village folk an occasional visit to a fair is always associated with great hilarity, joy and music. The peasants' full blooded zest for life, despite their poverty and misfortunes is effectively and beautifully captured in the description of their journey to the fair in carts at night:

'...the high whimsical falsetto of the toomba broadened into a hearty joke, as the contagion of its spirit caught the driver of the cart, and the driver of the cart in which the landlord's family travelled, further on. And the light, clear sky, rich with stars, spread above the soft breeze in a dithyramb of sound, reverberating now like gong-notes, now like cymbals, and now like the drawn-out barking of a wolf or a she-hyena, till the throats of another peasant party travelling to the fair on some far-off invisible road responded with an echo, which called forth yet another party farther afield. And the atmosphere throbbed and melted with the piercing melody, with the jerky words and the shrill laughter of the chorus, and the whole earth was filled with a sudden happiness, a shrill rapture of bucolic heartiness

Lalu, along with Ghugi and Churanji, steals a ride on a cart going towards the fair. It is here that he comes in close contact with Maya, the daughter of the landlord and experiences the first strong feelings of love. But much later, she remains elusive true to her name.

Lalu is wide awake to the tricks of the town-folk, but is
revolted by the stupidity of the rustics who are easily taken in by them: 'And though he resented the cheating of the city folk, he felt angry that the rustics had earned a reputation for stupidity and condemned their offspring to a fundamental unworthiness.' In the fair, Lalu witnesses the evil drama of money everywhere, and abhors it as a curse because of his present lack of it and the hopeless state of his family finances. Urged by this prejudice, he hastens his steps 'as if seeking to escape from this market where the gods of profit reigned supreme, and neither urgency of want nor nobility of purpose seemed relevant.'

Lalu is striving to establish his identity by breaking away from the futile and worn out rites of his religion. He eats at a Muslim shop without heeding the warning of a Hindu merchant and invites the wrath of the elders of the village. The most drastic step he takes against his religion is to get his long hair cut. However, he cannot shake off the fear of the possible consequences. It is so great that he avoids his acquaintances and moves hurriedly towards his house in a distracted manner: 'He glanced round distractedly and then hurried capering here and there, tense and frightened, the rustling of his tahmet sounding in his ears like the swish of a gale. At last he was about twenty feet from the house.'

The news of this piece of sacrilege spreads all over the village like wild fire. He is beaten and abused by his father; the whole village turns against him, with the exception of his brother Dayal Singh, who is more concerned with genuinely
spiritual affairs than with customs. There is a touch of Anand's own maternal uncle Dayal Singh in his character. In spite of this onslaught, Lalu feels that he has committed no sin, and his heart throbbed with the hurt-pride of confidence that he had done right. He had obeyed the dictates of his own conscience. In him and out-side him in the world, he felt as he drew a sobbing breath, he would be victorious and people would admire him. But here he was defeated. Like Bakha, Lalu is filled with rage to strike his tormentors, but manages to control himself. 'But the clarion bell of anger rang again in his head, rang incessantly and held him in its spell.' For violating the religious custom Lalu receives a cruel punishment. With a blackened face, he is paraded on the back of a donkey through the alleys of the village, and Lalu virtually goes through hell. His abhorrence of the world grows intenser and deeper and the real picture of the elders appears before his eyes: 'And they are hypocrites. They are not half of them as good as they pretend to be—wrinkled old swines who cursed and reviled me, and those women, with their filthy, shameless abuse! Recoiling in rage against their cruelty red-eyed and terrible, he had planted his feet on the earth and stood, the hulking frame of his body waving like a tree in a storm.'

The intense emotional experience makes Lalu feel 'older, wider, and larger'. It also urges him to question the very meaning of life: 'For what was life? What did it mean? He asked himself... What was it if it did not mean that one could enjoy himself, be happy, since in the end one had to die? To
be sure it was not play, one had to work.' The strength of his character lies in this realization. He resolves to work hard to relieve his family of the debt under which it is groaning. But remembering the treatment meted out to him, he begins to doubt the wisdom of all his good intentions to serve his parents, his family and work for the welfare of the village: 'They all hated him. And if you could not do such a little thing as have your hair cut without being abused and beaten and insulted by the village, how could you do anything that went against their other superstitions?'

By investing the traits of his own mother Anand emphasises the qualities of Indian womanhood:

'She had a great soul. How she accommodated herself to everyone and everything, in spite of her iron will! How she bent that iron will to the service of others, day and night without any gain for herself. For she desired neither clothes nor delicacies of any kind. She was satisfied so long as she could provide these for others.'

Lalu does not approve of the loan being taken by his father from the iniquitous moneylender Chaman Lal, at an exorbitant rate of interest, to pay the Government dues. He is not afraid to rebuke the Seth for his cruelty and greed. The Government officials who come to collect taxes also exploit the poor peasants. All their (the peasants') misery as Lalu concludes, is due to their heavy debts: 'And the peasants were an easy prey to such fools, poor, ignorant, groping fools, and the whole cause of their ruin was debt.'
Then follows the visit of Mr Hercules Long, the Deputy Commissioner, who unlike other English officials, is sympathetic to the villagers, and is determined to alleviate their sufferings. His nervous encounter with the buffalo, Suchi, serves as a comic relief from the agony of the preceding scenes. It appears that Mr England of Coolie, and Mr Long are meant to serve a similar purpose. Both are fresh from England, both are kind to the natives and are untainted by the false pride of Englishness. If Babu Nathram of Coolie tries to get undue favour from Mr England through flattery, here the villainous Herbans Singh resorts to the same device to win Mr Long's favour. If there is Munoo to attend on the former, here is Lalu to win the favour of the latter with his smattering of English. The visits of both the Sahibs end in a fiasco. Mr Long creates a troop of boy scouts with Lalu as its leader, much to the disgust and anger of the landlord and the Sahukar. The entire village resents the progressive measures of the Deputy Commissioner.

One of the causes that aggravate the misery of the Indian peasantry is false family prestige. Lalu feels irritated at the unnecessary expenditure his family incurs by feeding the 'ungrateful brotherhood and holy men as greedy as dogs', on the occasion of Dayal Singh's marriage. He knows that the loan taken by his father cannot be repaid, and will lead to the confiscation of the mortgaged property. Anand thus speaks out against marriage customs still observed by most of the rural and urban people, to maintain a false social prestige. Lalu
seems determined to eradicate the evils of indebtedness and empty illusion of family prestige. But his attempts to change this world are constantly foiled by the villagers' deep-rooted superstitions and adherence to old dogmas. The whole trend of his existence seems purposeless without beginning or end.

Lalu condemns his father's, as well as his brother's, total reliance on God as a panacea for all their misfortunes. He abhors his father's mumbled prayers all day and night, and resents his brother's practice of sitting on a lotus seat reciting the name of Wah-Guru: 'They did not want to think, to feel, to do anything, but relegated the responsibility of all their misfortunes as well as their blessings on Karma and God who did not exist apart from His apostles.'

The passive suffering of the people which he attributes to their absolute reliance on God enrages him so much that he begins to challenge. His very existence: 'If He exists, if He really can punish people for not saying prayers and violating the laws of religion, let Him come and strike me dead as I am walking along now', he would say to himself... His conception of God, if at all He exists, is that of a hostile force.

also

Anand has given adequate attention to Lalu's adolescent behaviour. Maya, the illusion of his dreams becomes real and palpable to Lalu when he accidentally meets her in the hall of his house, where preparations for his brother's marriage are going on. She seems

'so beautiful and soft and tender...ripe like the
cornstalk browned by the reflection of the sun, her breasts, her hands, her lips, her nose, her hair, her high-pitched voices, her shy movements storming his senses so that his heart beat turbulently and he stood on the brink of madness...'

But this romantic drama closes as abruptly as it has begun. Lalu, having been discovered by the Landlord with his daughter, is falsely accused of theft, and Napoo Singh, the policeman is called to arrest him. Frustrating the evil designs of the Landlord, Lalu manages to flee. With deep humiliation in his heart, Lalu leaves the village with his final words to Harnam Singh: 'On that hound's head rests the troubles of your stable.' I won't live in this cursed village...I...

He reaches Manabad still fearing arrest. He feels that as 'a rustic he would always remain an outsider to that world. Having no money and no where to go, Lal Singh scans the unknown world before him who inspires awe with its phantasmagoric shapes. Attracted by Lehna Singh's call to join the army, and urged by his own desire to pay off his family debts and also to escape from the clutches of law, he joins the army. He is taken to Ferozpur cantonment, and is introduced to Khusiram, the Head Clerk, as a 'gem of a man, a diamond, a ruby among men.'

Captain Owen is sympathetic to Lalu, and saves him from the police arrest on the false charge of theft. Owen Sahib's kindness and love of poetry are described in Seven Summers as well. Raja Sansar Chand, the kind ruler of the Kangra Hills, referred to here, in Kirpu's narrative, reappears in Morning Face.
Lalu is enlisted in the 68th Rifles. The tortures of military life, and the inhuman treatment by some officers on top and his own fear of imprisonment, make Lalu wonder about his future: 'What is my destiny in this place? What will happen to me?' He yearns to go back home, but he knows there is no escape from this prison. He is now beset with the memory of his village life and is more concerned about his family affairs. Soon, he receives the news of his father's serious illness and goes back on leave where he gets many shocks. The marriage of his brother does not take place; Sharam Singh, his elder brother is hanged for killing Haridit Singh the lover of his wife; most of the remaining land is lost in paying the advocate's fees for defending Sharam Singh, and uncle Harnam Singh is obliged to work as a coolie having lost all his land to the relentless moneylenders. What Anand has depicted is common experience in the Indian villages even today.

The last scene of the novel brings out the character of Baba Nihalu more vividly. He does not want to die because he has yet to fight injustices. Anand disapproves of the religious beliefs of both the Hindus and Muslims which make them hate each other. The Maulvi calls Baba Nihalu an infidel. The prophet will not intercede on his behalf on the day of Judgement. Lalu reproaching the Maulvi for his baseless, vicious and wrong opinion, observes:

'But each day in life is judgement day... And surely there is no favouritism shown to men in heaven, if there be such a place, just because men belong to one religion or another.'
On the expiry of his leave Lalu returns to the cantonment, taking a touching leave of his family and the entire village. In spite of the warmth the villagers show at the time of farewell Lalu feels that he can never identify himself with the village which had previously heaped abuses and humiliations on him. He sees through the snobbery behind this ritualistic farewell:

"He felt as if he would break down with the sadness of leaving this land. But though the liquid welled up in his eyes and there was the taste of salt on his tongue, he could not weep, and merely sat listening to the rattling wheels of the carriage speeding along through the rich hot shade after the sunset."

In this novel Anand has concentrated on the conflict between the adolescent and the adult worlds against the pastoral background of an Indian village. The pastoral atmosphere of the novel is linked with the dominant mood of the characters. Illuminating this aspect of the novel Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha observes:

"The pastoral motive runs through the narrative and forms the main impulse behind the poetry of the novel... It is the unity of character with landscape that makes the village so memorable."

According to Dr M.K. Naik, The Village is a memorable picture of pre-independence Indian rustic life, drawn with understanding and objectivity. The weaknesses/traditionalism are exposed through the observer who is alive to the modernity and its possibilities for a fuller life; yet the saving graces of the old world values are not forgotten.

Dr Alastair Niven comments on the similarity between The Village and the autobiographical novels:
Several of the themes of the autobiographical novels are expressed in *The Village*, Lalu's fantasy love for Maya...recall the closing incident in the autobiographical novel *Morning Face* between Krishna and Helen...The importance of the landscape in serving as a companion to Lalu's changing moods matches Krishna's love for nature. Like Krishna Lalu is praised by the patronizing European officials...The most important parallel lies, however, in Lalu's growing objectivity about his own environment. Krishna experiences this as he grows older, and just as Mulk Raj Anand had to work overseas before he could write with any degree of dispassion about India, so Lalu has to go away enlisting as a sepoy in the Indian army, before he can begin to see his own village with detachment...Once again one notices the romantic lament for a lost innocence that had to die if social consciousness and the urge to save humanity were to grow. Anand's concern is to eradicate poverty and disease and injustice, essentially practical concerns that need intelligence, worldliness, idealism and a certain ruthlessness to become manifest.  

Haydn Moore Williams brilliantly sums up the salient feature of *The Village*:

'*The Village* marks a change in Anand's writing. There is less practical satire and a more objective portrayal of the lives of the exploited, the sturdy Sikh and the Muslim tenant farmers of the Punjab. Unlike Coolies and untouchables of his previous books the Punjabi farmers are proud, colourful, militant and passionate. Lalu's father is proud...yet he is in the hands of the moneylenders, lives most of the time in poverty and suffers one catastrophe after another. He dies proud, a bitter and anguished. He is like character in a Scottish ballad.'
III

Across The Black Waters

Across the Black Waters published in 1940 is the sequel to The Village, and furthers the action with Lalu embarking with his troop for 'Vilayat'. About the genesis of the book, Anand observes: 'This book was sketched out in rough draft in Barcelona -- Madrid during January and April 1937 and entirely rewritten in the relatively more tranquil atmosphere of Chinnor, Oxon, between July and December 1939.'

In this novel Anand draws upon his own on-the-spot-experience of the Spanish Civil War as well as upon his knowledge of those who had fought in Flanders during the first world war. Out of his brief experience of a fortnight in the 'university trenches' in Spain, he has produced a unique war novel which can vie with the best in this genre, not only in Indo-Anglian Literature, but also in the entire range of Indian literature. Like Stephen Crane, Anand draws a realistic portrait of the war, which is grim, cruel, dreadful and sordid. But unlike Crane, he also tackles some other problems such as the conflict between the East and the West, the exploitation of the poor by those in power and authority, and the backwardness of the Indian peasantry. The fundamental irony around which the novel is built, is that the Indians, who were herded by the thousand to fight in Europe for the King Emperor, were not only totally unsuited to the modern war-fare, but also were bewildered by their ignorance of the new circumstances and
the uncertainties that loomed large:

'And they did not know where they were. They did not know the customs of this country, the ways of these people being different from the behaviour of the Tommies in the cantonments of Hindustan, and even from the people in the big towns of 'Franceville'. They did not know the language of the country which might have helped them to feel more at home. They had none of the consolations, amenities or alleviations of the land in which they had been born and bred. They did not know what they were fighting for or what anyone else was fighting for.'

Behind the tragic drama of human life as depicted in this and his earlier novels, is the new fate — Money. Illuminating the background of the entire trilogy Anand writes:

'I, therefore, wanted to seize on the tragic drama, which was the great truth about them, the fundamental conflict between the old 'fate' and the new 'fate' of money, brought into India by the Sarkar—dethroning all the gods. Somehow, this new fate seemed to me to be dominating much of the inner life of the conflicting actors in my theatre, and yet outside of them, hovering over their lives like a vast cloud of doom, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.'

And this is how this new fate has influenced the life of the hero of this novel:

'But the same omnipotent fate, which had led to his being insulted, still dominates him in the army. As a mercenary soldier, drilled to commit organized
violence for Rs. 15 a month, plus uniform, he has no choice at all. And when the First World comes, he is drafted to the Western Front without being asked whether he wished to go. Most of the Indian soldiers did not know who they were fighting, why they were fighting and what would happen to them. They were just churned up in the war machine, in the bogs, mud and slush of Flanders.  

In spite of the all-pervading gloom and fear of death, the soldiers who are all peasants at heart, are able to keep up their spirit of fellow-feeling, their broad humour, their simplicity and their attachment to the land where they were born and brought up. Thus Anand has successfully captured the essential Punjabi spirit in the novel.

Ruminating over his father's death, but not much affected by it, Lalu set out on the ship, brimming over with the excitement of new adventures abroad. But he is disturbed, as his other companions are, by the thought of the unknown towards which they are heading. The Majority of the sepoys are beset with bewildering doubts such as - Where is France? Is that England? Where is the enemy? How many miles is it from here? But no one is able to find a satisfactory answer. The terror of war is so great in their hearts that the boat-salute which they receive on their arrival, is mistaken for the booming of guns in a nearby battlefield.

Lalu feels elated at having 'come across the black waters safely'—as if he really expected some calamity, the legendary
fate of all those who went beyond the seas, to befall him at any moment. Truly, the black, or rather blue water seemed uncanny, spreading for thousands of miles. It seemed as if God had spat upon the universe and the spittle had become the sea. The white flecks of the foam on the swell, where wave met wave, seemed like the froth churned out of God's angry mouth. Here again, God becomes a hostile phenomenon.

Lalu seems to have inherited not only some of the characteristic qualities of his father such as his short lithe frame, his love of the land, his generosity, his stubborn pride, and his sense of humour, but also his faith and his naivety. Apart from these inherited traits Lalu is filled with his own spirit of adventure. Far from feeling sea-sick, he finds an inmate in the sea 'which spoke the language of his soul, restless and stormtossed, while the wind went bursting with joy in the sun. And the ship was urging him forward into the unknown. He was going to Vilayat after all, England, the glamorous land of his dreams, where the sahibs came from, where people wore coats and pantaloons and led active, fashionable lives - even, so it was said, the peasants and the poor sahibs. He wondered what was his destiny.

As the ship anchors in the French waters, they are greeted by a gun-salute from a French war-ship. It scares the sepoys as much as the train-whistle frightens Baba Nihalu in the opening scene of The Village. This again is indicative of the change that is taking place in the world.
Lalu's European experience brings many new discoveries. Unlike the reticent Tommies, he finds the French people quite cordial like the Indians. Marseilles, with its filthy lanes teeming with men, women, and children, curious to see the Indian soldiers, resembles any Indian city. The full-blooded zest of the Indian peasants finds a reflection in the exuberance of the French people who are welcoming the Indian soldiers. The French women, however, exhibit greater freedom in their rejoicings than their Indian counterparts. Lalu's sexual urges are stirred when he sees 'the smiling pretty-frocked girls with breasts half showing, bright and gleaming with a happiness that he wanted to think was all for him. Such a contrast to the sedate Indian women who seemed to grow old before they were young, flabby and tired, except for a cowherd woman with breasts like pyramidal rocks!'...

The characteristic remoteness of the Indo-Indian relationship does not exist between the Indians and the French, not only because of the open nature of the French, but also owing to the very important fact that there is no conflict between the rulers and the ruled here. From Marseilles, Lalu and his companions - Uncle Kirpu', Daddy Dhanoo, Havildar Lakshman Singh and others comprising the 69th Division, reach Orleans, where Joan of Arc had once repulsed the English army. The cloudy and wet weather of Orleans creates difficulties for the soldiers who have come from a land of bright sunshine. When they see the entirely new motor lorries capable of achieving
tremendous speeds and with astounding carrying capacities, intelligent men, like Lalu begin to think of the advantages these machies have over their own bullock-carts. Lalu is surprised at the wonderful achievement of the Westerners who can, 'arrest the movement of stars on a map, catch time in the hands of a watch and harness electricity as if it were a mule.' 7

How a common soldier when unduly promoted to power and authority can become frivolous and proud, is depicted in the character of Suba Singh. He rises to the rank of Jemadar through sheer favouritism. He illtreats Lalu, his close friend, and uncle Kirpu, who is his senior not only in age, but also in experience. He has become, as Lalu observes, 'overbearing, masterful and all-knowing.' 8

The sepoys contrast their own humiliating status with people as low as the coolies 'of this land, who seem to be coolies only during their work-hours, and become shahibs' in their own right when they put on suits and go out with their girl-friends.

Lalu and his companions feel they have come to the land of Lilliputians where everything in nature is small except the people themselves. Kirpu exclaims:

'Look at their rivers - not bigger than our small nullahs. Their whole land can be crossed in a night's journey, when it takes two nights and days from the frontier to my village in the district of Kangra. Their rain is like the pissing of a child. And their storms are a mere breeze in the tall grass. ...' 9
The width of seven of these (rivers) won't make the bed of Jhelum at its narrowest.

The two sweepers drinking wine with Tommies and a woman is a startling discovery for the sepoys who have come from the land of untouchability. Like Bakha, Lalu too is enthusiastic about the articles displayed in the market, but his days in the Mission School at Sherkot makes him recollect a bit of history he has read. The massive figure of a girl in the market reminds him of Joan of Arc. He draws inspiration from the bravery of that famous girl and decides to fight for his country's freedom when he is back home. Lalu also finds in what he has seen here, justification for his cherished idea of revolting against the restrictions placed on the younger generation by the elders of his village. Envying the freedom the people enjoy here in matters such as drinking and moving with women, Lalu says,

'In every land, even in our own country, it would be like this... But our elders say, 'It is not the custom to do this, it is not the custom to do that. Fools! if you are seen drinking a pot of wine you are automatically declared a drunkard, and if you look at a woman you at once become notorious as a rogue, a pimp and a whoremonger and your parents tell you that you have cut their nose in the brother-hood and no one will give you his daughter in marriage, Burnt up people! Owls!'

Uncle Kirpu is a man of wisdom whose life-long experience of peoples of various countries, their behaviour and customs make him conclude:
All men in all countries are perhaps the same ... At least, all are equal in the grave. And in life all must have duties and responsibilities; these people must have families; they are probably fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and sisters... Life wouldn't be worth living my son, without the spirit of service which is in the members of a family.' 11

Lalu sharply reacts to this homily of Kirpu and indignantly bursts out:

'But the spirit of service ought not to become a way of extracting pain out of people in the guise of duty ... You must always put on a miserable expression and remain quiet in the presence of your elders, that is respect. And of course, you must never commit the crime of being happy.' 12

This spirited denunciation of the authority of the elders forms an essential theme of Anand's autobiographical novels which appear later.

Lalu's contacts with the French girls in the 'Red Lamp' area arouses his sexual desires, but he is capable of controlling them. They are all amazed to see a mouth kiss in public. In contrast to the enjoyment by the other sepoys of the boisterous love-making of Suba, Lalu is filled with disgust:

'Instead of laughing or smiling as the others did, Lalu found himself contracting into his own skin, till he felt himself reduced to an emptiness from the centre of which his two eyes seemed to see this world as an enormous enclosure, crowded by hordes of hard, gigantic shapes which were oppressing him.' 13
Anand here shows the growth of his hero's moral character. Lalu looks at the entire drama as if he were a creature from some other world. Human folly is so vividly depicted here that one cannot help recalling the sarcastic remark of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

'Lord, what fools these mortals be...'

Army life disintegrates all religious prejudices and intolerance. Lalu feels the confirmation of his anti-religious attitude when men like Dhanoo and Kirpu silently bear the insult to their religion and cannot object to Lalu and other sepoys going to the kitchen in their boots of cowhide skin, leather belts and handling food without washing their hands.

In spite of all their diversions the sepoys cannot forget the disturbing doubts regarding the war and their destination. But no definite answer comes to them. The troops continue to march ahead without knowing where they are going. Everything is left to rumours and surmises. The soldiers fret and fume under great mental tension and curse the Sarkar, the war, and their own lot.

The adventure in the unknown creates a warm fellowship among the sepoys. In the alien land the anchor of Lalu's strength and faith are Daddy Dhanoo and uncle Kirpu in whom the milk of human kindness flows in abundance. On the other hand, there are Lance Naik Loknath and Jemadar Suba Singh who are surfeit with power and authority and ill-treat the soldiers. Among the English officers, Captain Owen is extremely kind to the soldiers, especially to
Lalu.

From Orleans they reach Rouen, where Joan was burnt alive for 'heresy'. Here, for the first time they become aware of the wounded soldiers from the smell of medicines. They still do not know where actually the war is going on. At Calais Lalu is moved by the pathetic scene of the French soldiers bidding sorrowful farewell to their families. He realises that human sentiments are the same everywhere. He even prays: 'Oh no, oh no, let the train not go; let it not break their hearts.' So great is sorrow in his heart that he identifies himself with the bereaved families.

Lalu is sensitive enough to reassess his own position and the futility of his enterprise, in view of his ignorance of the vast unknown world lying before him:

'He felt small in comparison with this gigantic world, a poor insignificant fool of a peasant boy who had had to run away from the village and join the army and who had now come to fight, a joke among these grown-up men for his new-fangled notions, a ridiculous fool in spite of the grave, wise airs he gave himself, small and feeble and half-afraid.'

They at last arrive at Lillers from where they have to march to the front. As they move on Lalu wonders about the rationality of war which means nothing but devastation of life and wealth. The chief strength of Lalu's character perhaps lies in his capacity to distinguish between the right and the wrong, but he cannot comprehend why civilized and sane people should get involved in war. The sanity in Lalu persists even amidst this 'insanity which had blown off the towers of the churches, and he could not believe that ordinary men and women of good sense, and the Governments
of France, England and Germany, which were saner and wiser than the ordinary people over whom they ruled, could be engaged in a war in which men were being wounded and houses shattered.\textsuperscript{16}

Whenever he gets an opportunity Anand assails the prejudices which people usually harbour against their 'inferiors' in caste, creed and colour. Lalu too, feels an aversion to the black Moorish soldiers, but soon realising his mistake admonishes himself: 'If the French liked the blacks why shouldn't he like them.'\textsuperscript{17} Kirpu also cannot tolerate the Moors being called savages by Dhanoo. He bursts out: 'Don't talk like a Brahmin dog... They have some religion... Surely every people has his own religion and God is one, and whether they may be black or yellow or pink they all have eyes, legs, arms and heads... Naked we come into the world and naked we will go...\textsuperscript{18}

Marching forward they reach Arques, Wallahcap, and finally Wulvergham from where they have to go into the trenches to fight the enemy. Their community life of the past which they had come to accept as a matter of course, is shattered when it is announced they will have to fight the battle individually.

The 69th Regiment, consisting of Lalu Kirpu Dhanoo and others, enters the communication trenches filled with mud and water, and the enemy bullets flying over them. The victims of the war lying in the trenches 'dead and finished' frighten Lalu and remind him of a similar fate awaiting him. Day and night, plagued by fog, mud and rain, hungry, and terror-stricken, Lalu keeps aiming at the enemies if not to kill them, at least to defend
himself. He looks at the inclement sky and feels that even God of
is angry with them because their inhuman acts. The grey sky
appears to him as if it were the face of God looking at the
world, sullen and angry, though sad at the travail of men warring
in this soggy wet earth, torn by shells and bullets in the haze
of an ever-thickening mist.19

Notwithstanding its sombre theme, there is no dearth of
humorous episodes in the novel which are meant to relieve the grow-
ing tension. For instance, when Dhanoo informs that twelve Muslim
soldiers have 'gone to celestial heavens', Kirpu humorously remarks,
'They will get fairies there if their prophet was right.'20
Again, when Dhanoo suspects that the ration party might have been
shelled by the enemies when it does not arrive in time, Kirpu
says: 'If they prevent our ration party from getting across, we
could prevent their food from reaching them...And both the armies
could not go on fighting on empty stomachs...21 Kirpu's unfuffled
serenity and practical wisdom are indeed worthy of note.

The devastating drama of the war which is resumed after a
brief pause because of preparations on both the sides, is vividly
captured:

'For the enemy's big guns, rifles and machine guns
began to hurry the sepoys back from the barbed wire
entanglements and the empty ration wagons or the
fatigue parties, issuing at first a gentler reminder
then a clear challenge, then a well-aimed shot, accom-
panied by curses and imprecations uttered through
rifles, then the angry stutter of a machine gun, an
impatient, insistent threat which became the ferocious
growling of a hundred fire-tongued lions, of a thousand
flaming tigers, of a million roaring elephants,'
bursting upon the world from the jungle. And since there were always a few slow-moving stragglers, or the masses of darkness clustering like men to the hallucinated vision of the tired, crazed brains on duty in the trenches, the thunderous reverberations of the storm-tempered beasts filled the air, night and morning, morning and night.²²

Anand aptly compares the soldiers who are fighting against their will to the souls of sinners being tortured in Hell. In this depressing atmosphere, they are possessed by the thought of their doom, sitting silent and gloomy in the trenches:

'For indeed, if the cats were all of the same colour in a dark city, the days were the colours of the nights or only a shade lighter, and the murky, greenish grey sky was the exact colour of the roof of hell which the sages in India spoke about, where the souls of the sinners were subjected to the ordeals, first of trailing through the mud of marshes, full of slimy, ravenous rats and blood-sucking leeches, then through a forest of tangled bushes and thickets of thorns, then to wait in misery, naked and cold and hungry, for the coming of the rain which was to wash them clean of their sins, for the ordeal of fire which was to purge them, and for the final judgement before the throne of Brahma seated in all his glory on a mighty throne surrounded by hosts of angels and fairies. They had already come through the long and wary trail and were now in the stage of waiting in this vast, timeless universe for their doom to fulfill itself as if they had been suddenly transplanted into the world of their ancestors where men struggled against the elements, the Gods and Destiny.'²³

There is complete lack of involvement in the soldiers who
are fighting for the money they receive every month from the Sarkar. They intensely feel the futility of the war. However eager they may appear to kill their opponents, they are in fact like conscripts brutalized and willing to fight like trained bulls, but without a will of their own, soulless automatons in the execution of the army code, though in the strange dark cope of their nature, unschooled by the Sarkar, there lie the sensitiveness of their own humanity, their hopes, their fears and their doubts.

Then the first major attack is repulsed by the Germans, Lalu and Kirpu become conscious of the inadequacy of their weapons. Kirpu rightly curses the Sarkar for thus endangering the lives of the soldiers: 'This bitch of a Sarkar has not got any big guns as the Germans.'25 It makes Lalu remember also his relatively comfortable life back home at his village, with a longing to go back.

As the war intensifies Lalu's close friends begin to die in quick succession. Daddy Bhanso dies in a reservoir, and the tall borex-like Ramnath Singh is shot by Subedar Suchet Singh for insubordination. Lalu is shocked by the cruelties and atrocities of war. He cannot understand why the people of Vilayat, whom he has always admired so much, were filially destroying each other, ruining their villages and cities. Amand's own partiality for the English had been shattered in a similar way when he saw their cruelty in crushing the general strike of the English labourers in 1926. Lalu retains his presence of mind throughout the battle. Avoiding a German sepoys charge Lalu pounces upon him, and with his boycott kills him, and even steals his watch. Lalu is surprised at his own cruelty, and feels repentant. It
is evident that the spirit of the war leads him on in spite of himself.

Lalu's zeal for reform finds an impetus when he sees a French farm after he has returned to the billet from the front. As a peasant he takes a keen interest in the way the French farmers maintain their farms. The pigs here are clean, red and fat, cow-sheds are spotless, and the cows themselves yield far more milk than the Indian ones. He is surprised to hear they are milked by machines. The mettlesome horses in their dark velvet coats for the winter also attract his attention. The farm makes him think:

'If it was typical of Vilayati peasant households then all his righteous indignation against his own village folk had been justified and his aspiration to live as European farmers lived a great ideal. He wished some of the old fogies of his village were here, for then he could show them how true had been his talk about reforming the village'.

This marks the beginning of his dream of an ideal farm at home.

The only attraction for the sepoys lies in the hope of getting some rewards at the end of their career so that they might be able to free their mortgages. Therefore, it is no wonder that 'the information about the rewards was the chief preoccupation of the sepoys, talking about it their main consolation in exile the inspiration of it, what spurred them on to battle'.

Lalu, too, is keen on them so that he can be in a position to discharge the duties he owes to his family.
Captain Owen realizes the tragedy of the Indian soldiers in the war and is bold enough to say, 'All the rules of war, theorems, all the ideas - everything has been shattered in this war buried in the mud.'

Away from the misery of the battlefield, in the billet, Lalu gets an opportunity to ponder how the European farmers have become so prosperous. He is here preoccupied with the idea as to how he may help the ignorant villagers of his native place. In a letter to his mother Lalu describes the wonderful achievements of the European farmers, and tells how they have reached the pinnacles of glory:

'This country is full of precious things such as machine ploughs, steel implements, sheep, pigs, cows, chickens, beetroot, potatoes, and apple wine... They plough five times as much land in a day with tractor machines, as we do in ten days with wooden land screecher. And they use manures full of medicines... The house in which I live is like a palace and yet it belongs to a farmer. Only he does not think it below his dignity to keep poultry and sell eggs or to rear pigs. Oh, how clean is the farm! The floors of the stables shine like mirrors! And smell - you never hear the name of it!

The reason why these people are happier is because they do not borrow money from moneylenders, but from the Cooperative Bank at very low interest... Every child is put to school and boys and girls study together... The women here walk in public without purdah and look straight into the eyes of men who should tease them. They read, write, play,
rise on horses, play cards but no one dares to call them immoral for these things ... The machines can not only conquer the earth but the heavens. "29 (A)

Like Anand's other heroes, but with a little more impatience, Lalu struggles to live not only for himself but also for his village. He hopes: 'I shall probably come through unscathed, because I don't want to die. ...' (B).

The best instance of Anand's subtle use of irony about the reward a soldier gets for his bravery in war, is to be seen in uncle Kirpu's reaction to the news that Lachman Singh is to receive the posthumous award of the Indian Order of Merit: 'A life pension addressed to Havildar Lachman Singh, Village, Pool of Blood, Tehsil, Purgatory, District, Hell -- Wah, don't speak of it.' 30

Human considerations are almost forgotten by those in power. Lance Corporal Lok Nath serves as an illustration. Taking umbrage at some humorous remarks of uncle Kirpu, Loknath arrests him for disobedience. Unable to bear the humiliation, the kindly old man commits suicide. Lalu's last anchor of hope and inspiration is gone.

This unbearable loss urges Lalu to think that neither his youthful outbreaks, nor the passive acceptance of life in the army are the proper ways to live usefully. Having reached this turning point, he questions his own nature:

'In him the two poles of his nature seemed always to have been quarrelling as if he had not decided
whether to burst out of his skin, as it were, and live outside himself, or recline back, self exiled, pain marred mutilated with the memories of those hindrances which the world had put in front of him. The two anti-types had revolved in a furious whirl of the axle tree during his boyhood. He was the contradiction who had cultivated a pride in excess of a dignity ... bent on the consumption of his unrestrained impulses, as if he could cheat nature and take happiness by surprise.

In the final phase of the rush towards the German trenches Lalu is wounded in the thigh and is taken prisoner by the Germans. This is a befitting end to the novel because it prepares the background for Lalu's revolutionary action in the third volume of the Trilogy, The Sword and the Sickle.

In Across the Black Waters Anand reveals consummate skill in tackling a theme rare and unique, in the entire range of Indian writing in English. It holds the interest of the reader and awakens him to the brutalities of war. It also exposes the exploitation of the Indian soldiers by the British for their own purposes. At the same time it stresses the beneficial aspects of the Western civilization. The most powerful impact of the novel, however, is in the sense of futility and meaningless- ness- it succeeds in creating in respect of war. It has been highly praised by many discerning critics.

Dr. Alastair Niven referring to the compact structure and the universally important theme of the book, writes:

' Anand's writing is at its best, least given to a
sort of poeticising looseness, when it tries to convey strain and nervous intensity. For this reason Across the Black Waters is probably the best novel since Untouchable, for it exactly communicates the claustrophobic tension of men in the front line, the immanence of death and the pervading sense of inevitability which, though it is the source of Anand's anger, is at the same time at the root of so much Indian fiction...Across the Black Waters is other things than a humanitarian account of the expliation of the lower ranks in the wartime, but it is an expose of military officialdom that its social commentary is more explicit. 32

Dr M.K. Naik has to say on the novel:

Across the Black Waters has a well-controlled, taut structure in which the major themes are blended together harmoniously and the central figure of Lalu gives unity to the entire picture. 33

Evaluating Across the Black Waters as a war novel Dr Krishna Mandal Sinha observes:

In spite of its decorous theme, Across the Black Waters lacks the sureness of accomplished art. Anand seems to write out of his depths, as he leaves native grounds to describe the global catastrophe. He is, however, at his best evoking sensuous pictures and in providing broad human content to his subject. But the inner certainty of vision and deep emotional conviction which characterize great war novels—War and Peace, for example—are not there. There is no doubt, however, about the author's pacific sentiments and the cumulative effect of the novel is powerful. 34

It is difficult to fully agree with Dr Sinha's contention, for Anand never leaves his Indian background even if he is dealing
with a theme which has a universal implication. Throughout the novel it is mostly the Indian soldiers who are depicted as the most desperate victims. Lalu's inability to decide whether to 'burst out of his skin or to recline back' is in conformity with Anand's own literary theory: 'I believe in posing the question rather than answering it.'

Stressing the historical importance of the novel Dr Srinivasa Iyengar writes:

'...Apart from an occasional passage of introspection... the main narrative, with its burden of incident, comedy and tragedy, moves with a certain precipitation and the reader can sniff in these pages the atmosphere of war-torn France in 1914-18.

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IV

The Sword and the Sickle

The symbolic title of the novel is derived from the following stanza of Blake's 'Merlin's Prophecy',

The sword sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field,
The sword he sung a song of death,
But could not make the sickle yield.

They are also suggested by the well known symbols of Hammer and sickle. In this novel the sword and the sickle stand respectively for the power of money and authority inherent in the bourgeoisie and the Sarkar, and for the fruitful earth, the peasantry, the poor, and the untouchables, for whom Frantz Fanon
uses the term 'Lumpen-Proletariat'. Anand says in *Apology for Heroism*: 'There is a living myth and a dead myth and the desire image, which is the basis of revolutionary romanticism, must really be creative and must help men to integrate in society and not provide a formula for escape. Poetry must become a kind of courage.' This may be applied to Lalu who struggles to achieve 'the desire image' through 'revolutionary romanticism'. Here the poetry of life lies in freedom and in socialism which treats all men as equal, irrespective of class, caste, or creed. Anand cannot see the relevance of the Vedantic ideal of oneness with God when most of the people are consigned to the inequalities of hell on earth. This novel attempts to show the way of liberation to the peasants.

The novel which comes after *Across the Black Waters* and completes the trilogy, follows the progress of Lalu from the stark awareness of death, devastation, and futility of war to the noble ideal of revolution. It is the continuation of his search for identity which he has not been able to find so far. Here we find him nearer realisation, through the People, Revolution, Reason and Love, and through an incessant self questioning. He is no longer content with merely protesting against the world, but takes upon himself the task of changing it. His pilgrim's progress from the village to Flanders and back to India, has taught him 'the doctrine of struggle—of life as a struggle.'

After spending five years in the German prisoner-of-war camp, Lalu returns to his country hoping that he will get a respectable rank in the army as a reward for his distinguished service, as
well as the piece of land promised earlier. But he gets neither of these because of his association with the 'seditionists', Barkatullah, Chattopadhyay and Hardayal in Germany. He is humiliated further by being demobilized. If the first humiliation had driven him away from the village, the second greets him when he returns to India.

While he is heading for the Lahore cantonment, he learns about the ruthless massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, which only confirms what he had heard in Germany. The woeful tales of his fellow passengers make him feel that 'although the war was over and though it did not happen in India it seemed ... to have happened to India.'

Lalu sticks to his conviction that all human beings are equal even if they belong to different casts and creeds. When asked by a traveller about his caste, he says: 'I have no religion or caste since I have been in Vilayat among beef and pig-eating sahibs.' He feels like a stranger in the cantonment, for except Rhusiram and Colonel Peacock, he knows none. The memory of the ideal French farm is fresh in his mind, and he asks Babu Rhusiram for the grant of land to start a farm in the Vilayti style. Lalu's love of land is as deep as Gangu's in Two Leaves and a Bud. Its denial and his demobilization from the army frustrate him, and he is filled with rage at the betrayal. He emerges from Colonel Peacock's room where the decree on his destiny has been passed, recalling the words of Ghalib:
very insulted and injured,
I emerged from your lane, my beloved ... 5

It is this typical Indian attitude that gives him strength even in despair.

In Lalu's account of the ravages of war lies the bitter truth that even victory can be meaningless and ridiculous. Referring to the sudden awakening of the people to the realities of war, Lalu says:

'After four years of fighting they had suddenly awakened one morning to find themselves bereft of everything they had, bar the rags to hide their nakedness ... There were riots in Germany, for some hadn't a morsel to keep soul and body together ... The English though exulted in their victory soon realized that some who should have been there were no more. And after the first few days of joy, there was heaviness in the atmosphere, the jins and bhuts went brooding everywhere.'

On both the occasions, when Lalu is disgraced and humiliated first by the elders of his village, and then by the Sarkar, he feels defiant. He wishes he could have smashed everything in the office, just as he had thought of breaking the heads of his humiliators in the village. But not being able to translate his indignation into action, he wonders and finds a clue in uncle Kirpu's words: 'soldiers' honour lay in his right to obey'.

Arriving home, he finds that his family has disintegrated. The brothers have separated. The land is lost. His mother has died two years before languishing for him. Dayal Singh has become an
ancetic and gone to Haridwar. Lalu sees that the gap between the rich and the poor has become wider. Wide-spread famine has engulfed the peasantry, who have become beggars and coolies in the towns. But he discovers that in spite of their abject misery, the people have learnt to organise themselves and fight for their rights. Thus, two major incidents, his dismissal from the army and the political unrest among the simple farmers in the village, urge him to take up the path of action. Uncle Hernam shows how the British in India exploited the country's natural resources and its people:

"'They took away crores of rupees as free gifts and loans from the country to support their war and foodstuffs to help to stem the privation of the memnies in Vilayat ... They took our grain, our timber, our tea, ... and the oil from the poor man's saucer lamp. There are some people in the villages around here today who hide their nakedness in the clothes discarded by those who have died of plague while their children go naked! And there are people who have been forced off the fertile lands with the connivance of the Sarkar."

It is this challenge of the new Fate that Lalu decides to accept. He has seen death and devastation stalking this land in the form of famine. The old myth of Kali, the Goddess of war, provides the symbolic framework of Across the Black Waters. In the present novel the old myth has been replaced by the new myths - Money, People, Revolution, Reason, Love. It is the new myth that inexorably governs the fate of Lalu. Anand describes this new Fate thus:
It was a Fate which seemed to him to have been working before the war, the incomprehensible Destiny which had something to do with the school he went to, with the macadamized roads which had connected the village to the town for movement and transport, with miles of railways ... with fleets of ships carrying cargoes of commodities and men ... and the war in which he and the other sepoys had fought. It was the pitiless Fate which, like Kali, the old Goddess of Destruction, had shouted for blood and taken the toll of crores of dead in battle and which, it seemed, still spread starvation, death and disease among the survivors of the war .... It had eluded his grasp, it had never been comprehensible to him, because it seemed to have been hidden behind the illusions to which he had aspired, behind the mirage of picturesque Vilayati farms and Sahibhood. But now, from the corroded hearts of the people at home and his own bafflement, he had vague glimmerings of this new, inexorable Deity in the Pantheon of Indian Gods. 9

Maya has come in Lalu's life as a houri, but she has so far remained insubstantial true to her name. She has lingered in Lalu's memory throughout his adventures across the black waters. But at last she appears as a real woman capable of showering her love on Lalu, though her aristocracy frequently comes in the way. Maya, who is now a widow, comes to Lalu at the caravanserai, and when he is persuaded by Professor Verma to take up service at the house of aristocratic socialist landlord Kunwar Rampal Singh, she elopes with him.

At the Rajgarh station, Lalu recognizes the count who had come to the prison camp in Germany, the self-same easy going, loosely-
dressed, quick witted bufoon who once seen could never be forgotten, his straight hair weighting his forehead and giving him the air of being ducked in thought, a lurking smile on the corners of his full lips and on the high cheek-bones, which seemed to contract his eyes behind the thick glasses.10 This vivid portrayal conveys an adequate idea of the count's eccentric but amiable personality. He loves to ride on an elephant like the feudal lords, but at the same time like a true socialist abhors the obsequious greetings of the peasants, who come to him to tell their tales of woes and tribulations. Anand also paints a shocking picture of the abject spineless slaves that the peasants have become because of their age-long servility:

'The one eyed man...began to crawl towards the place where shoes were discarded, with his outstretched hands joined before him, his forehead rubbing the ground, his black face closed in a silent, shriveled knot of misery above the neat beard, his body dragging on the floor in a way that was both revolting and yet strangely poignant. A host of other pigmy-sized black men crowded in behind him, the whites of their eyes flowing in the black hollows, and their joined hands lifted towards the company, cracked, horny and repellent, and their whole down-at-heel manner an insult to the light.'11

Lalu understands that it is these creatures whom he has to raise to the dignity of men, and infuse in them the spirit of Revolution so that they will have the courage to defy the landlords and the Sarkar, and get back their land from which they have been evicted.
The contrast between the characters of the two brothers Kanwar Rampal Singh and Birpal Singh is also clearly brought out. While the former is sympathetic to the peasants and wants to help them, the latter threatens and turns them out. Towards the end of the novel, as the agent of the Sarkar, Birpal goes to the extent of getting his elder brother and his followers arrested.

Lalu, who has borne many affronts and hardships both in the village and the army, has now reached a point when he feels almost certain about his destiny. He forgets his personal grievances and decides to fight for others by organising the people against the landlords and the Government. He has imbibed the teaching of his father and brother Dayal Singh, to make the service of others as a way of life. He has chosen the path of revolution as the means to achieve this ideal. Lalu's attitude comes out clearly when he tells Maya:

'I have come to help to convert this prison into a free land like Roos, where there are no divisions of religion or property among people, where women, who were sold to the highest bidder, have become free to choose their own lives, where...' 12

Although Maya has thrown in her lot with Lalu, she does not approve of his idea of punishing the landlords. Their living together has failed to unite their feelings and opinions. She is always obsessed with the thought of her status as a respectable woman, but Lalu considers marriage as an obstacle in the achievement of his ideal. With his increasing involvement in the peasants' cause, he begins to regard Maya as a hindrance in the same way as Ananta considers Janki in the Big Heart.
The conflicting ideas among the leaders render the revolution ineffective. Professor Verma, Srijut Tiwari and Sarshar prefer a Gandhian nonviolent movement, whereas Lalu and the student leader Razwi are for violent action. The Count vacillates between the two. Professor Verma, though a revolutionary in spirit, rejects the use of violence for achieving peasants' liberation:

'Since every man has only one life to live', said Professor Verma, 'it is hardly worthwhile murdering Napoleon whose rule can only last as long as he lives, especially as it means invoking the hangman's rope round one's own neck. But it will be eminently worthwhile to combat landlordism, which might last for generations if the Government does not devise some tenancy legislation to alleviate the life of the peasantry.'

Of all the characters in the novel the one-eyed Sukhua is most witty. His statements are sometimes replete with irrefutable truth. For instance, he says that the English are usually kind but it is their Indian subordinates who are cruel. 'It is always the one Hindustani who is at the throat of another.' Here Bhoori Singh, the watchman is the greatest 'throat cutter' of the peasants. A terrible instance of his cruelty is evidence when the Count and his followers are on their way to Nasirabad to hear the grievances of the peasants.

Of all the people at Nasirabad only Jamal, the Nawab's son appears to be modest and considerate. He is a staunch critic of the fatalistic attitude of the Indian people. Comparing the Indian farmers with their European counterparts, he says:
There is nothing in which the North European peasant differs so much from the Indian than in this: "God's work was well done, man's badly," says the Hindustani and leaves whole areas to nature's caprices. "God helps those who help themselves," says the European, and measures his profit in terms of the increasing knowledge of soils and crops he cultivates....Waste, waste, waste! There is waste from the depredations of pests, there is waste from the use of inertile seed, there is waste of nature, there is waste in the uses to which various crops are put!...The whole thing is a waste! 15

His views support Lalu's own impressions of an ideal farm in France. Other characters like Hidayatullah, the Nawab's manager, and Captain Effendi, the Police Superintendent are drunk with power and authority, and mercilessly harass the poor and the defenceless.

The failure of the Count's visit to the Nawab which was intended to free the peasants from the tyranny of the manager leads to the peasants' revolt under the leadership of the Count himself. Professor Verma on his part makes arrangements for the publication of Naya Hind. Lalu himself addresses the peasants on the banks of the Ganga, on the day of the festival of eclipse. But the meeting is disturbed by Captain Effendi's agents. Yet, Lalu feels elated because of his success in arousing the men to a consciousness of their miserable plight, and to the necessity of a revolt against their exploiters. But here, even God seems to be on the side of the exploiters, and bent upon punishing the revolutionaries. The chaos in the Sabha develops into a pitched battle:
And the weird rasping shrill cries of the antagonists filled the air above the swish of the Ganges and the slow, insidious sound of the hushed voices on the vast sands by the temple, now electric with the heat of the burning sun. And it seemed as if some evil, monstrous, cruel, revengeful God were going to wreak a long vengeance on the Count and his followers, some sacrifice of broken heads and flowing blood.  

We are also given a glimpse of the subtle power of the 'Rajmatas', a species extinct today:

There was something fascinating about these old tigerish women, however reactionary they were, strong in love and hate, narrow and stubborn in their addiction to custom, but solid and brave the way they withstood the wills of their overpowering men and in the compensating resurrection from their slavery of a subtle matriarchy which subdued even tyrants.  

The appearance of Srijut Tiwari, an eminent lawyer and the secretary of the District Branch of the Indian National Congress on the scene, gives an important turn to the peasants' revolution by linking with the national movement which was at the moment resisting the vicious Rowlat Act of 1919. He explains to them Gandhi's nonviolent movement against the Sarkar. The aim of bringing the Indian National Congress into the novel is to give it realism and authenticity.

Lalu's vague ideas regarding revolution begin to take a more definite shape when he comes into contact with Comrade Sarshar, who gives an outline of what revolution means and how it can be successful.
Though our ultimate end is revolution we cannot bring it about by saying the word Revolution a thousand times a day in the rosary of our hearts. Phrases like justice and liberty which may mean something to the middle class in England mean nothing real to the peasants except that hypnotic power of exalted utterance impresses them with the lordliness of the lord and with their own ignorance. The situation is serious and unless you can train yourselves as members of an India-wide organisation which can provide continuity to the movement.

Tiwari, however, does not believe in the Russian type of revolution which involves violence and bloodshed. He is a follower of the Mahatma who says: 'Our aim is freedom and our method is nonviolence.

Thus, there is a conflict among the leaders who have joined together to bring about a successful revolution. None of them seems to have a clear conception of the best course. The result is an immature uprising which ends in failure.

Lalu organises the people to carry the dead body of Chandra, a young victim of the manager’s cruelty to Allahabad in a procession, in order to highlight the inhuman deeds of the Nawab of Nasirabad. But Lalu fails again. Wherever he goes he sees the naked dance of cruelty and exploitation. The peasants have lost their land and are thrown on the streets as beggars.

The British who first came as a shadow, soon assumed immense power and authority by exploiting the resources and the people of this country. Here, Anand draws upon the folk tradition in his
profuse use of personification. The rhetorical style matches the theme.

'Oh, the coming of the Angrezi Sarkar had been like the coming of a flood, a flood greater than any the Ganges had carried through the centuries, a flood which had broken down all the old landmarks, destroyed habitations and crops and human lives in its torrential course, carving out other channels to irrigate, and spreading over all the waste land and the breadth of a new acquisitive spirit. Such a vast, gigantic transformation had it wrought that one could not blame it or praise it, one could merely stand aside for a moment and contemplate its potencies, stand aghast and gaze, wide-eyed, at its invisible, insidious presence, gaze at it as one gazes at a god, merely to see its magnificent, all embracing, omnipresent, omniscient being in action and to seek to understand its inscrutable inexorable presence, to realize the reality behind its various manifestations... 20

Lalu is constantly worried about Maya whom he has left alone in the palace. His love for her makes him feel guilty of negligence. He forgets everything else when he remembers her song:

'Oh, do not go my love,
Do not go,
The winds of home are free,
Oh, do not go my love... 21.

Thus, Lalu combines in himself the austerity of political life and the tenderness of love.

After the failure of his mission, and the death of one of his comrades Nandu, Lalu reaches Allahabad with his other
companions. The Count is shocked to hear about the tragic end of Nandu. But, he arranges a meeting for Lalu with the Mahatma so that the latter may be apprised of the cruelty of the landlords of that area. They also hope to persuade the Mahatma to visit Rajgadh and help form Kisan Sabhas in order to unite the peasants and put them on the path of prosperity. Although Lalu does not believe in Gandhiji's doctrine of non-violence, he is deeply impressed by the Mahatma's simplicity and his dedication to the cause of the suffering masses. As he is dictating an article on the sanctity of the cow the Mahatma talks about the role of pity in human life:

'Suffering is the mark of the human tribe. It is an eternal law. The mother suffers so that the child may live. Life comes out of death. The condition of wheat growing is that the seed grain should perish. No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering.... It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone ... the purer the suffering, the greater is the progress .... Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering.'

This is the Buddhist concept of 'Karuna' or compassion, which as Anand says in his Apology for Heroism, 'becomes the pervasive starting point of comprehension for each feeling, wish, thought and act that constitutes the world behind the scene of the human drama, from which catharsis or ultimate pity may arise.'

22

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This doctrine of suffering does not go home to Lalu who has never seen happiness during his long suffering. But when he hears the Mahatma say, 'The first thing that I can say to the peasants is to cast out fear ... The, real relief is for them to be free from fear,' He feels that the very heart of the problem has been touched. Gandhiji, of course, rejects every kind of violence. He observes:

'Strength does not come from physical force. It comes from the will. Nonviolence does not mean submission to the will of the old order, but of pitting one's soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under the law of our being it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust Empire and lay the foundation for that Empire's downfall or its regeneration. ' 

Lalu is on the way to a new awareness.

About this scene S.C. Harrex remarks:

'Anand adopts the Gandhian attitude to suggest that the truly epic quality in suffering is the aspiration for human freedom that results from purification. When Lalu realizes there is a purpose in suffering, he experiences a state of euphoria common to revolutionaries before they become disillusioned. ' 

The Mahatama lays down as his important principles of life to spin and wear Khadi and abolish untouchability.'

He also stresses the need for observing 'Brahmachraya' in which sexual energy is completely sublimated into spiritual energy. ' 
This episode is very important because it throws a great deal of light on the development of Anand's own mental make-up. In the final analysis the impact of Gandhi seems to be much stronger than that of Marx, though it was Marx who first taught him to feel for his unfortunate fellowman.

Anand vividly and realistically depicts the mental reactions of his hero when he is in the presence of so exalted a personality. Lalu feels, 'as if he were a huge uncouth figure with large legs and big paws in a glass palace.' He appears to be losing the case for his violent principles against the sober doctrine of non-violence. Lalu is asked by Gandhiji to bring his comrades to a feast for the untouchables. This gives Anand an opportunity to probe into the causes of the abject condition of the peasants who are afraid to enter the Anand Bhawan where Gandhiji is staying. 'Serfdom for generations brought up to respect the rich and keep their distance, fundamentally unworthy in the eyes of society, they dared not even stare at this palace ...' 

It is Jawaharlal Nehru who addresses the peasants first. He promises to visit their village to study for himself the condition of the people. The presence of these two national figures in the novel serves the purpose of bridging the gap between fiction and fact and enhances the credibility of the social and political themes. Though the attempts of Lalu fails to achieve its objective, it has at least succeeded in rousing the peasants against their exploiters.
As the company retreats to Rajgarh, Lalu feels increasingly guilty because of his neglect of Maya. But he soon discovers that the task he has undertaken requires a cold asceticism, the breadth, length and depth of a mature, capable of iron decisions. He has always failed to become master of himself, of his destiny and has been susceptible to all the weaknesses of his nature. He feels:

'Maya was his chief weakness, the reflection of his desire to which he had returned from the dreams of the days of disintegration, the fulfilment of all the sensuality in his nature, the first vision of a woman to which he had become fixed and enchained years ago and from which he had only been freed after his realisation of her...'

The Count goes on to form the Kisan Sabha under the supervision of Lalu to mobilize the peasants to wage struggles against their oppressors and get back the human rights. The strength of Lalu's character lies in his relentless pursuit of his Destiny and his ideal of a better world. Anand sees the future of his hero in the doctrine of struggle:

'He had struggled, and always would go on struggling to remove his own ignorance and all the defects of his own nature. And, since self perfection was not enough, he would try to cleanse the blurred minds of all the peasants, to open their eyes to the iniquities which were practised on them. He had been unconsciously practising one ideal of his brother Dayal Singh's outworn code, — to serve others.'

Even the Count is able to see the sincerity and goodness of the farmers who appear to be despicable fools. He has overcome
all the pride of his aristocratic birth and has decided to help the poor:

'I know how horrible I must sound blaming the landlords for all their delinquencies and completely ignoring the faults of the peasants... But it is a question of two moralities, as it is a question of two different worlds we live in, the world of this palace, allied to the Angrezi Sarkar and its morality, and the world of men who live in those huts out there and the morality which they might create if they had a chance. Have you ever seen how they hang by each other on their marriage birth and death ceremonies, how they would lay their turbans at the feet of any member of their brotherhood with whom they may have quarreled, to reconcile him before partaking of feast on an auspicious occasion... All that may look ridiculous and sentimental to us, but it shows the tenderness that exist between them.'

Nehru arrives at Rajgargh, but before he can address the Kisan Sabha he is called back to Allahabad, much to the chagrin of Lalu, his comrades and the Count. The authorities do this to prevent Nehru from intensifying the peasants' revolt. In a scuffle with the Cooperative Bank authorities, Lalu and his comrades are arrested. But there is a new awareness among the submissive farmers who seem to have overcome their fear at least. Lalu and other arrested members of the Sabha are bailed out. It appears that the joy of this incident is shared even by nature herself. There is soothing rain after days of hot winds and scorching heat.

Mr. Buckle, the English magistrate, is a young-man who has
recently arrived from England. He had the misfortune of the oppression of the Cooperative Bank and clears Lalu of all charges. Razwi, a fiery student leader appears on the scene, and soon becomes an important figure in the organisation.

In Lalu's relationship with Maya there is the conflict between her stubborn pride of high birth, and his own attempt to bring her down to his level. She has become, as Anand puts it, 'A forest of emotions and intricate tangles of the most sensitive clinging tendrils.'

The Count expresses Anand's idea of women's emancipation from the blind acceptance of belief that they are born to suffer. What the Count says about Maya is applicable to the Indian women in general:

'Like most people I expect, she knows that the world is full of horrible things. But what can she, a woman do who was never allowed to show herself to the world! She believes that women are just made to suffer, that is their birth right, their role in the world...Her religion told her that people were born to suffer and she believes that God ordered the world as it is no better.'

Of all the peasant characters Sukhwa is most attracted by the idea of violent revolution. He even hits Kamvar Birpal Singh and this results in the removal of the Count from the palace and the arrest of Razwi and himself. Professor Verma leaves the Count accusing him of spreading hooliganism. But there is a marked change in Maya's attitude when she comes to live with other peasants. She is now prepared for any sacrifice, though she is with child.
Lalu joins the peasants who have come to see the Count in jail at Rai Baricelly. While they are trying to cross the river many of them are hurt in the police firing. Lalu and other peasants are arrested and put in a cell. It is here that Lalu gets the news of the birth of a son.

His present condition makes Lalu feel frustrated at first, but it is not long before that he is able to recover his courage and will. The trilogy ends on a qualified optimistic note. Lalu's ruminations in the prison reveal the bewilderment of the modern man regarding contemporary events, as well as the real understanding of Revolution which he has arrived at through difficult experience:

"Why had a whole generation been wiped off the surface of the earth?" he mumbled to himself impatiently as he had often done before. "Why were there food riots in Germany? What had happened to the square of land I was promised by the Sarkar? And why was I demobilized? Why the money famine?...Why was the speculation in Bombay not stopped and why was the blood money of contractors not taxed? Why the scarcity, the restlessness, the uncertainty in Vilayat as well as in Hindustan?...

What is the destiny of man and how can I control it? Why is it that after a long time of struggle, after all the stress, after all the efforts I made to cure the defects of my own nature, going deeper than all my deepest discoveries, on guard against being taken in listening and considering every matter and endorsing only what I was sure about in the light of my experience, after seeking to grapple with my own destiny and that of others with a devotion... Why is it that I have ended up in a rocking hell, scratching my head, tossing restlessly from side to side?..."
Thus it is only through his constant struggle that Lalu has learnt the doctrine of Revolution, which emphasises the need to give oneself up to the service of others:

'And once one has made up one's mind to give, once one has devoted oneself to others, one must learn to master oneself, to discard one's family and caste egotism, to banish all the lies of religion and to break the narrow walls which separate man from man...' For Revolution is a novel of togetherness, Comrade, the need to curb malice among men, the need for men to stand together as brothers....'37

The birth of a son, perhaps, symbolises the birth of the new era of Lalu's hopes and ideals.

Emphasising the epic dimensions and the humanistic theme of the trilogy as a whole, S.C.Harrex remarks:

'Nevertheless the trilogy and the third book in particular is concerned with the real problems and the achievements of real liberties. The lesson that Anand seems bent on teaching Lalu from practical experience is that the achievement of freedom, self mastery, and human dignity (as he says in Apology for Heroism) depends on man's capacity to evolve the perfection of oneself and the universe in which one lives through the 'deepest socialism'(103,106). Moreover what Lalu seems to be looking is not totalitarian control of egalitarian man but a system based on economic and social justice which will ensure the moral development of the whole man.'38

Dr Alastair Hiven finds fault with Anand's portrayal of Gandhi as 'the supreme egoist smug in his own self-righteousness and bound in by narrowest Hindu orthodoxy...as the embodiment of all anti-progressive forces which he believes are menacing India
The Sword and the Sickle was written six years before Gandhiji's death when he was at the height of his influence and to criticise him was close to blasphemy...in no other section of his writings either in the novel or in the essays is Anand's scorn directed so pungently against an individual.\(^{39}\)

In reply to this charge it must be pointed out that, if the Mahatma appears as an egoist it is only because he is preoccupied with 'his own spiritual struggles', and not because of his self-opinion. On the other hand, Gandhiji is depicted as a man who has adopted service of others as a way of life. Only on one occasion/the Count ridicule the Mahatma's dislike of machines:

"The spinning-wheel! The spinning-wheel!" the Count parodied the Mahatma's voice with indifferent skill."I say unto you!... the spinning-wheel is the cure of all our ills in this destructive machine age .... If every man and woman! ... " As if the charka itself were not a machine!"\(^{40}\)

The fact is that in this novel there is an implicit, as well as an explicit, examination of the Marxist and Gandhian approaches in the context of the staggering social and political problems of this country. It is evident that Anand himself at this stage has been trying to arrive at certain definite conclusions. In spite of his early acceptance of Marxism Anand's innate Indianness is strongly influenced by many of Gandhi's ideas. But, while Anand seems to have been deeply impressed by Gandhi's concept of non-violence, his modern, scientific bringing up rejects much of Gandhian Economics. It is no exaggeration to say that Anand's humanism attempts to
draw out the best of both Gandhi and Marx and synthesises them, in even as he has succeeded in synthesising himself the best of both the East and the West. Moreover, the comments he puts into the mouths of his characters are consistent with their natures.

Further more Anand's belief in Buddhist compassion or 'Karuna' as essential for growth, is not different from Gandhiji's assertion: 'Suffering is the mark of the human tribe. It is an eternal law ...'. Hence, there is nothing to show that Anand ridicules Gandhi.

Although Dr. Krishna Nandan Sinha disapproves of Anand's didacticism which he says, 'has a palpable moral design upon the reader,' he highly praises the trilogy as a comprehensive work (which) embraces different and complex areas of life and in doing so extends the territories of fiction. He also quotes John B. Alphonso: 'Mulk Raj Anand's major work is the trilogy! Dr. Iyengar considers it 'an impressive work' and adds, 'the trilogy is indeed a mature work which shows confidence and development in the art of the novelist ... a creditable achievement placing Anand in the front rank of the novelists of social conscience.'

In the character of Lalu Anand has depicted the conflict between an individual and society with an insight rarely to be found in his earlier works. As D. Diemenschneider has pointed out, 'Munoo, Bakha Gangu and de la Maure mainly saw their adversary as the system of society which was evil and made them suffer. In their revolts they (Munoo, Bakha and Gangu) could not do more
than merely defend themselves, because they lacked the intellectual capacity to fully understand what they themselves could contribute to the struggle. In the case of de la Mère, the fight of a single man could not be successful because only in togetherness lies strength.  

Jack Lindsay has this to say on the trilogy: 'Anand has validly extended the method with which he began in Untouchable. He has re-discovered the Indian epical tale in terms of the contemporary struggle. All the while, a continual fusion going on between the methods of Chatterjee, Tagore, Premchand and the methods which Anand has learned from his study of the European novel; and the result is one long experiment in adapting the Indian folk elements to Western eyes and the European elements to Indian eyes. In stabilizing and extending the Indian novel, Anand is also adding to the tradition of the Post-Joycean European novel, thus extending the range of modern fiction by providing novels for the experiments of new talents in the emergent countries of Asia, as also perhaps Africa - the novel which may compel new forms from the pressures of the revolutionary experiences and the rich content from the inner ferments of the Eastern sensibility.'

On the other hand, Dr. M.K. Naik thinks: 'What starts by promising to become a memorable picture of the development of an Indian peasant's cosmos, ends up in chaos and confusion.'

This view is questionable because the novel ends on
qualified optimism, with a new awareness of the ways to change the world and attain happiness:

'Now is the time to learn the ways of struggle ... now is the time to live in and through the struggle ... Now is the time to change the world, to fight for life and happiness. Now is the time to sing, comrade, the brave songs of the struggle ...' 47

The Big Heart

The Big Heart breathes the spirit of revolution for the one of attainment of social justice. It is Anand's most passionate works in which a new humanistic approach to the problems of caste, creed and class, as well as unemployment caused by industrialization and exploitation of the poor by the rich, is advanced. The novel seems to have been based on Anand's conviction that in the final analysis it is through compassion, generosity and love that age-old evils can be overcome:

'I contend that our inability to evolve a wide generous and the fine civilized order is to a large extent due to the past repressions of our emotional life, the hangover of the petty restraints imposed by the old system of life. Equally our priggishness, intellectual bullying and an insensitive emphasis on reason often destroys us in the process of destroying the very dark feudal habits and impulses which we seek to abolish. So what is needed is the big, the understanding, the generous, the wise heart.
informed by passion and schooled by a knowledge
born of love. 1

The last sentence of the extract is very significant.

In order to grasp the full implication of the novel it is
essential to understand the background against which it was cre­
at. Anand wrote it in London in 1945 at the end of the second
world war when the machines of the Western civilization had nearly
destroyed the world. This world-wide catastrophe so deeply moved the
author that he began to see the wisdom behind Gandhiji's criticism
of the machine, though at the same time he knew that a total
rejection of the machine was not feasible. On the other hand, if it
is controlled efficiently its powers can be harnessed for the
prosperity of mankind. Explaining the origin of the novel
Anand himself writes:

'I was aware we cannot get back to old-fashioned ideas
of beauty as harmony as in Tagore. I realized that any
genuine work must interpret the ugliness of civiliza­
tion, as a kind of negative view, which may bring the
longing for heaven.

And so the drama of The Big Heart was staged as a
battlefield of hell and heaven, devil and god, the
rough diamond against the polished dandy of Indo-English
literature.

Perhaps it is because of the inner power of the dar­
k encounter, in spite of the nightmarish Finnegans
wake quality of the writing in this novel, that quite
a few critics go to it...? Certain personal experiences,
which went a long way in shaping the novel are described by the
author:

'I had known the transformation of Amritsar, 'the
ocean of nectar'... into sweet shops in almost every lane
... businessmen seemed to me to be the pictures of
despair...During my adolescent life in Ujir, I had seen the cloth merchants turned textile millionaires, thus making the whole city into a mental asylum. Crimes had settled down side by side with poverty. 

Prostitution was rampant. And decay seemed to spread like cancer in all directions. The bad dreams swarmed on my pillow and left me wondering what would happen when the parasites of the modern period would regiment the old craftsman, fill their lungs with the chimney smoke and make the sun black, the moon purple, and blot out the stars with tall buildings, polluting life altogether. No flower or a tree or a laundry or a shop or a playground anywhere near.

Anand has not only depicted the modern inferno in the present novel but also suggested a way out. The theme of this novel is already anticipated in Coolie where Ratan, the wrestler, speaks of a 'Big Heart' as the only way to happy human relationship. It is again implied in The Sword and the Sickle, where, through a difficult experience Lalu realizes the need for love and unity as the pre-requisite of success. Ananta, the hero of the novel, is aware of the truth but falls when he tries to implement his ideals in a world torn by hatred and suspicion.

The original of Ananta was simple and good man understanding his roughery and drunkenness. He used to feed all his friends on the holiday of Nashti. He even bought liquor with his hard-earned money and defied the elders by 'spreading drunkenness all round'. So far as he was concerned, God was dead, but he himself seemed to have become a kind of god.

As in Untouchable and Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts,
in this novel also the action is circumscribed to a single day. Yet the author has successfully interwoven a variety of episodes in the main theme of the book without detriment to the compactness of its structure.

At the very outset, the change that modernity has brought about in Kucha Billimaran (the cat killer's lane) in the centre of Amritsar, is indicated by the tall clock tower and the electric bulb. Through 'the pure holy water of the age of truth', the dirty water of the middle ages' and the polluted water of the 'iron age' that had flowed through its open lanes, Anand appears to convey the gradual deterioration of the ancient values. The ebb and flow of the water also stands for the interludes in the drama of human progress in various ages. Anand has given a philosophical colouring to the common phenomenon of the flowing of water:

'The fact about water, like time, is that it will flow; it may get choked up with the rubbish and debris of broken banks; it may be arrested in stagnant pools for long years; but it will begin to flow again as soon as the sky pours down its blessings to make up for what the other elements have sucked up; and it will keep flowing, now slowly, now like a rushing stream...'

The contrast between the rich, and the poor coppersmiths of the story, is indicated by the tall buildings belong to a few well-to-do families, and the hovels possessed by the bulk of the poor. Among the coppersmiths, who belong to the Kashtttriya caste, the second highest among the Hindus, there are two classes,
the Kaseras and the thathiars. The former are traders and they look down upon the latter because they are poor manual workers who barely manage to earn a subsistence wage. Anand draws a vivid picture of the dark, dingy hovels in which they live and work:

'It would be absurd to call those ramshackle buildings by the respectable name of houses when they are really dilapidated hovels, blackened by the soot of the ropersmiths' furnaces and foundries, greased by the mustard-oil saucer lamps which they burn to illumine their nights (and yes, sometimes, their days), dirtied by the spittle, the nose blowings and sweat of the men who hammer metal into shape, day and night, night and day.'

Although one or two prosperous families have installed machines the artisans in general disapprove of them. And their abhorrence is expressed by their faces knitted into frowns like the question mark.

The lane itself is like a two headed snake revealing its two opposing aspects—tradition and modernity:

'With one head it looks towards the ancient market where the beautiful copper, brass silver and bronze utensils made in the lane are sold by dealers called Kaseras and hence Bazar Kaserian. With the other it wriggles out towards the new Ironmongers' Bazar, where screws and bolts and nails and locks are sold and which merges into the Book sellers' mart, the cigarette shops and the post office replete with the spirit of modern times.'

The grotesque imagery of the snake augurs some sinister
occurrence.

Another aspect of the locality that reveals the contradiction between the ancient and the modern is to be found in the co-existence of the shrine of Goddess Kali and the Golden Temple, on the one hand, and the massive Clock Tower in the neighbourhood which has ' ushered in the iron age with the fancy weather cock on its steep needle which talks to the sky and records the evanescent moods of the winds and the spheres, and with its gigantic four-faced English clock from which the families with the two or three storeyed houses in Billimaran can read the movement of the two hands of the clock of Time.\(^8\)

Since 'Time' inexorably governs the life of man in the modern era, Anand has called it a new god. Aldous Huxley too conceives it as 'a by-product of industrialism -- a sort of psychological analogue of synthetic perfumes and aniline dyes. Time is our tyrant.'

The advent of modernity has also brought with it ill luck for the many and prosperity for a few. In search of bread, some of the people who wandered away to the 'cities of gold' Bombay and Calcutta, had to return home having lost everything save their loincloths. Some of the boys who have managed to get jobs in the machine shop or the factory have become bicycle-minded, unlike their elders. The contrast between the younger generation and the older one is vividly brought out:

'... they work in the glow of small electric bulbs gleaming under the lusture of great arc-lamps, standing
Meaps of intricate machinery, with pulleys and wheels and handles before them while the older members of their community bend like gnomes before the fires in mature furnaces, soldering the joints of household utensils or crouching in the doorways, their lined faces groping for light in a world where, they say, the darkness is spreading."

Gloom and utter despair prevail among the people of the lane because most of them have lost their jobs. Machines have come to them as harbingers of death. They have haunted their dreams as visions of death. They think it to be the age of death which is to culminate in the doomsday.'

In this atmosphere of despair, there appears a man, Ananta, who is known for his roguery, and drunkenness and his strong physique. Ananta has nobility and courage in abundance and these two qualities redeem his shortcomings. We hear him say time and again in the novel:

'There is no talk of money brothers; one must have a big heart.' 10

Highlighting the essential characteristics of the hero Anand himself says:

'I had the hunch that my hero, Ananta, had rescued enough nobility from the small life to which he was condemned by his adventures as a manual worker in Jamshedpur, Bombay and other places. And, that by becoming a revolutionary trade unionist, he had almost achieved saintliness. The fact that he lived with a woman, outside marriage, with a courage, with a courage
not given to many people, seems to make him, in my eyes, a greater human being, because he had sensed this woman's tenderness and was devoted to her. His love for the recalcitrant cousins and his bluff, hearty generous manner, made him more endearing. His Guru, Puran Singh Bhagat, is really his chela. Because, Ananta has emerged from the lower depths and shown what a man can become. 11

His predilection for the machine is so strong that he sings:

'This is the machine age,
We are the man who will master it ...' 12

In these words lie the quintessence of the entire novel, for, they stress the need for mastering the machine for human prosperity.

Ananta believes in earning his bread from the sweat of his brow and revels in his soiled reputation as a 'fresh eater and drunkard'. But in his generosity he is like Hatim Tai. He is, as the novelist depicts him:

'A turbulent spirit and wanton in reaching out after life, he sensed now and then the poise of a furious calm in himself, like that of a leaf suddenly come still in a storm, specially after he had been struggling like a tormented beast, in the cage of his soul, in his recurrent dreams or in odd moments even in daylight. At such times he rose above his sense of Destiny and looked on himself as a person whose lusts were the reaction to other people's envy of him, whose depravity and drunkenness was a fight against the
debris of broken idols in his mother's home, whose hotheadedness was a protest against the decaying fatalism around him. And then he was dimly aware that his sudden love of 'Revolution' that had burst out like a red flower in Bombay, was due to the disgust he felt for the selfishness of his youth.

Ananta's love of work and his dexterity in the traditional profession is shown by his evenly imprinted beautiful moon-strokes on a copper pitcher.

Even while he is busy at his work, the thought of his mistress Janki's illness disturbs him. She is a victim of consumption which is eating away her life insidiously.

Kalyan Devi, his step mother, is a kind hearted woman, but steeped in conventionality. Her awareness of suffering is like Laxmi's in Coolie.

Outside his shop, Ananta hears the shouts of the people assembled at the gate of the factory clamouring for jobs. Ananta goes there to see what is going on. No body pays any attention to him except Ralia, the stubborn, masterful giant, his one-time drinking companion. By the sheer eloquence of his speech, Ananta wins over the jobless people, and urges them to unite and press their demands if the foreman Channa does not give them jobs. It is evident that Ananta is preparing them for Revolution.

There is chaos outside, but inside the factory there is the rhythmic revolution of the machines, which produce a peculiar distinguishing sound.
Only the sharp screen of the machines and the monotonous hum of the gyrating belts came echoing across the shed, the death-rattle of the new song of the machine urgent but already fixed as a conventional classical tune in Billimaran. 14

Anand chooses the most appropriate epithets to reproduce the working of the various machines in the factory:

The protracted hum was the undertone of the factory... the monotonous shrill; rasping whine of the big wheels revolving in a neverending movement... the sharp twang of the small riveting machines... and the dithyramb of the whole ragged rhythm of the workshop... the strange aura of the factory's roar. 15

Viroo the 'Black God,' and Dina the lame-footed 'Tamer Lane,' along with Ralia, are bent upon breaking the neck of the sparrowfaced Channa the foreman, if he dares to come out. Viroo shows his contempt of the machine which is for him a devil:

'You can call me the son of an ass if they are not strangled by those machines. If they do not break, if the bodies they have built up on the wrestling pitch are not sucked away by the devil machines.' 16

This is an expression of the general feeling among the people here, towards the machine. On the other hand, Ananta declares: 'This is the machine age in which each man is for himself till he learns to unite with others.' 17

Nevertheless, Ananta is filled with compassion for the plight of the people who are driven to resort to violence because of their desperate condition. When others around him are merely
groping in the dark and giving vent to their anger and
disgust Ananta shows an acute awareness of the problem:

Inside him his awareness of poverty which spread
from Madanpura to Billimaran burnt into a dark cloud,
heavv and oppressive, and all he could do was to curse
the country in which there/always an endless scarcity
punctuated every now and then by a famine.'Lord God,
what a land.'18

He is also disgusted with the narrowness of the people who
do not approve of his relationship with Janki. In big city like
Bombay no one cared for such things. Janki herself does not think
much of the machines, which she calls 'toys of Shaitan' but to
Ananta they are like a dowry which we cannot refuse:

Like the fashionable vilayati bride, we have accepted,
we ought to accept the dowry of machines she has
brought, and make use of them, provided we keep our
hearts and become the masters. Machines don't think or
feel, it is Men who do.'19

Ananta thinks of consulting Puran Singh Bhagat about organizing
the people into a union so that they may effectively deal with the
factory owners, Gokul Chand and Murlidhar. By the time Ananta
reaches the Bunga of Sant Harnam Das it is already quarter to
seven. He had stopped work at five. Ananta is quite at home with
children. Rodha and Ram come running to him for the promised
sweets. At this juncture we get a full view of his character and
affectionate nature:

'And he sped along with the kids running little capers of
joy behind him. For the rogue and scoundrel that he was
to the elders of the thathiar community, he was the idol
of the youth of the craft. Partly it was the contagious warmth exuded by his well-knit body, the rounded proportions of a frame which seemed to combine a tiger's fury with the casual dignity of an animal who did not need to throw his weight about. Also, there was the air of the rebel about him, the man who worshipped no God and feared no mortal and had travelled further by train than anyone else in the neighbourhood. And there was his large, expansive, generous manner, the open, frank, hearty speech which endeared him to those whose impulses were yet free from all restraint—a remnant of childishness in the mature wine of life with which he was intoxicated, but of which no one knew very much and of which even himself had had only a few glimpses.  

Anand's conception of Bhakti—devotion through service of others, is reflected in the character of Puran Singh Bhagat, a wandering poet who has come to occupy the charity house of Sant Harnam Das, which has become a religious place free from all hypocrisies. It lives up to the writer's conception of righteousness: 'In fact the place was a centre of a great deal of heterogeneous life, and many varieties of experience, among which the only connecting thread was the curious acceptance of all and sundry, without any attempt on the part of one person or another to impose his own peculiar vision on the rest...'

Puran Singh Bhagat is a staunch follower of Guru Nanak, whose sermons he preaches to the ignorant folk. One such is addressed to Viroo who condemns Ananta for his love of machines, and for his connection with Janki. The Bhagat quotes Guru Nanak so that he may be initiated into the Bhakti cult and learn practical wisdom: 'Evil mindedness is a low woman, anger an animal without direction, whereas
in love and understanding men are equal. But whatever be his spiritual attainment Puran Singh Bhagat is more a man of precepts than of action. He is to some extent unwittingly responsible for Ananta's tragedy.

Ananta is capable of keeping calm despite provocations from his friends about his living with Janki without being married. He knows that there is no hope for this country except in 'Revolution', and in order that it may be successful, he thinks it essential to contact those who know how to organize revolution against capitalists. But the leaders are usually deceptive, inadequate, or ineffective as Barrister Sheikh Abdul Latif, in the present novel, Onkar Nath and Sauda Sahib in Coolie, and professor Verma, the Count, Tiwari, Razwi and Sarshar in The Sword and the Sickle.

Ralia and Viroo are hotheaded fatalists who blindly believe in violence. Against these extremists are put Ananta and Dina Tam-erlane. Ananta's visit to the lawyer leader Mr Latif fails. As he comes towards the station he is deeply touched with pity for the poor beggars who line the way in abject misery: 'Good fortune seemed now a days, to come at random while misery knocked at the doors of one's life.'

Ananta is ever burning within himself to mitigate the sufferings of the poor, and those disabled in the war. The brutal massacre of the Jallianwalla Bagh looms large in his mind. He gets inspiration from the revolutions in 'Roos' and 'Chin', and wants to launch a similar one in Amritsar. He is filled with hatred for profiteers like Gokul Chand and Murlidhar, who are sucking the blood of their kinsmen. Ananta has abandoned all the pride of his nature to give
right direction to the stubborness of the thathiars by organizing them. He seems to have respect for the Supreme Being who has created this world and is in this respect, unlike Lalu, who consistently challenges Him. His views are very moderate about God and Fate, and he feels that men are themselves responsible for their misery:

'No God to make such world and consign it to such suffering for if He did so He was not a good God... But that was not the question and if his friends believed in Fate, he would let them... Only he must convince them that they could not win bread separately but together, and that if they believed in their own manhood and were patient, and held on to each other, he would form a union and help them to come through. And then he felt calmer.'

Ananta is a victim of uncertainty and does not know how his ideals can be realized. This is an unfortunate aspect of his nature which renders all his efforts to overcome the pressures of a socio-economic situation, futile. As he sees an anchorite sitting on the bed of nails to accustom himself to the thorns of this world and the next, Ananta feels while going towards the Temperance Hall as if he were walking on a tight rope like a clown trying to balance himself on his head.

Ananta's friendship with Puran Singh Bhagat is unproductive because, as Professor Narasimhaiah says:

'Ananta's tragedy is like that of Hamlet who is fortunate neither in Ophelia, innocent in her calf-love, nor in Horatio, his ineffectual friend. So is Ananta in his friendship of the poet Puran Singh Bhagat who cannot come to grips with the situation but can only speak
of love begetting love and hate bringing hate.25
Yet the introduction of this character serves the author's purpose of emphasising the possibility of social reform through humanism.

Puran Singh Bhagat preaches fearlessness which is essential for success. When Ananta is disturbed by people's gossip about his relationship with Janki, the poet advises him:

'Never surrender to fear—never, never, never... for if the mountains should break, and the rivers flood, and lightening crash, so long as you go on, through weariness and doubt in the spirit of devotion to work and service of others, holding fast to the light which is in you, you will be so strengthened that you will go a long way...'.26

A short scene depicting the hypocrisies of marriage follows in the house of Sadanand whose son Nikka is to be betrothed.

It is Puran Singh Bhagat, who points out the vacillation in the minds of the people whether to accept or reject the machine which has come to them as a gift. The poet says: 'And this quarrel in man's mind is going on in spite of the fact that the machine is there and can't be refuted. The bulk of men are rooted in the womb of custom and hardly yet born, while there are some like us who are only half alive.'27

In the Bhagat's dread of the machine lies Anand's own fears about it because of the devastation caused by it in the Second World War that 'And the horror he felt hanging over the universe, and which he ascribed to the machine, seemed to shape itself into the future form of that perfected death machine, the sinister robot aeroplane and rocket, hurling a twelve-hundred-pound bomb on a row of houses
and burying people, most of whom had done nothing to deserve death.

In spite of all the evils of the machine Ananta is convinced of its benefits if only it could be mastered and controlled. Ananta, who is full of spirit and vivacity asks the thathias to discard their submissive attitude and unite to bring about a revolution. Life becomes meaningful only when one is prepared to stake it for the right cause:

'I will take the plunge into the ocean. After all men have gone to their deaths with a song on their lips and here is the promise of an abounding life, certainly of struggle. Let the storm rage I say.'

Like Lalu again, Ananta wants to go to Vilayat and see the new inventions with his own eyes. There is an echo of the author's early love of 'Vilayat' in almost all his young heroes.

Puran Singh Bhagat lays down that confusion, turmoil, selfishness, greed, lust for power, and above all hypocrisy, should be curbed if a proper growth of man is to be achieved. Anand makes this novel more comprehensive by introducing an international problem like the failure of European humanity, about which Puran Singh Bhagat says:

'The failure of European humanity', said the poet, explaining it all in his own way, 'lies in their reduction of man to a mere cipher, to mere nothing. Their politicians did not realize that the power of the State to rule should come from the pooled resources of all the striving people rather than from a small group of old privileged families. Their rich men did not see that triumphs in international competition and in the mass production of cheap goods are not worth having if these are to be attained at the expense of death and human degradation...
Their spiritual leaders and guides built their homes in a barren, hard orthodoxy and clung to the shells of ancient ideas rather than evolve Ananta's new faith in a new togetherness. 30

Puran Singh Bhagat calls Ananta his Guru only because of this doctrine of new togetherness which he has learnt from him.

Janki gives the impression of being a practical woman, and unlike Ananta, she seems to have grasped the nature of the problem the thathiars are wrestling with. She even chastises Ananta for finding a model for his idealism in the Russian Revolution. She tells him: "The trouble with you folk is that you are always talking of Roos and not of your own country. I can understand why the thathiars won't listen to you. They have nothing to eat and the machine has come and taken their jobs away from them and you talk of Roos to them." 31

Women are more fatalistic than men, and blame their own Karma of the past life for all the misfortunes and misery they are undergoing in the present life. Kam Devi, the step-mother of Ananta, who is overcome by self-pity, cries out: "We belong to suffering, sister, we belong to suffering. This life is not worth living. All we can do is to do some good deeds and prepare for the next." 32 She is a compassionate woman and follows the ideal of Bhakti, which can be seen in her desire to do good deeds.

When Ananta delivers to Lala Lalchand the utensil he had just finished, the dealer pays him less than the usual price, on the pretext that the rates have gone down. But Lala Khushal Chand pays him the balance. Since most of the coppersmiths are
narrow-minded and suspicious, they feel that Ananta for all his talk of unity favours the cause of the factory owners by taking bribes. The suspicion leads to the climax of the novel, when Ralia and others storm the factory without heeding the words of Ananta.

There are two more intellectuals—Mahasha Hans Raj and the student Satyapal who appear on the spot where Ralia is revelling in drunkenness. Hans Raj is a stocky middle-aged man, with good looks having the complexion of 'cow dust hour'. He is for the revival of Gandhi's dream of 'Ram Rajya', and is against the machine-age civilization. He asserts:

'It is a question of good and evil, of the age of truth against the age of falsehood, of the world when there was light against the world of darkness, of the India in which we had great civilization and everyone was a peasant who ate a bellyful and the machine-ridden India we are threatened with, by those who want to reproduce here the conditions of the atheistic West.'

Hans Raj reveals the very nature of the conflict our country is facing. But he is a mere idealist unable to do anything to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Satyapal on the other hand, is a fiery student and a more practical man. He has seen the hypocrisy of Gokul Chand and Murlidhar, and bursts out against them: 'Yes, they seem to leave their religion behind in the Samaj on Sundays and only worship money on the other days.' Even Ananta is afraid of the eloquence of Satyapal, and his capacity to arouse the crowd to frenzy and violent action.

Ananta has invited Ralia and his other friends to the feast in his shop on the occasion of Akaashit. As he is preparing the food
he cogitates over the causes of the unredeemable poverty of the people:

"...the trouble lay in the many bonds of custom and habit and superstition which bound them, and in the weakness, fear bred by poverty and the struggle for existence and the pain inevitable to life. What was required to give them heart and to lift them from the abject, frustrated and terror-stricken creatures they were to the courage of manhood. And that required first that one must become a man oneself, to battle with desairs which assailed one and to believe in happiness and the possibility of abolishing unnecessary suffering, to settle one's doubts patiently, in fact to believe in Revolution in the way in which people believed in religion.

Ananta again goes to Janki to give her the meat he has prepared. She is always confined to bed because of the pitiless disease, which has made her face pale like that of death itself. She appears told...wilting like a pale white motia flower under the stress of the afternoon heat and her illness, her head hung down as though she was withdrawing to a world of her own, the dank clammy underworld of Yama where the souls swam with difficulty in the putrid ocean of filth, tormented by vipers, snakes, scorpions and blood-sucking leeches.' The myth of the underworld is here associated with the dread of impending death. The fading light from the eyes of Janki is described with deep feeling and exquisite art:

'She lifted her sad eyes from which the light seemed to be evaporating, leaving them a grey-green where they had been vivid cat's eyes, mocking and rather uncanny the way they saw through people.'
Like Lalu in The Sword and the Sickle, Ananta too neglects Janki because of his preoccupation with Revolution. But, at the same time, he holds himself responsible for her deteriorating condition.

In spite of the insults and humiliations his Thathiar brethren inflict on him, he is determined to work for their betterment. He is optimistic about bringing about a compromise between the Kaseras and Thathiars by means of a little reason. Ananta's nobility and faith in Bhakti become evident all the time:

'And I feel I ought to do something good before I die, so that the others who come after can be a little happier, but I am not even equal to the call of my own torn conscience... The truth is that devotion and sacrifice are the twin brothers of courage and will have nothing to do with cousin cowardice.'

Puran Singh Bhagat, though he is a man of action, embodies the humanistic creed:

'I believe in the restoration of man's integrity if he is to control machinery at present time. I believe, in fact, if we can have any religious faith, morality or code at all today, it must arise from the reassertion of man's dignity, reverence for his name, and a pure love for man in all his strength and weakness, a limitless compassion for man, and unbounded love especially for the poor and the downtrodden.'

Even in her illness Janki is a source of inspiration and comfort to Ananta, who seeks her advice like a comrade. A man's faith in God usually becomes strong with the awareness of approaching death as in the case of Janki, though Ananta's disbelief...
remains as strong as ever:

'God works in a mysterious way,' said Ananta ironically, in such a heartless way that the ominous owl alone has so far taken pains to answer the peasants in the night.... God seems to have deserted the world—if ever He were there, helping it along!' 40

In spite of his rejection of God, Ananta intensely loves His creatures and wants to dedicate his entire life to the cause of the hungry, diseased, and oppressed people. He says:

'this

'All of us have the gift of a short life, for I do not think there is any hereafter; and I felt that if only I could give it to the service of others rather than keep it for my own selfish enjoyment, I should feel happier.... And who could I have served better than those men whom I used to despise at one time and to whom I came back from Bombay full of unbounded love, and with a due sense of their as men, as my brothers.' 41

Among the capitalists, it is Kushal Chand who has a kind heart for the poor, and even comes forward to help them. He is fully aware of the misery of the unemployed Thathiars and tells Gokul Chand:

'They have been robbed of the fruits of their labour for years, their wonderful bodies have been wrecked, their initiative has been sapped, their hopes destroyed and with it ambition—their whole outlook on life has been darkened and warped.' 42

All the jobless Thathiars form a union under Kushal Chand, who tries to convert them to Gandhiji's ideals of nonviolence. But Ralia, in a frenzy of anger, begins his onslaught on the machines in the factory. His hatred of the machine is so great that he howls like the machine itself and stages a violent caricature of
the factory. He becomes an instrument of nightmare and mythic chaos:

'I want blood! I want bones! I want bodies and sinews of men!...Hoon...I want them young! I want them green! I want them in stream so that I can crush them and break them!...I am a bitch, see! Let them come and I will embrace them!...I am the bitch goddess machine, hane, Kali of the iron age, the age of machines!...I will wed you --I Ralia, I am Shiv, and you are Kali...'

Unable to control the fury of Ralia, the crowd becomes a congregation of helpless spectators. However, Ananta manages to subdue him temporarily but soon in a state of increased frenzy Ralia flings Ananta against a machine which breaks his head. Ananta dies on the spot.

The relentless fury of the sun has provided the backdrop to the relentless acts of man, which subside by the time the clock tower strikes half past seven.

Puran Singh Bhagat returns from the court only to find his friend gone for ever. His immediate reaction is:

'One man can die, hundreds can die, but life cannot be extinguished...until the very sun goes cold and the elements break up...And yet the inescapable feeling clung to him that each single man is important, that Ananta was his friend, and that with his comrade's going there would be a gap in the world which could not be filled easily...'

The poet consoles Janki and gives her shelter when she most needs it. He also realizes that mere talk is not going to fetch anything substantial, ' because men don't really learn from speeches as much as they learn from examples. Perhaps the life of Ananta--I mean the way he conducted his life--has probably been a greater
example for them than any words he could have spoken. Why, they may even recall the wise things he said to them now that he is dead. For what can be more persuasive than the death of a man who was so sincere in his love for them, so loyal and devoted to them and yet so free? 45

He initiates Janki into his own doctrine of 'Bhakti,' because she is left behind to carry on as long as she survives, Ananta's selfless service to his fellow beings:

'You must not be afraid, Janki he said, 'You are so sensible and have such gifts of understanding. What great thing it would be if women like you who possess such gifts of sincerity and grace give yourself to Bhakti, devotion, to working for others!' The poet adds: All stories end in death...but childling, even if one is given a short life, it becomes shorter if it is guarded selfishly. On the other hand think of the beauty, the richness and the joy of living with others, of helping others--' 46

Commenting on the last scene of the novel S.C.Harrex rightly remarks:

'The poet's disquisitional discourses at the end of The Big Heart are not merely a chorus comment of the tragic action; they are intended to leave the reader with a catharsis of hope and a desire image' of which Ananta is a noble sacrificial prelude.' 47

Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha's following evaluation of the novel seems to be nearer the truth:

'The Big Heart, then, is a moving and powerful delineation of passion in its labyrinth, a human drama enacted within the limits of probability...The novel is unmistakably his masterpiece. The curve of its plot, the momentum.
of action, the richness of characterization and the clarity its moral vision make it an orchestrated whole.\(^4\)

Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar who is also highly impressed by the novel, remarks:

'The descriptions in the novel are painstakingly vivid, and the characterization is forceful and clear. Once again Anand triumphs because he writes of things he knows — things that, as it were, float in the stream of his ancestral memories, things that warm up his blood and course through his veins. And there is seeming inevitability in the catastrophe recalling, say, O'Neill's Dynamo or even a Greek tragedy.'\(^4\)

All things considered **The Big Heart** is an outstanding achievement, if only for its emphasis on the primacy of genuine feeling in the search for answers to human problems. Ananta possesses the 'Big Heart' which is essential for the compassionate understanding of the common man's plight in the machine age. He looks for a compromise between the primitivism of Mahatama Gandhi and the modern worship of the machine. At the same time, he seems to be groping for an approach which avoids the two extremes of violent action and idealism, represented by Ralia and Puran Singh Bhagat. His tragedy lies in his inability to do so. He has neither the capacity to arrive at the right solution, nor is there anyone who can lead him to fruitful action. It is very significant that the machine which he has always believed can be a friend of man, becomes the instrument of his death. In fact it has been put to the worst possible use by the man who hates it most. Ananta, however, has one thing which gives him almost the stature of a tragic hero—'The Big Heart'.
Private Life of an Indian Prince

Private Life of an Indian Prince, written in India in 1948, was Anand’s last novel to be published abroad by Hutchinson, London in 1953. The impulse behind it was the author’s personal tragedy. 'The white heat of a tremendous crisis' which produced this novel was generated by Anand’s love affair with a Singhalese hill woman, his securing a divorce from Kathleen Van Gelder in order to marry her, and the former’s elopement with a Frenchman. Anand tells us, 'I had a six months' nervous breakdown and recovered my equipoise only when the novel rushed out of me in one month.'\(^1\)

In this book the author has attempted to write a 'Comedie Humaine in which the poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one kind of outcastes. The middle sections and the nabobs and rajas were also to be included as a species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show the poor-rich of our country who deserve more pity than contempt.'\(^2\)

Victor certainly elicits a lot of pity from the reader. Characters who enliven the novel, the author observes 'are taken from real life and transformed creatively from within in an almost Dostoevskian mood of pity, absolute pity, for those who love absolutely—in this case the Prince. I taught two or three princes as a tutor in the early 20's, so I know the background. The hero is the unheroic combination of three different personalities. The narrator is supposed to be neutral, but is a portrait of a liberal gentleman (Lala Man Mohan) who was a
private secretary to a Maharaja (the late Maharaja of Patiala). I knew at least three Gangi. The last one was a Singhless hill-woman, whom I myself nearly married. Her neurosis makes her pitiable in her degeneracy.

Anand conceived this novel with a Prince as a central character, sometime before the Second World War, when he had taught in India ended up in the Poona asylum. In writing the novel some years later Anand was definitely influenced by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as well as by Gandhi.

The first person narration emphasises the subjective aspect of the novel. In spite of the author's assertion that the 'I' in this novel is not to be identified with himself, the rational and the irrational aspects of the author's own character may have been revealed by the narrator and the Prince respectively.

This is perhaps the most uncharacteristic of Anand's novels. It is truly a psychotic odyssey of the Prince rather than a political historical dossier. It is set in the early days of independence when the future of five hundred princes was decided once for all. They were left with no alternative but to accede to the Indian Union.

The novel is divided into three parts showing the three stages of the Prince's psychotic odyssey culminating in madness. The Prince, Victor George Achok Kumar, is caught in the cross-fire of/partition crisis, and the question of accession to the Indian Union. Ever since he was asked to sign the instrument of accession the Prince has been in an incalculable state of mind.' The novel
opens with a public scandal which is the result of the Prince's distraught eroticism. Munshi Mithun Lal, 'a proverbial court fool in disguise' is perturbed by the Prince's sudden disappearance from his summer resort in Simla. But Dr Shanker, the private physician of the Prince remains calm and appears to know the secret of his disappearance:

'I think he must have taken Bunti down the Khud to the waterfalls for the obvious purpose. He has had his eye on her for some time, and she had been pursuing him, hanging around upstairs, dressed up like a gypsy with a snake coiled around her arm... She is a nymphomaniac!'

Dr Shanker has a complex nature and the novelist takes care to reveal the main traits step by step. Like Miyan Mithu he does not want to serve the Prince, but he is under the obligation of the Prince for the scholarship advanced by the state for his studies abroad. His initial revulsion becomes more intense towards the end of the novel. If he had acted according to the dictates of his conscience he would have done a greater service to the state, and to the Prince as well. He has a keen eye which notices all the vagaries of the Prince's character but like Captain Pratap Singh the seven foot tall A.D.C., and the snorting Bool Chand, his political secretary, he closes his eyes to the undesirable actions of the Prince. All the same, he paints a realistic picture of the private life of an Indian Prince during the British regime:

'... these princelings had not much to do, after their precious childhoods in the zenana, their expensive
their expensive boyhoods in the Chief's Colleges, and all the flattery and adulation of hangers-on like ourselves, except to set about to achieve the only other conquests left to them, the conquests over women, the easiest victories in our hapless country where the palace of women was still governed by Manu Smriti and the Hindu Mitakshra Law. 5

He points out not only the Princeton obsession with, but also the unfair nature of the Hindu religious code which has suppressed the Indian women for centuries.

There are some enchanting descriptions of nature in this novel such as the one below which captures the panorama of the Simla hills: 'the floating cotton wool of the clouds rose from the sub-valleys and struck the mountains in the middle. The mist became liquid and fell like dew, while the tops of the hills remained dry except for the few high points against which small wisps of clouds rose in spirals, covering and uncovering the mixed English, Swiss and Far-Eastern style chalets and bungalows and huts where once lived the officials, the potentates and the memsahibs, both English and Indians of devoted husbands who willingly grilled in the sun-scorched plains of India in the service of the British Sarkar merely to be able to help their wives to retain school-girl complexions. 6

The picture of the beautiful hill station cannot be complete without a reference to the flowers which blossom there: '...the carnations, the pinks, the sweet peas, the fuchsias, the lilies, the poppies, the dahlias, the pansies, the scarlet geraniums, the gladioli and the forget-me-nots which stood droopingly along the
shapely beds laid out by the broad drive to the lodge." 7

Dr Shanker's monologue not only reveals his own character but that of the Prince also whose immoderate desire for a Brahmin woman called Ganga Dasi leads to the ultimate catastrophe. The doctor is seen as the friend, guide and philosopher to the Prince, but he fails in all these capacities because he lacks the courage to hold a mirror up to the Prince so that he may see his own misdeeds reflected in it. The Prince's weaknesses are counterbalanced by his loyalty to his friends, as well as by his love of art, literature and philosophy. Dr Shanker diagnoses the causes of Victor's acute mental disturbances which go on aggravating with progress of the narrative. He observes:

'This is really the culmination of that passion for his Brahmin mistress, Ganga Dasi, which being thwarted by the various petitions to the British Government of his consort, the Tikyali Rani, Indira, as well as by the tantrums of Ganga Dasi herself, has led him to seek consolation for his will to lust and happiness in one desperate and mad sexual adventure after another.' 8

Dr Shanker on his part, is torn within himself because of the debt he owes to the Prince and his duty to preserve the Prince from the dangerous path he has chosen, in order to help him to regain his confidence in himself and to see him adjust himself to some kind of balanced social behaviour. It is this vacillation between right and wrong that precipitates the crisis and brings out his own as well as the Prince's doom.

After his adventure with Bunti Russel, the Prince is back in
his room but in a very distracted mental state. Dr Shanker attends on him and this enables us to have a closer look at the Prince:
The doctor himself impressed by the 'extraordinary fascination of his big brown eyes, studied like two moonstones in a face that was otherwise plain enough, with its narrow forehead, its almost sunken cheeks, sharp nose, thick lower lip, weal mouth, pointed chin and rather long ears.'

He can see from his countenance how the Prince rises from the depth of despair to the height of anger. Colonel Jevons finds no trace of rap but confirms that there was an attempt at penetration. Dr Shanker feels greatly relieved by this opinion. But the Prince's face seemed to be wrought up by the high tension of his nerves knit like a violin of which the strings are ready to burst. His complex neurotic nature is evident from the following:

'I am a haughty boy who ought to be whipped,' he said lifting his head towards me supplicatingly. But then as though he had realized that he was losing his rigidity, he turned defiantly and snapped, 'What did Jevons say?'... 'Why did you go to see Jevons? What does he think? I could buy off twenty of those Jevons if I cared to...'.

He very often cries 'I am like a rat in a hole,' and this reveals how deeply he is involved in his affair with Ganga Dasi, and the petitions of Tikyali Rani against the Brahmin woman and her son. Vicky wants Ganga Dasi to be declared his real Maharani and her son his heir. He says 'I shall lose my mind if I don't get out of this hole.' And as it happens by the end of the novel, he goes mad as he is unable to get out of the orbit of Gangi's spell.
Immediately after this incident he is called back to Shampur by his Prime Minister Popat Lal J Shah who is also the emissary of Sardar Patel. But it is Gangi who exerts a greater influence on him than the Prime Minister himself.

His home coming is beset with personal and state crises. His failure to bestow any legal status on his mistress and her son, and her constant demands make the Prince levy illegal taxes in the forms of 'Hazarana' and 'Segar'. These aggravate the misery of his subjects. The purchase of property in Ganga's name draws the opposition of Maharani Indira. The people also rise in revolt against the Prince for his indiscriminate and oppressive actions.

The people begin to organize themselves in a body called Praja Mandal to protect against the Prince's policies. His relation with Ganga Dasi also deteriorates because of her infidelity. Out of utter frustration he starts behaving like a despot. Dr Shanker sums up his tyrannical reign during this period as follows: 'Not a virgin or rupee was safe in his realms during this period.'

In the first part of the novel itself we are introduced to almost all the important characters who hold a complete sway over the narrative till the final catastrophe. The novelist gives the reader an insight into the character of Prince which is devoid of the will power required to move in the right direction. Like Nero, the Prince is fiddling in 'imla while his kingdom is burning.

Part II is longer than the first and the final parts put together. Here the narrative reaches its climax. The two forces
which confront Victor's weak will power are his overwhelming passion for the hill-woman, and the instrument of accession to the Indian Union. Although the prince succumbs to these forces, he does not fail to arouse pity in the heart of the reader. Even in his madness he realises how the sycophants around him have ushered in his doomsday. As the Prince and his entourage arrive at Shampur the withdrawal of the thirteen gun salute makes him feel insulted and humiliated. This is just a prologue to the greater humiliations the prince has to suffer in his own state.

Dr. Shanker symbolises the struggles of a modern Indian who want to shake off the influence of the effete conventions and adopt the modern values. But at the same time, he realises that a synthesis of both is essential to evolve a congenial way of life. He observes:

'I am a silly modernist, for whom everything European is good and everything in our own heritage bad, but because I have begun to see that the confusion arising from the clash of all the centuries with our own, in India, is bound to become worse unless we seek a synthesis of Europe and India, unless we evolve a new sense of values to live by and generally know the direction in which we are going.' 14

for Vicky leaves his capital Shampur only when the state astrologer announces the setting in of the proper 'muhurt'. It is in the Shampur palace that we come face to face with Gangi. Her charm lies in her green eyes and in her excessive sex impulses. She has been fickle in her sense of morality from her early girlhood. Her present is as colourful as was her past. Even at the
age of fourteen she had already had sexual experience with many people. She knows how and where to wield her weapon to subjugate her victim. Vicky calls her a 'consummate actress' who pretends to be a child, wanting protection but she knows what she wants. She is clever... 15 To Dr. Shanker, ' she seemed neither devilish nor angelic, but just a bundle of ill-assorted nerves, impulses and fascier bound up into a knot as is the peasant woman's bundle, the knot being symbolic of the harp, instinctive sense of mastery she had of all situations...' 16

Her character is further revealed when the Prince tells Dr. Shanker about his intimate relationship with her:

'The bitch ... She comes to me with so many love words, shrieks and hisses ... I am trapped. I tell you I am like a rat in a hole ... She has never been satiated, although she has had so many men. She is a very lonely person, unhappy at heart and very frightened of that the world would say. She is secretive. Also, she tells lies as easily as most people tell the truth. She is a bitch but I cannot do without her.' 17

Victor's mental derangement is due as much to his own weakness as it is to Gangi's infidelity. As Dr. Shanker concludes,

'It was really the call of one chameleon to another for they had both emerged, with similar temperaments, from the orbits of their respective affairs and mistaken their fatigue for the urgent need of each other... 18

Victor emerges from the crisis of the bed chamber only to face the political crisis awaiting him. Rijut Popat Lal J. Shah,
the experienced diplomat, 'trained in the British Indian steel frame tradition', with an Anglo-Saxon economy of words, comes to deliver Sardar Patel's order to the prince to sign the instrument of accession. The prince unsuccessfully tries to defy it. Sardar Patel is particularly displeased with him because of his professed allegiance to the British, and his attempt to be a pseudo-nationalist after their departure. Gagji's interference in the state affairs in the presence of the Prime Minister, shows her confidence in the power of her charms to win over her adversary. She is like 'the sun towards whom all the sunflowers must turn. Only this egotism became ridiculous because of the gap between the ignorance and vulgarity in her nature and the seriousness of the occasions and issues into which the barged where the proverbial angles would have feared to tread.' 19

Dr. Shanker is not merely the narrator but a part and parcel of the whole administrative set-up of the prince. He knows what is wrong and right for the state, and the prince but is unable to enforce his judgement, and silently bears the wrath that rises in him. 'I only want to tell you, Highness, that perhaps you don't know how grave the situation in the state is. You see, no one dares tell you.'

'And you dare to be impertinent!'

I felt a wave of anger go through me I was itching to blow up the bubble of his complacency, but I controlled myself. For a moment, the oppression of our opposite wills shimmered in the close atmosphere of the drawing-room.' 20
Vicky tries to crush the agitation of the Praja Mandal by putting the leaders in jail. He has his own plans to foil Sarfaraz Patel's order for accession. But he underestimates the ability of the Sardar and that of his own people who have risen in revolt against his injustices. He says:

'I will form a solid alliance with the people against all my enemies. I will teach the sardars an education: the lesson of their lives. I will dismiss the officers who oppose me. And then I shall be strong enough to stand my ground against the States Department, I will offer the British and Americans the use of some strips of territory if need be. Later, I can turn them out.'

This shows the prince's political immaturity.

Apart from the Praja Mandal, his own cousins Thakur Praduman Singh, Mohan Chand, and Shivaram are in revolt demanding the restoration of their privileges and share in the state. In fact in every part of his state the storm of revolt is brewing. In such a situation his talk of Ram Rajya, his claims to be a follower of Gandhiji, and his professed objective of safeguarding the people's interests sound hypocritical. Vicky's personal agonies are thus aggravated by the political unrest. He becomes almost hysterical when he finds himself unable to cope with the situation. He asserts:

'The trouble is that I am a genius whom no body understands. But I shall make you understand. I shall make everyone understand! I shall show you the stuff I am made of! I ... I ... I ... I ...'
Victor goes to Indira to ask her to withdraw her petition to the Government. There is some tenderness for them in the heart of every member of the family. Out of sheer affection his son rushes towards him but the prince remains almost cold. Having suffered greatly at the hands of her husband Indira refuses to relent. Victor, at last feels guilty for neglecting his family. This is what he has to say about Indira:

'...She was a good Hindu wife, in spite of the fact that she had passed B.A. Especially when I was ill, she looked after me. And, after all, she bore me two sons. She had a wonderful sense of humour ... But unfortunately she was too good for me and I was so bad.'

Unlike the illiterate, cunning and fickle Gangi, Indira is an educated, gentle but firm lady. As a true wife she comes to nurse her husband at the asylum in sharp contrast to Gangi, who deserts him when he is stripped of his kingdom. Indira's greatness lies in her devoted selfless service to her husband, despite the humiliations she has suffered at his hands.

Dr. Shanker is more a philosopher than a physician. He appears to be the spokesman of the author when he reiterates his philosophical conviction about religion and the role of man in this world. He observes:

'Live in action', said Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Only, there has been some confusion in our minds, because Gandhi borrowed the European Christian belief in original sin and introduced an element of guilt into the Indian soul, thus emphasizing the old Indian idea of ascetic withdrawal from life, the denial of all sexual
intercourse. And he exalted prohibition, penance, fasting and prayer. Whereas life in the pagan Hindu sense is immanent; truth is immanent; God is immanent. The whole universe is a kind of Lila, sport, in the expansive mind and heart of Brahman. The manifold world began when desire arose in the heart of the One Absolute, and now there is the constant desire on the part of mankind to break duality and attain absorption in the One. So that desire is an essential element in us and all our actions are motivated by it... though there is free will in a limited sense, we are really bound by responsibilities, duties... in a universe which is determined by acts, thoughts, and feelings of other people both in the past and the present..."[24]

Dr. Shanker has a special relation with the Prince, which the latter's other companions do not enjoy. This makes him reassess his own nature. We get a full view of his personality through his self assessment:

'I was weak, vain and timid; that I did not have the courage of my convictions and could not act in a crisis with the single minded zeal of a good moral person; that, substituting psychology for morality, I had dissolved the values of my inheritance and was experimenting with the new and tentative hypothesis of liberal individualism which concedes free will to every person, even though that person may be determined by his or her own subjectivism.'[25]

At the Udhampur hunting lodge the prince hears about the Communist agitation supported by his cousins. Thakur Praduman Singh openly rebukes the prince for his debauchery and for not allowing him and other nobles their rights. They have also sent
a petition to the State Department against the Prince. All these incidents aggravate the crisis and he bursts out almost pathetically: 'The unrest in the State has coincided with my difficulties at home. Why/how have to happen to me? I feel cornered.'

His difficulties multiply when he returns to Shampur. Gangi is furious with him and turns him out of her room to prove that she has been faithful to him, while actually she has been chasing one man after another. This gives an occasion to Dr Shanker to analyse her nature:

'This woman(Gangi) was at once a sadist and masochist. She wanted to torment him and be tormented. A compulsion to conquer the members of the opposite sex and to change lovers dominates the nymphomaniac. And yet, as most men and women exhibit the same traits to some extent, no one noticed that she was a schizoid, or split personality.'

Dr Shanker's greatest failure lies in his inaction. This is clearly noticed in his inability to redress the grievances of the leaders of the Praja Mandal, who are kept in jail without a trial.

The Prince continues to hope that the Americans will come to his rescue. He thinks that 'the Americans are the coming powers in India. And if they back my claim for an independent buffer state of Shampur, then I will have more cards up my sleeve to play against the Home Department.'

It is under this delusion that he invites the authorities of the American Embassy to a hunting expedition scheduled to start
from the Dharampur lodge. Captain Pratap Singh brings them to the lodge. The Prince and his entourage consisting of Popat Lal, Gangi, Shanker, Bool Chand and others set out in a motor boat. They are obviously attracted by the thick jungle lining both the sides of the river. In the human heart the law of jungle perhaps still prevails. As the Prime Minister says: 'There is something in the soul of men which draws them back to the jungle...Perhaps because life is elemental here, everything in the jungle preys upon everything else and the survivor is not always the strongest, bravest and the most godly.'

Commenting on the episode, Dr Harrex significantly suggests that 'the jungle metaphors in particular suggest that Victor's condition is a primeval horror. Beast preys upon beast, treachery succeeds, nature is diabolical, the most beautiful flower is a botanical Circe...'

This section also abounds in beautiful natural descriptions. Here is a striking example:

'All the talk we had been having seemed like empty sound in the face of the sheer insidious beauty of the jungle, the secret exhilaration that seemed to arise from the eerie glow of the sunset, which was spreading itself over the placid mirror of the greenish black water, lit up here and there by the fading lances of the dying sun. After a few long seemingly endless miles the stream opened out into a lake, the creepers and the water hyacinths gave place to lotuses which were folding on the placid waters on the approach of the night from the steep mountains that rose to the north.'
They leave the boat at a place from where they are escorted to the hunting lodge. The people who have assembled to greet them are portrayed in their abject misery: 'A cursory glance reveals the miserable condition of humanity in the narrow, confined little thatched cottages, as skeleton after skeleton showed up and salaamed.

In the entire novel it is the only picture of the miserable plight of the poor people, which is a clear departure from the dominating preoccupation of Ahand's work. The contrast presented here between the King and his subjects adds to the realism of the novel.

Mr Peter Watkins, Homer Lane, Kurt Laundauer, major Bell and Mrs Bell are taken to the Machan that very night for the 'Shikar'. Gangi's attraction for the young American, Kurt Landauer and her pretending to swoon in his arms disturbs Victor and engulfs him in jealousy. Vicky receives a greater jolt when Gangi goes to Kurt leaving him asleep. Dr Shanker takes this opportunity to warn Vicky: 'The moon is in her blood again and you must cut her out ruthlessly, otherwise she will deceive you again and again and destroy you.' But in spite of this humiliating experience, the Prince is unable to free himself from the enchantress. Dr Shanker gives a thorough analysis of her fickle nature:

'...she does not really want to be possessed, even though she wants to possess. It is this conflict in her, between being possessed and dominated, and the will to be free, that makes things different. She wants to run wild like a goat, from mountain to mountain with a strange ambition to get there, she does not know where...' He adds: 'the pitfall in the psychology of a nymphomania is that she will believe that her
next victim will be her last...whereas there is an
infinite regress in this business... 35

Victor fails to manage his personal as well as his political
affairs. His plan to allow the Americans to build air bases, in
lieu of the support they will be extending to his fight against
Sardar Patel's orders demanding accession of his state, is nipped
in the bud. In response to a telegram the Prince goes to Delhi
to see the Sardar. Here he is subjected to deep humiliation at
the hands of the Home Minister. Even his own secretary, the
snorting Bania Doolchand turns against him and calls him a
'trespasser on the sacred soil of the Indian Union...A criminal...
There is no divine right of Kings left any more! Shampur has no
place outside the great Indian Union! It has no sovereignty of its
own. Sovereignty belongs to the people... 36

At Delhi, the Sardar deliberately delays in giving him an
interview in order to cut down his 'exalted status' as a 'king' to
that of an ordinary citizen. He calls him at five O'clock in the
morning when he is asked by a peon to wait by the lamp post fifty
yards away. The way the Sardar addresses him as 'Raja' makes him
even more angry and pale. Sardar Patel's stern attitude and
taciturnity make the Prince sign the instrument of accession
almost without any resistance. Dr Shanker calls Vallabh Bhai
'the arbiter of the destiny of the princes...a man of steel and
iron...a stolid peasant with a shrewed glint in his small eyes,
and the conceit of power seated casually upon his knotted fore-
head... 37

The manner in which the affluent princes were tamed by
Sardar Patel is described metaphorically:

'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Vidarbha) Patel growled like a big angry bull, twice or thrice from the rostrum in Delhi. And most of the sons of Sun and Moons fell into line as children of the earth. They had loyally served the British in their day, but they saw the new stars and comets rise above their heads and began to claim descent from these...'.

Vicky returns home stripped of all authority and power that go with kingship. But he continues to be in the power of Gangi. He says:

'Now, I shall be more or less in the same position as Gangi, one of the dispossessed! May be, this will bring us closer together...'.

Anand's own theory regarding body and soul which is given by Dr. Shanker as he tries to calm the agitated nerves of the Prince, is a reiteration of 'Apology for Heroism':

'I do not believe that there is a soul distinct from the body; the soul is body, the body is soul—and together they make a man'. Again commenting on mysticism Dr. Shanker observes: 'Mysticism is the approach of a dying man. It is a blind alley, leading to God, from whom no traveller returns to tell what he saw at the other end.'

Gangi elopes with Bool Chand because the centre of her interest has shifted from Victor to him. Victor is thus vanquished at two levels.

Victor's story is the disintegration of man through the pangs of thwarted love. But yet he finds it difficult to forget...
Ganga Dasi.

A democratic but more corrupt government comes to power. The communists intensify their attack, and almost reach the capital. Popat Lal Shah dismisses Pt. Gobind Das's democratic government, and calls in the army to meet the challenge. He also asks the prince to quit the state.

In the third part of the novel we find the prince, Dr. Shanker and captain Pratap Singh in London, where Victor finds temporary respite in the arms of June Withers whom he seduces by pretending to read her palm, and by giving her good dinners and costumes and taking her out for long rides. But June is not capable of replacing Ganga. Victor confesses: 'I have lost my throne ... But that would not have mattered only, only, the woman whom I loved also left me.'

Unable to reconcile himself to the situation Victor gets Ganga's paramour Bool Chand murdered through Pratap Singh, but the sin of homicide weighs upon his soul. The pressure on his nerves become too much for him. He breaks down at last and goes mad. Dr. Shanker comes to know of this new development in the course of the police enquiry.

Victor is called back home. Pratap Singh is ordered to surrender himself to the police in Bombay. Anand vividly describes the condition of the mad man when Dr. Shanker tries to control him. Victor bursts out:

'Speaking from a mouth that was no mouth, straining from a throat that was all husk, he said words which were no words:'

Ganga Dasi.
' Don't hold me, swine! Don't hold me! I want to fly ... Ohe, let me be a needle! Thunderbolt!
Mountain goat! Horse! Woman is the beginner!
The valley is green. And there grows the root,
Strike up the band for rhumba! Darling, darling, dearest ... Go or go ... Ohe, Ohe, where are we?'

Victor is removed to the Poona asylum with the help of a generous Englishman, Mr. Gibson. Towards the end of the novel, the conversation between Dr. Shanker and Mr. Gibson, shows the former as a modernist who attempts to shatter the ideals of Indian spiritualism taken for granted by the Europeans. He repudiates Gibson's belief in Fate and defines it as 'the accidental circumstances, which seem to make important differences to one's life just because they coincide with possible temperamental change, they you can use the word Fate; otherwise, it is meaningless'.

Further, he denies that the centuries old way of life is acceptable today and says that 'one can take the vitality of impulse from the past; one cannot take the dead routine of an old culture...'

Anand is of opinion that the Europeans' attraction for the spiritual utopia of the East is an escape from the cash-nexus world of the West, where personal conflicts reign supreme. His theory of body/soul as an integrated part of the whole man, which is briefly referred to in the second part of the novel, finds a detailed explanation here. Dr. Shanker answers Gibson's question about Indian spiritualism, and says: 
The bifurcation of soul and body is a vulgar heresy of conversational speech ... The emphasis on the first leads to idealistic views of life and to passive acceptance, isolation, agony, and death; while the emphasis on the other leads to its own excesses. The truth is that man is both body and soul and a great many other things besides. And the whole man cannot admit of the stupid dualism between 'spirit' and matter.

Pointing out the shortcomings of Hinduism Dr. Shanker remarks:

' ... Hinduism was seldom humanist in the modern sense. It mostly regarded man as speck in the dust, a servile creature living in the wrap and woof of maya whose illusory reality was only a remote reflection of God - the Supreme Brahman.'

After Mr. Gibson’s departure, Dr. Shaner, who has seen the drama of the prince’s life in which he has also had to play a major role, as a guide, philosopher, personal physician, and a confident looks at his own life retrospectively. He feels a sense of guilt for tenaciously clinging to the prince even when his own conscience revolted against him:

' I could have walked off from the court at one stage or another, when I felt intense revulsions against continuing without any moral scruples about the debt which had ultimately come from money derived from the dumb peasants and that I could have gone and served the state as a doctor more usefully in some village dispensary and thus appeased to my conscience about what I owed to Victor ... I wanted to rebel, to rage to fight against the whole system which had enveloped me in its poisonous fungus growth and kept me rooted in the shadowy bestial world of tyranny, cowardice, ennui and sloth.'
Dr. Shanker's realisation comes too late, or else he might have saved Victor from his doom. At least, he would have made his own life worthwhile by dedicating himself to the service of the poor and exploited people.

Dr. Shanker, is in fact, passing through a process of self purification by admitting his mistakes in life. He devotes the rest of his life to the ideals of 'bhakti,' which is the novelist's own ideal of life:

' I began vaguely to feel that I must do something to help these people which might make me a little more useful than I had been to them while I was in the pay of the Maharaja. Only in healing the poor I could live an intrinsic life, which had been dead in me while I had been living only for the gratification of my five senses. Something for myself but also something for other people, as they said ...' 48

It is evident that by 'Bhakti' Anand means devoted service to mankind.

Dr. Shanker is a complex character and is very true to life. He may serve as an example to those who are steeped in their own subjectivism. He redeems many of the blemishes of his life before the end of the novel.

As Dr. Shanker prepares to go to Shampur, Maharani Indira conveys the news of her arrival to look after her husband. Because of her selfless love, she is prepared to make any sacrifice for her sick husband. It is this devotion which is woven in the texture of Indian life through the teachings of Nanak, Kabir and other Sufi saints and
Shanker proceeds to the asylum reflecting on the irony and tenderness of a woman's love that would pursue a man even to hell to rescue him when the love was selfless and real. 49

Critical opinion about this novel varies very greatly. Critics and like Dr. M.K. Naik, Krishna Nandan Sinha, Neenakshi Makerjee, dismiss it as a comparatively minor work of Anand, devoid of that flame which lit his earlier fiction. Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's earlier evaluation of the novel makes him say:

'The novel is full of small intrigues and the gyrations of sex, and Anand's aim is to fuse contemporary political history with the personal history of a few individuals; but the book rather leaves an impression of cram, like the memory of a nightmare one has been through. Anand doesn't seem to know his Victor as he seems to know his Bakha, Munoo and Lalu... There is some failure of understanding and perhaps a failure of compassion as well.' 50

But subsequently, illuminating some of the outstanding characteristics of the novel, Dr. Iyengar writes in the foreword to Dr. Balarama Gupta's Mulk Raj Anand:

'I have since re-read the novel ... and I now see things I couldn't see before ... He wrote Private Life to get the anguish out of his system ... In the result the novel is a paradigmatic transformation — or Bottom-like 'translation' of certain elements in Anand's own emotional life: the divorce from his first wife, the betrayal by the hill-woman, the memory of the prince (an ex-people) who had become mad and other flotsam and jetsam of the subconscious sea of memory. And the conscious mind was aware of the events of 1947-48: the transference of power to India and
and Pakistan, the integration of the States with the Indian Union, and the tragedy of Kashmir. Even more important, the unconscious was ready to provide suggestions, currents of thought, possibilities and chain-reactions from its own opulent storage of personal and racial memory.

Of many possible methods of narration, here Anand employs the psychologically and the artistically safest: making a minor participant in the action, Dr. Shanker the Prince's physician, recapitulate the events in the 'tragi-comic-play'. This Shanker is rather a bore when he shifts the interest from the Prince to himself ... but as a filtering medium he is unexceptionable. Just as in the earlier novels Untouchable and Coolie, Bakha and Munoo the individuals aren't quite lost in the types, the Prince too, is both the representative of a class and a unique and exceptional person. After three legal marriages, he contracts a fateful relationship with Gangi Dasi, a brahmin hill-woman who becomes his Cleopatra, his Messalina, his 'Dark Lady', his flawed paradise, his irresistible hell, his ultimate doom. The novelist is a clinical specialist ... a man of compassion too, who wears the Yoke of pity and this grace is denied neither to the Prince nor to Gangi.

But maddened or mad, absurd or atrocious, the Prince holds the centre of the stage with his veering moods, his pathetic vacillations, his violent outbursts, his orgiastic restoratives and his inveterate premonitions of doom. 'I am a rat in the hole', he says more than once; 'I am caught, I am trapped,' he cries; and Shankar too has 'a repeated sense of the doom that was imminent in it all.' Bad and mad though he may be, and pursued by fatality, the Prince isn't devoid of a certain distinction; he
quotes Manu and Plato and Shelley, he discusses philosophy and statecraft; he is cunning and cruel; he is vily and vain; he is self-righteous and self-pitying, and always he has a residual human charm of his own. Both Prince and "Queen Bee" are Dostoevskian characters in the sense that they exemplify the Russian novelist's dictum, "Human nature is broad". And Dostoevskian too is the Prince's capacity to indulge endlessly in the "hopeless wailing of the helpless".

This is the most comprehensive and satisfying evaluation of the novel and shows how the insight of a true critic deepens with a more intensive study of a work of art.

In the light of the above judgement, Jack Lindsay's opinion about the book may not sound as an exaggeration but a fitting tribute:

"If Anand had written nothing else, his place in the history of the novel would be secure—his place as a profound interpreter of Indian life in a phase of pervasive crisis."  

Dr. Haydn Moore Williams observes a certain grandeur in the Prince's failure and links it with the political situation prevailing in India during 1947-8. He says:

'"There is something noble and inspiring about his failure. He is no Antony but like Antony he throws away his kingdom for his mistress...Since Anand used the Prince's catastrophe to reflect the cross currents of independent India, it is noteworthy that the picture of India is full of gloom and foreboding. Victor's madness is equated with neurotic tendencies of an Indian State pulled between the feudal past and the industrialized so-called "progressive" future, an India where (Dr. Shanker thinks) only the political revolutionaries are sane. In spite of the author's
assertion of an objective outlook in his Note (p. 7), we suspect that Dr Shanker's views are at least partially Anand's own. 53

Dr William's objection to the author's note seems to be correct.

Dr Harrex also sees Dr Shanker and Victor in altogether a new perspective and disagrees with the author's professed objectivity:

'Undoubtedly Anand brings off some dramatic dark effects by contriving Shanker as a kind of Poe narrator who is custodian of another's soul and witness to its Empedoclean destruction and there is also in Shanker something of the secret sharer intimacy of the Conardian narrator. However, it is equally Anand's intention to balance the novel's horrific darkness with passages of sociological and humanistic illumination. Thus Victor symbolizes the Nietzschean corruption of power... Yet the novel's major emphasis lies not in the tyrannical abominations of Marxian orge but in the pathetic anguish of a fallen autocrat. Compared with Bakha and Munoo Victor represents victimhood at the opposite end of the scale. Shanker's fragmentary discourses which come at the end of the book, fill the narrative vacuum created by Victor's retreat to madness, are mainly reiterations some of the main points in Apology for Heroism... Thus Anand is not entirely justified in claiming in the Author's Note that he has reverted to the Indian tradition of anonymity in his use of narrator. 54

Evidently, the critical balance tilts in favour of the author with one more critic to quote, Dr Cowasjee bestows high praise on the novel:
Private Life of an Indian Prince has something to offer to every kind of reader. The historian will be fascinated by the intriguing relationship between the Prince and his subjects and the new Government of India; the moralist will find confirmation of his faith in Vicky's destruction; the romanticist will find consolation in the Prince's ultimate love for Ganga and his sacrifice; the realist will point at the futility of knowledge which is not backed by a will to act; the psychologist will either agree with Dr Shanker's analysis or gleefully take issue with him. But it will please most the committed writer who is also an artist. An order has been ruthlessly condemned, but the hereditary architect of the order remains sympathetic to the end.

'And all will find the novel eloquent, ironical and funny, tragic and human.'

VII

The Old Woman and the Cow

In The Old Woman and the Cow published in 1960, Anand returns to the novel of peasant life, though it concentrates more on practical wisdom and a greater concern for and with the human heart. It is Anand's first, and the only novel with a woman as the protagonist. In other novels women have appeared as mothers, sweethearts and housewives, but have always been secondary to their sons, lovers and husbands. The old myth of Sita from the Ramayana has been given a new dimension by making it relevant to our times. He has not merely filled 'the old wine in a new bottle' but has given a new flavour and colour to it.
We can know the origin of the novel from the author's dedicatory note to Sardar Jafri in which he says, 'The story of The Old Woman and the Cow has been narrated here from the urge to retell it in my own manner. The spark that lit the fire that has raged in this book came from your hearth, many years after Nekrassov had left the smouldering ashes of this epic poem in me.'

This reveals the two of main factors that gave birth to the novel: author's own mental struggles, and the epic poem 'The Peasant Woman' written by the nineteenth century Russian poet Nicholas Nekrassov. The Sita Myth which tells the story of a woman who is banished by her husband because she had spent sometime in the captivity of another man, and because people had doubted her purity, is also a very important source.

Gauri, 'the Innocent of Heart', belongs to the same peasant background as Bakha, Munoo and Lal Singh. Her story is conceived as a folk-tale of modern India and has allegorical significance.

At the very beginning of the novel the author draws a portrait of Panchi who is going to wed the heroine, so carefully that even the minute details of his character are revealed. We can clearly visualize what sort of husband Gauri is going to have and what might be her plight in his house:

'Panchi though an independent peasant with an acre and a half of land, was an inauspicious orphan, and notorious for the bad company he kept. 2 'And again: 'A God forsaken orphan' 'a rogue of a wrestler', 'a goonda' and 'a show-off preening himself on his borrowed clothes and riding on a borrowed horse.' 3
Although they are the foul remarks of jealous women, they are fully justified. On the other hand Gauri is 'like a cow, very gentle and very good.'

The novelist is no hurry to show the resplendence of his heroine; it is left to Panchi to unveil her beauty slowly.

Anand presents an archetypal situation -- the ceremony and the festivity of an arranged marriage which sets the narrative in motion. The marriage party passes through the beautiful landscape over which hovers the snow-clad Daula Dhar and the Siwalik mountains towards the bride's village, Pilan Kalan, situated on the foot hills of the Himalayas. In these mountains which are associated with Shiva and Parvati, their presiding deities, Anand has given the necessary pastoral and folk setting for the book.

The long scene that follows beautifully brings out the 'twists and turns' of Panchi's soul, who is being subjected to the arduous marriage rituals. He feels at once, resentment, humiliation and sensual pleasure at the jokes of Gauri's girl-friends. Making lampoons of the elders and mixing hemp with the food are some of the crude but lively aspects of the conventional Hindu marriage. But there are darker aspects also like negotiations about dowry and ornaments, display of personal jealousies. Yet they are intimately connected with life and experience of this country, that they do not appear shocking.

The conventional attitude towards Indian women is clearly reflected in what Panchi feels about the prize he is going to get:
"There was the prospect of the prize of a girl—a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day."

Drought, famine, poverty and debt which unfortunately coincide with the marriage are, as it can be expected, attributed to the 'inauspicious' bride. Panchi, who accepts this superstition mainly because of the insinuations of his jealous aunt Kesaro, thinks of Gauri as 'the incarnation of Kali the black goddess who destroys all before her, who brings famine in her breath and lays bare whole villages.'

Panchi's uncle Molaram is a cunning rascal who has been ill-treating and exploiting Panchi who rightly accuses him: 'He has mortgaged my land to Birbal. He charges me hire for the bullocks, besides making me till his land as a serf...'

This is the evil of avarice, and the worship of the new God 'Money' which tempts one to sacrifice all human considerations at its altar. But the novelist presents another character, an old Muslim potter, whose abhorrence of money is as strong as the greed of the others. Thus, the all-powerful evil is relieved to some extent.

Rafique Chacha gives shelter to Gauri and Panchi, who have separated from their uncle and aunt because of the evils of the joint family system. Although he is a poor Muslim he has a kind and hospitable nature. This is evident from what he says while welcoming the couple:

'The threat of famine has certainly made our humble house worthy of a visit from Hindu brethren.'
Anand's own feelings are revealed in the words of this kindly Muslim, who too is jobless because of the famine. He says: 'There is no talk now a days except the talk of money...Don't let me hear the word money again. The curse has blighted my house...' What he says a little further brings out his contented nature: 'Let me eat the dry bread of peace and I won't look at any other else's buttered bread.' But he is bitter about the state of affairs caused by the drought, and the 'money famine' and thinks that the world is taken over by Shaitan.

Some humorous episodes are inter-woven in the texture of the novel in order to give a complete picture of peasant life. The drunken revelry of of Panchi and Rafique, and their falling into the gutter is an instance. The irony of the situation is very aptly conveyed by Hoor Banoo:

'Hai sisters! they go drinking when there is food in the house

As Panchi goes to work in the field the hot wind sweeps across the land, frustrating all his hopes and labours, Anand paints a realistic and horrifying picture of the sun-baked earth and the dessicated people dying of disease and starvation:

'But all was baked in the sun which shone with relentless fury of a demon, pitiless and unforgiving, the rays became stronger and stronger everyday till the crescendo of drought seemed to have been reached. And yet the thunder in the air, into which heat often matures, did not appear. Only rumours of the old men dying through fever and strokes and dysentry, came to little Piplan from the villages around. And it was said that in the hills children were expiring because their mothers had no milk in their breasts to give them, and dogs were being eaten up.'
Panchi's prayer to the rain-God fails and the heat becomes more intense. Anand describes this scene figuratively:

"...electric sparks were bursting from the stones of the surrounding hills, like bright diamonds against the withered brown rocks, and the torrid glare spread, even and omnipresent, with not a shrub to give shelter to the lone hoopoe or sparrow or any fowl of the air."

Although the novelist has put into Panchi's mouth also those fundamental questions which challenge the potential heroes like Ananta e and Lalu, it is only show Panchi's inner conflict and his utter dejection in the face of the impending calamities both natural and wrought by men:

"What was in his fate? How was he to control his destiny in this impending famine? Who could help him out of this torment of waiting through the drought?... He felt without the help of words that he could defy God, the maker of famine and spit on everyone around him."

Moreover he is a stupid short-tempered fellow who resorts to wife beating whenever he is angry. Gauri though a truly devoted wife, is afraid of his anger and shrinks in her own demure little personality. We get a full view of her beauty as Panchi observes her fascinated:

"He noticed more often the curves of Gauri's body, the hard compact breasts, the thin waist, the heavy hips and shapely legs and the bloom of youth which glowed on her face."

In spite of Panchi's brutality she is burning with love for him and even wants to show it but the age-old convention that forbids the wife from taking the initiative, comes in her way.
Panchi behaves like a coward in his refusal to accept the responsibility of fatherhood. He becomes furious when Gauri discloses that she is with child. He is extremely suspicious and doubts the purity of Gauri and turns her out of the house, abusing and kicking her at the same time.

Gauri's search for identity begins with this calamity. She moves from one place to another not for her own emancipation, but of all women. She passes from one ordeal to another only to shine more brightly. But she neither forgets her husband nor the child inside her.

Though her experience shocks Gauri beyond expectation, accepting it as the decree of fate, she goes to her mother's house where she is treated as a burden. The very first words of her mother Laxmi are: 'He is not the only husband'. They not only disgust her but also make her think that Goddess has deserted her. The Pipal tree to which she used to go with her mother to worship the Goddess does not give her any comfort. She is reminded of people said:

'that the Goddess often went away to the snowy peaks of Daula Dhar to be with her consort Shiva. So she looked towards the heights of Daula Dhar. The overrange seemed to blossom like a garden full of roses in the light of the afternoon sun. The Goddess was not visible. Only the great God Shiva seemed to be there, red eyed, enjoying the fires that he had lit, which smouldered before him. The blessed one was in a cruel mood which would only prolong the drought.'

Thus Gauri in her belief in Gods and Goddesses resembles a true folk heroine.
It is clear now that Gauri has only fallen from one boiling cauldron into another, with her return home. But her devotion to her husband and faith in her namesake Goddess comes to her relief.

Because of Amru's machinations Laxmi sells Gauri to Seth Jairam Das, at Hoshiarpur, in order to save her cow Chanderi. To her the quadruped is more precious than her daughter. She is a cruel woman who does not hesitate to abandon all moral values for the sake of money and pleasure.

Although Gauri's initial resistance against the Seth's lascivious intentions fails, she is successful in preserving her chastity. The hypocrisy of the Seth makes her almost cry out, 'May the Gods die if they favour these dogs,' but afraid of being punished for her blasphemy she suppresses her curse. Gauri's devotion to the Goddess does not make her blind to puzzling iniquities of divine justice. She scares away the old banker who wants to put 'chadar' on her and tries to molest her. She warns him: 'I am guarded by the Goddess! So do not come near me or you will burn.'

Her goodness and innocence are often exploited by various hypocrites and parasites, but her virtue is preserved. In this challenging situation Colonel Dr. Mahindra appears as the voice of rationality. He combines in his personality the virtues of asceticism, self-discipline, and generosity and love for humanity. He comes as a rescuer of Gauri from the clutches of the old lecher. The fever of Gauri proves a boon to her. Dr. Mahindra
conceals a compassionate heart behind a hard exterior. Gauri is shifted to his surgery which not only serves as a rescue home, but also as a training centre where she learns to confront the challenges of her Destiny. She also learns the importance of cleanliness and cultivates the doctrine of service as a way of life. Because of her good looks she becomes the centre of a scandal owing to the evil intentions of Dr. Batra, but Dr. Mahindra's prestige and wisdom come to her rescue.

Dr. Batra, a man of 'volatile personality' who is known for his scandalous affairs with women, provides a contrast to Dr. Mahindra, who never has deviated from celibacy after the death of his wife. He is a man simple in his apparel, straightforward in his dealings and with a strange, incomprehensible soul, rooted somewhere in the torso of his dark body.' Added to these qualities are his freedom from money considerations and conventions 'almost complete freedom from fear, a kind of detached indifference to the worldly world.'

In the episode of Miss Young, the nurse, Anand has brought out religious intolerance. After having been humiliated by Dr. Batra she prepares to go to St. Xavier's colony at Ludhiana, and wants to take Gauri with her so that she may convert her there. Dr. Mahindra insists that one should be free in the choice of one's religious belief. It should not be imposed upon any body without his consent. When Gauri refuses to go with Miss Young, the lady becomes furious and goes out of the doctor's presence, hating the dark gods of the heathen.' Dr. Mahindra looks at the tender bloom of innocence of this young hill woman...
and thinks, 'certainly, to be condemned to regard her body as sinful in the Catholic mission would be the most undeserved punishment for her.' 20

Anand attacks the custom of the arranged marriages again in this novel by ascribing to it the lasciviousness of his partner:

'Dr. Batra is probably suffering from the usual frustration of our countryman whose marriages are arranged. And there is none completely evil that has not some good in him... I do not believe in revenge.' 21

Here again the author advocates a humanistic approach to all problems.

Panchi vacillates between the dictates of his own conscience and the allegiance he owes to the village community. His tragedy lies in his inability to choose between right and wrong. Panchi sets out in search of Gauri. But having been assaulted by the hired goondas of Gauri's uncle Amru, he is unable to carry out his good intention. Laxmi's repentance as well as her fear of her police drive to decide to bring back Gauri. She goes to the Seth with Adam Singh for this purpose. At this stage of the novel is Laxmi's lurid private life revealed by the author. She is partly right when she says that women are dragged into immorality by men, and it is wrong to blame them everytime.

They are both impressed by everyone's high opinion about the doctor. Their respect for him is evident when they say to the peon, 'Tell us the way to the temple where the great
God resides'.

Dr. Mahindra combines the virtues of a surgical healer and a social reformer. The stage is now set for delivering his inspiring oration. The widespread wretchedness of the peasantry is due to their abandoning the old way of co-operative farming, and becoming owners of small bits of land which are often grabbed by the moneylenders and capitalists. All the peasant heroes and characters of Anand are victims of this evil.

Practising hypocrisy in the name of religion makes the so-called 'twice-born', meaner than the Shudras. The new God Money, the bringer of all evils in this world, as well as the false pride of his own countrymen, come under constant fire at the hands of Dr. Mahindra:

'All life in our country today, everything in it, has been poisoned by the importance given to money, property and possession: ... First there were the white sahibs and now there are the brown sahibs. The banias are hoarding foodgrains while the people are dying. And for one good man there are millions of self-seekers.'

Nevertheless, Dr. Mahindra sees a bright future for our race in the light of modern inventions, provided there is also strength of mind and heart.

'We know enough about the breathing of plants to make them grow faster with medicines. We can steal the secrets of the earth and make food out of sunshine: we have learnt to control the energy of the universe like gods and we can get water and electricity by turning on the tap. Only, we must not be
afraid and weak and cowardly and small minded. We have to reform the whole of our country, every dying part of it. 24

He does not believe in the theory of rebirth and insists on making full use of the given life span to turn this hell of ours into heaven;

' We must end the cycle of poverty and death. ... We have to use our instruments and machines wisely ... There is wretchedness beyond wretchedness in our land, the most terrible squalor. Our people have been living like the denizens of hell. We must build the new life on this earth here and not in heaven. ' 25

He does not believe in any other hell or heaven. He repudiates the theory of Karma, and as a true humanist stresses the need for the development of the whole man:

' The idea of deserving a higher birth as a reward for good and bad deeds, is to my thinking a myth promoted to keep men and women at work for the slave drivers ... it is true that at the back of all wretchedness, there is the soul of man. And the soul remains when the wretchedness has passed ... So the deepest good builds on the deepest human being, the whole man ... Even as the salvation of men requires socialism and not the profit system ... Any how, there is no question of rebirth ... ' 26

Dr. Mahindra evidently voices Anand's own views to a large extent. His acceptance of the soul but rejection of rebirth, and his commitment to socialism being him close to his creator.

Adam Singh is more attracted to the new faith of devotion and self realisation than Laxmi. They return to Chota Piplan
with Gauri where Panchi is recovering under the care of Rafique Chacha and his wife. Gauri resumes her duties as a wife, and becomes a nurse also to effect the speedy recovery of her husband. Adam Singh becomes another messenger of the new faith and serves the purpose of the novel more than Panchi:

'I have realised that we peasants are too full of fear and we have always practised too much humility. And we have forgotten our pride. And in actual fact all men without exception are divinely inspired. And for everyone of us two ways are open: the way to suffering and the way of devotion to work and helping others.'

But Panchi's dull understanding cannot scale such heights and he thinks these are mere words incapable of being translated into action. He remarks with biting sarcasm: 'They all hope to grow grains on news papers. And water the earth with talk — with their spittle.' But to rescue him from the torpor of despair and indecision Adam Singh again exhorts:

'Life is a speck in the eyes of Brahma. And there will yet be good in it, and bad. Only we must go on working struggling and helping. Mother India is big enough, and if there are Karma Yogis like Mahindra in it, and young ones like you our land will have sunshine ... The seasons will be changed by man. There will be water from wells, with electric pumps and no drought. And medicines will renew the earth.'

Gauri has returned home a completely changed woman under the influence of the modern but saintly Dr. Mahindra, who combines in himself the virtues of both the East and the West.
She has cast off all her shyness and docility, and is determined not only to change her husband but also the whole village. She condemns blind faith and stresses the need for education. Quoting Dr. Mahindra she says: 'Education will make us masters of our destiny and not religion.'

Rakhi's role in the novel is like that of Manthara in the Ramayana. She is successful in instigating Panchi and the people of the village against Gauri. She refers to Sita's abduction by Ravana, and the people's suspicion about her chastity which led Ram to banish her. Panchi himself, after a little vacillation between his own conscience and the suspicions and insinuations of others, is convinced of Gauri's infidelity. Even the wise counsel of Rafique Chacha is of no avail. He strikes Gauri resounding blows with his open palm, cursing her all the time. But this does not make Gauri feel despondent. She is not the helpless girl she used to be, thanks to Dr. Mahindra. She rises with her will power and severs her relations with him. She goes out of Panchi's life as calmly as she had returned to it. Her final farewell is surcharged with vigour and shows a proper understanding of Panchi's character:

'He is not foolish. He is a weak, spoilt creature! ... He pretended to be a lion among the men of the village! But really he is a coward! They are telling him that Ram turned out Sita because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana! ... I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out and be forgotten of him.'
The point is, that a modern woman humiliated and turned out by her husband cannot expect the earth to open and allow her like Sita, but has to rely on her own ability, courage and resources. Gauri has imbibed this truth from Dr. Mahindra, and hence can rise to the occasion. True, as she goes out with a heavy heart, she thinks for a while that the earth must open up to rescue her as it had opened up to receive Sita, came as an echo from the memory of her race! But soon she felt that the ground was hard and solid under her feet and showed no sign of opening up to prove her innocence. She waved her head to forget Sita and thought of the road to the town. She knew Dr. Mahindra would be there, and this reassured her. She would go to him and live under the shadow of his protection and work as a nurse until her child came .... And child would not be the coward that Panchi was or as weak as she had been ...

Gauri looks forward to the coming generation which will not inherit the weaknesses of its predecessor but will evolve a bright new world free from jealousy, superstitions, intrigue, despair and intolerance.

There is similarity between Sita and Gauri both of whom show conjugal devotion. Like Sita again, Gauri is to have her child in exile. But magnanimity and nobility of Ram's character and his exalted action are to be found in Mahindra's character and not in that of Panchi. But the difference between the myth and the situation here is very important. The only way left for the modern Sita is the one chosen by Gauri.
Referring to the allegorical significance of the novel

Dr Harrex remarks:

'Clearly Anand intended The Old Woman and the Cow as folk fable or allegory in which the therapeutic reason (bearing in mind the novel’s desire-image of a doctor healing a sick world) rescues virtue and both triumph over the plagues of of the lower nature. The parallel suggested between Gauri and the cow and Sita imply an allegorical intention whereby the author expresses, through the heroine, the hope that India and India’s values will endure through her suffering.'

Dr Krishna Nandan Sinha sees a definite epic strain in the novel. And about the use of the old myth of the Ramayana, he observes:

'The closeness to Nekrasov’s poem does not in any way diminish the richness and beauty of its original conception, based on the Sita myth which is woven like a central jewel into the whole design. The novel suggests continuous parallels and links between the primitive past and the desolate present and thereby presents the most absorbing image of the human condition.'

Dr Naik’s remarks about The Big Heart and The Old Woman and the Cow, are here worthy of note:

'These two novels represent the high-water mark of Anand’s fictional genius, since in them his vision of the central theme is pure and clear and is, on the whole, realized in satisfying artistic terms, notwithstanding occasional lapses into direct, inartistic statement. Never again was his flame to burn so steadily, shine so brightly.'

About the didactic strain in the novel Dr Alastair Niven correctly says:
'...in The Old Woman and the Cow he reminds us, as surely as he had done in Untouchable at the start of his career that art and revolution often spring from the same source, a faith in man's humanity and his inability to reconstitute himself as each new dawn rises. 'If my book is sad' he writes before the novel starts...then it is not because I don't see any hope, but because I am conscious of the present despair.' Gauri and Dr Mahindra show that such despair need not be the inalienable destiny of man, in India or elsewhere.'

In The Old Woman and the Cow Anand stresses the need for the emancipation of women, freedom from fear, superstitions, jealousies, and conventions, and for adherence to the doctrine of Bhakti which is blended with the modern attitudes. In a sense Gauri symbolizes not only Indian womanhood, but her country as a whole, which must rise and work for a better future with courage and determination. And the possibilities for the future are never lost sight of, in spite of the present darkness. What is required is the courage to stand up and face the situation.

Dr Mahindra is undoubtedly one of the closest among Anand's characters, to his own personality and attitudes. The doctor has absorbed the best of all the influences to which he has been exposed. He has achieved a synthesis between the scientific approach of the West and the moral values of the East. His leanings towards socialism have not made him a materialist, though he has emancipated himself from the dead weight of superstition and convention. He is the kind of philosopher or leader that the modern Indian society needs.

Anand's use of the myths is very interesting and ingenious.
One cannot help thinking of T.S. Eliot's exploitation of myths in his plays, 'The Cocktail Party' in particular.

All in all, The Old Woman and the Cow, is one of the finest achievements of Mulk Raj Anand.

VIII

The Road

In The Road, published in 1961, Anand returns to the theme of untouchability twenty five years after the publication of his first masterpiece in 1935. The Road is not a revision of Untouchable but a different tale. While Untouchable is a study in miseries of the adolescent untouchable Bakha, and his aspirations, The Road is a symbolic story about the struggles of the grown up Bhikhu, whose main concern is not only the emancipation of an individual but also of his class as a whole, through devotion to work. The novel owes its origin to Robert Graves' Good Bye to All That and And it Still Goes On, as well as to the author's own shocking experience of the treatment meted out to the Harijans in Haryana. He writes:

'...it was a kind of shock to me when I went to live in Harayana, twenty miles from Delhi, in the human empire of Jawaharlal Nehru, to find that the outcastes not only in South India, but in the mixed north were still consigned to the limbo of oblivion. There was something tragic-comic to me in the fact that the caste Hindus would not touch the stones quarried by the untouchables to make the road, because the stones had been touched by the untouchables. I mentioned this to the great Nehru. He
did not believe me. He was quite angry at my mentioning this awkward fact. I said I would prove it to him by showing it to him in the "enchanted mirror".

I therefore pursued the mirror game at various levels of consciousness of the people, conscious and covert, involved in this drama of the road. You will notice, that, technically, it is not a straight narrative, but diversified by breaking through the obvious planes to the impalpable world of feelings of the characters involved.

...I therefore, tried to achieve closure of the insulted and injured, by transcending the first "amazement" through the dialectic of feeling...

We have to see what this 'enchanted mirror' yields. The symbolic title of the novel was suggested by Ravindra Nath Tagore's epigraph:

"He will pass by the road,
And I wait for him;
Many thorns prick his feet,
He is covered with dust;
And I die of shame,
Morn and Eve."

The Road stands for the way which leads a man out of the hell he has built for himself to the realization of a heaven of a classless and casteless society, free from the dead weight of custom and superstition. The symbolic and the humanist contents of the novel have the same inspiration and purpose.

In the opening scene of the novel, emphasis is laid on Love as a supreme power that can change the entire status of man and bring about miracles in his spiritual and material life. Laxmi, the kind hearted and God-fearing mother of Bhikhu exhorts her son who is oppressed by the caste Hindus, to love his oppressors.
'Love them even if they hate you. Love them as Lord Krishna loved the whole world. Love the old and the young. Love the cattle as Shyam, the God of Brindaban loved the cows. Love everyone and everything... Then through your good deeds shall we rise from our low caste and be born into a higher caste...'

Bhikhu and other Chamar boys have quarried the stones to build a road to transport milk from the village Goverdhan to the city. But the Caste-Hindus not only resent the fact that they have to touch the polluted stones, but also object to the wages the Government gives them for their work. Bhikhu is attacked by the caste-Hindus when he tries to go to the temple with his mother. But even before Dhooli Singh, the dumpling nose, comes to his rescue, he has overpowered them. This clash between the 'high' and the 'low' is meant to be symbolic of the conflict between evil and good that has always been going on. And true to the law of 'Nemesis' good ultimately triumphs over evil. So Bhikhu and Dhooli Singh become victorious in the end.

The quarried stones are collected on the farm of Dhooli Singh where the workers get necessary protection against the high caste people. While working on the road they visualize their intrinsic desire to 'emerge to the surface of life, above the hell of the outcastes' colony in the village...'

The village well is usually the centre of attraction. Pandit Surajman who comes there to eye the village girls is a successor of Pandit Kalinath of Untouchable. But by accepting the mangoes touched by the untouchables, he hints at the breaking of the caste barrier between them and the 'twice-born'. 
Dhooli Singh thought as he stands in his field ready to meet any eventuality posed by the Landlord Thakur Singh, bring out his unconventional attitude towards life. He sees through the hypocrisy of the high caste people who do not hesitate to allow their children to play with those of the low-caste people, but, when it is a question of working together they become highly conscious of the distinction. Dhooli Singh feels:

'All the cowardly ones, all the physically and morally weak ones will soon be left behind. Only the physically and mentally strong, like Bhikhu will remain and go forward.'

Lambardar Dhooli Singh is full of hope regarding the prosperity the road will bring to the village. Encouraging the stone breakers he says:

'Ohe, fool, the milk of the village will be borne to the city, and more cash will come to the folk. I say it is roads and roads and more roads and electricity—that will bring prosperity...'

Dhooli Singh is portrayed as a progressive and upright man whose strength lay in his natural direct feelings through the purity of which he could stand against all duplicity. And he preferred a row than harbour bad thoughts and burn up inside him like Tomato face! His sincerity and humanity become evident when he says '...I know that while the men of our brotherhood eat a little, even many of these Chamars don't have bread with pickle twice a day.'

And when his own son Lehman and Thakur Singh's son, Sanju together set fire to the untouchables' huts, it is Dhooli Singh who gives them shelter in his house and even distributes the clothes
of his wife and daughter to the wailing comen and children. His sympathy for the helpless untouchables overshadows even his family ties and leads him to a crucial decision:

'Come then', he said, 'suddenly impetuously. Come into the house .... come .... the woman of God is gone to her proper place, the temple!... And that rascal Lachman will not be my son again!... And I shall be an outcaste forever.... So the house is yours.... come my sons and daughters...

the Dhooli Singh is thus a representative of a section of the caste people who are prepared to fight against injustice. He is also an archetypal figure representing 'Bhakti!'

Bhikhu, like Bakha, is a strong-bodied man with a poetic heart. He works with diligence and determination. He is a strict moralist and does not even raise his eyes to look at Rukamani, the Landlord's daughter. Dhooli Singh is impressed by his slight education, as it is, his poetic heart and unswerving devotion:

'And he thought that some men are born to go ahead and the others have their backwardness allotted to them. Apart from Bhikhu who could sing and read and talk as he could work, the rest were illiterate and will trail behind.

Even Rukmani praises the bard in him: 'Only this Bhikhu sings and makes up verses.'

Bhikhu is capable of keeping his mind cool even when he sees the devouring flames of fire set by the envious caste people to punish the low ones for the 'crime' of their striving to keep their body and soul together by working on the road. Although Bhikhu resigns himself to his fate, he sees a ray of hope in the dim future through self-effort and devotion to work. He sees the
miserable plight of the helpless men, women and children who have stopped wailing after the initial outburst. They appear to have accepted it as the decree of fate that they have to bear the humiliations and abuses from the higher castes. It is not the realization of his abject misery that makes Bhikhu calm, but a vague hope of emancipation in the distant future. The portrait of Bhikhu as presented here is very appealing:

'Bhikhu had stood grim and taciturn but now turning his face away from the tender scene with dimmed eyes and contemplated the smoke above the flames. Strong and sincere but calm, he was too spiritually pure to hate, and had learnt through long submission, without protest, only hoping that through work and more work he would be liberated, somehow, he did not know.'

Laxmi, Bhikhu's mother embodies the superstitions and fatalistic attitude of the average Indian woman. She thinks that the Goddess Kali has punished her and her son as well as the other Harijans, for defying the caste people against whose will the road is being built. The fire is a curse thrown upon them from heaven. She is so obsessed with this idea of 'divine wrath' that she visualises Goddess Kali speaking to her angrily:

'I will burn you all up! I have singed those birds! You must suffer for defying the twiceborn! I will consume you until your souls descend from the ashes to the bowels of the earth, there to undergo the just punishments for the misdeeds of your son and other boys. And when you have suffered enough, been bitten by scorpions and snakes, tortured with red-hot irons by the demons and crushed in oil mills, I will come like a dark angel and beckon your souls to rise like ghosts, who will become jinns.'
to wander around the village, bereft and hungry and accursed for ever..."12

Dhooli Singh accommodates all the displaced persons on his farm with Governmental aid. Dhooli Singh's wife Sapti, and his son Lachman who had revolted against him for sympathising with the untouchables, return home and later join him on the farm and work on the road repenting all the while of their follies. Sanju, the Sarpanch's son also joins Lachaman and others on the farm. With this defection the marriage between Rukmini and Lachman has become almost impossible. The romantic attachment between Bhikhu and Rukmini is an intricate problem to which there seems to be no solution. Sapti is angry with her son for being an accomplice in the crime of Sanju. She is sincerely sorry for her own misdeeds and the confession of her sins redeems her. She exhorts her daughter Mala: 'Let us go to where your father is—we cannot stay where the light of the house is not.'13

Mala and Rukmini on their part, though they mostly live in their romantic worlds, are fully conscious of their brothers' misdeeds.

Sanju, who had joined the untouchables, returns home complaining about the low wages the Government gives for breaking the stones. Evidently, he had gone to Dhooli Singh's side mainly to attract Mala towards him, but he has failed. In sharp contrast to Lachman, he shows no insight and does nothing to wipe the blemish of his heart by sincerely serving the poor.

Even Thakur Singh, the relentless custodian of the high-castes, accepts his defeat, and calls Bhikhu to talk to him. But the irony
lies in Sanju's unmitigated fury against the untouchables with whom he has worked. It is also curious that while the obstinacy of the old man about caste slackens, the young man's ire and invective increase. Generally speaking, the younger generation is found to be more liberal in such matters. Obviously, Sanju's anger is the result of his frustrated love for Mala. He goes to the extent of concealing his own crime by ascribing it to the 'judgement' of God:

'There hovels are burnt down by the wrath of the heavens
And now one day lightning will strike the whole race
of Chamar and outcastes.'

Bhikhu works in intense heat, drawing inspiration from the words of Kabir. After the road is built he goes to see the landlord. Thirsty as he is, he is given a tumbler full of water by Rukmini. But Sanju comes out and strikes him, uttering foul curses all the time. Bhikhu is injured. Blood drips from his torn lips. He wants to retaliate but as in Bakha, the age-old feeling of inferiority lurks in him, and he strains himself:

'Bhikhu stretched out his full height again, till the landlord's son covered back. Then he felt he must withdraw before either hands should strike. He wiped the smear of blood from his torn lip, turned round deliberately, swallowed his spittle and walked out of the hall. He did not go towards home. Instinctively he went towards the direction of the road he had helped to build. And in his soul he took the direction, out of the village towards Gurgaon, which was the way to Delhi town capital of Hindustan, where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste...'
road to freedom has to be built by the oppressed people themselves though they may receive a little help and encouragement from others. But their only salvation is in their own awareness and effort and the mere building of the road is not enough. One must follow it as Bhikhu does, and show the courage to face other challenges.

Dr. Harre sees the impact of Gandhism on The Road and Death of a Hero though he thinks that artistically they are slight works. He observes:

'The moral premises underlying both the novellas are essentially Gandhian and perhaps are best summed up in the simple statement from The Road: 'Against the frenzy of wrong, there must be no hatred.' Both stories are the episodes of the heart refined down to the pure moral elements of Anand's achievement as a novelist. They nevertheless testify to his strong consistency of purpose. The Road and Death of a Hero lack the virile of life of The Big Heart, but they are faithful to its values.'

D. Riemenschnieder considers it a 'failure not only artistically but also in the context of presenting an idea of man.'

Anand himself repudiates this charge and observes: 'I don't think he (D. Riemenschnieder) has noticed the new elements of the labyrinthine interiors, which I tried to touch in this book. This novel was therefore not a repetition of Untouchable, but an attempt at a break-through, at various layers of awareness below awareness.'

Dr. Krishna Nandan Sinha has a very high opinion of the tale: 'The Road is a brilliant piece of symbolistic construction. It stands out as a fresh landmark in the art of Mulk Raj Anand, considering the distance it has travelled since the creation of Untouchable especially with respect to its artistry and symbolism.'
All things considered, however, the novel cannot be called a major achievement. Even so, The Road certainly succeeds in movingly presenting its author's belief in love, compassion and devotion.

IX

Death of a Hero

This novelette was written in New Delhi in 1947 but was not published until 1963. It is set in the years immediately following independence and has for its background the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistani raiders which prompted Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir to sign the instrument of accession to the Indian Union. In some minor details it has a superficial resemblance to Private Life of an Indian Prince.

The hero Maqbool Sherwani is drawn from the history of the post-independence period of our country, and his story is still fresh in national memory. He is a poet and a patriot who sacrifices himself for his convictions. In this novel Anand keeps aside the usual conflicts which dominate his work and probes deep into the meaning of life. As Dr D. Riemenschneider observes:

"Though the action takes place in India—in Kashmir—and the hero is an Indian, his problem is only superficially that of a particular historical situation; basically it is the problem of man: the confrontation with death because of one's own convictions."

The novel opens with Maqbool Sherwani returning to Baramula,
his home-town, from Srinagar on his motorcycle. His aim is to rally the people against the Pakistani invaders who are committing atrocities in the name of religion. He is conscious of the dangers of his enterprise and with fear in his heart he thinks of pain offered by death. He remembers the Biblical words, "How sweet for our souls to be borne to the skies, Our journey done, our journey done...", but derives no consolation from them. The grim reality of total annihilation that death brings about, hovers over him, and impels him to say, 'I shall love life with the last drop of my blood.' 2

The chill of the evening enhances the awareness of this blood congealing horror:

'The wintry sky on this late afternoon, the red sun tinting the snowy clouds above the mountains, and the chill mist covering the shallows and the swamps of the threatened valley, all seemed to bring the shadows nearer.'

Maqbool is fully aware that in going to Baramula, he is perhaps going to certain death. But he is not disheartened because he is convinced that there is no hope for the people of Kashmir except in struggle:

'But those who hoped for a new morning for Kashmir, would have to fight because only through survival would there be a chance to metamorphose the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of the young from past servility.' 4

As he is whirring past the Poplars, he comes to a stop, threatened by the barking of a dog which seems to echo the proverbial warning from hell. He is at Pattan where the raiders are yet to
come. Maqbool meets his friend and confidant Mahmdoo, a cook-shop walla who is sceptical about Maqbool's capacity to arouse the people against the intruders. Maqbool who is unable to convince his friend begins to doubt the wisdom of his mission: 'What was the use of his going to Baramula to rally the people if he could not convince this man.' Even at a later stage he is not at all certain about his mission: 'What exactly could he do? He could, in his opinion, tell them the news of the imminent help from India and wait'.

In spite of diffidence and uncertainty, Maqbool, who firmly believes in secularism, remains unshaken in his determination to fight for what he considers a just cause.

Maqbool is shocked to see his 'Muslim Brethren' burning a church and killing missionaries. Aunt Rahti gives an account of the misdeeds of the Pakistani Pathans who are plundering, burning and killing innocent Muslims and Hindus. The poet in him is shocked by the hypocrisy of these raiders when he sees them praying beside a tomb. He is struck by the irony, '...that these brutal/could be devoutly praying, though only the previous night, perhaps they had been looting and murdering ...their prayers were automatic gestures, repeated without understanding of the meaning of the Arabic words.'

Like many other protagonists of Anand, Maqbool too is vexed by the fundamental questions about God, but concludes: '...the death of the innocents had proved that there was no God...'

Wading through the dangers, Maqbool succeeds in getting to the house of Muratib, a friend of his, whose factory has been looted by the raiders. Muratib, however, is a coward as he himself admits...
and cannot be persuaded to join Maqbool, who after having been in the constant strain of fear at last appears to have overcome it. His boldness of spirit asserts itself as he talks to Muratib in an attempt to involve him in the struggle for liberation:

'I am under orders... Besides, I feel that on principles we must struggle... If we believe in freedom from these brethren as we believed in freedom from the British and their friends.'

Muratib has no objection to give financial help. Maqbool's next adventure is in the house of Ghulam Jilani where he comes face to face with Khurshid Anwar, the Pakistani official, and his one-time friend and the lawyer Ahmad Shah. His rejoinder to the treacherous friend breathes the spirit of rebellion. Maqbool's courage in defying his enemies to their face is truly heroic:

'I will certainly not be bullied up by you... We were living peacefully enough and struggling against wrongs... And then these people came, with guns pointed at us demanding accession by force.'

By protecting Maqbool from his captors Jilani shows the fundamental trait of his culture which enjoins everyone to treat his guest as sacred. Jilani declares: 'Maqbool is my guest, as you are...And I would not like to misuse the fact of his visit here to impose a decision... He need not commit himself.'

Maqbool's struggles are inner. Though he does not actually participate in the actual war, he fights a battle in his own conscience. He vacillates between hope and despair, between right and wrong, but ultimately it is his will-power that triumphs.

Maqbool reaches his house disguised as a woman. Even in such
emergency when the jaws of death are open at him his conscience rebels against his travelling in a woman's costume.

Maqbool's free spirit refuses implicit submission to age. He contradicts his father who professes surrender to the will of God. He comments ironically:

'All the old people believe in obedience. We must accept and not rebel. All that happens to us is due to the fate ordained by Allah...Say five prayers a day, keep the fasts and obey and die in the process.'

In the entire household, there is only Noor, his sister who can be the anchor of his future aspirations even when he is no more. She is an even featured girl slightly disfigured by the pimples of youth, with big black eyes, and a very sensitive heart. It is she who helps Maqbool to escape when the invaders enter the house by force in search of him. Despite all his efforts to run away, Maqbool is captured and put in a cell. Now certain of his death he feels that perhaps his sister would come to see the carcass hanging up 'there', and tears of self pity come to his eyes. He feels he must at least write a final message.

The last part of the tale which describes the final struggles of the hero, is deeply moving, tender and poetic. Maqbool's greatness of soul and his firm determination not to submit to the enemies in the face of imminent death, reminds one of the great heroes like Bhagat Singh who sacrificed their lives for their motherland without ever bending before their oppressors. The spirited reply that Maqbool gives to the traitor Ahmad Shah is a sustained piece of poetic intensity:
'Truth has no voice... Only lies flourish for a while...
I have no face, I have no speech. I cannot move you...
This land, which gave birth to me, this land which is
like a poem to me -- how shall I explain my love for it
to you? From out of its valleys there has risen for
centuries the anguish of torture... And we are trying to
emerge from the oppressions to liberate our mother beca-
use we know her each aching caress... And you have come
and fouled her and wounded her! How could any of us
stand by and not protest against your cruelty... I cannot
forgive your treachery Ahmad Shah. Do you not feel the
human response of pity for the weak?'\textsuperscript{13}

After a false trial, Maqbool Sherwani the poet and patriot
half of is shot dead. When the Indian army enters Baramula it finds/the
town razed to the ground, and the dead body of the poet tied to a
pole with the word 'Kafir' written on the lapel of the shirt. And
almost 'the body looked like a scarecrow, but also like that of Yessu Mesih
on the cross.'\textsuperscript{14} It is as though that Maqbool, who has suffered and
died for a noble cause, has earned the right to martyrdom.

Maqbool's letter to his sister Noor given at the end of the
novel is intended to summarise the character of the hero in all
its ramifications, and also to maintain the compact structure of
the novel. In spite of his active involvement in the struggle
against the raiders, Maqbool is essentially a poet who sees glory
in the 'yoke of pity'. He writes:

'I have never been anything but an aspirant to poetry
All my dreams will remain unfulfilled; because I am
going to face death. But here in our country, the most
splendid deeds have been done by people, not because
they were great in spirit, but because they could not
suffer the tyrant's yoke, and they learnt to obey their consciences. And all conscience, however dim, is a great force, and is the real source of poetry. For, from the obedience to one's conscience, to pity, is but a small step. And pity is poetry and poetry is pity.  

Maqbool derives his philosophy of life from the great Sufi saints and poets. He says:

'...This is my philosophy of life that I love people!... And I want father and mother to accept this truth than the lie which their love for me dictates.'

There is an intense longing in him that his poetic aspirations should inspire people beyond his tenure of life on the earth and feels 'if life continues, then death, even sudden death, is as reasonable as birth, or life itself'.

What makes him request his sister to name her first born after him, is that immortal urge in him 'to work for the new life in our country'.

In spite of the adverse judgement of Dr M.K. Naik who thinks that it is 'a slight and superficial work', and Saros Cowasjee's opinion that 'it is an unimpressive work', the novel has an ardent appeal to many. Dr Krishna Mandan Sinha has given high praise to it: 'Death of a Hero, is truly an epic of modern India, covering events which are fresh in national memory. But the novel's real thrust lies in an intensely poetic, if also sad, appeal which gives it the status of a tragedy.'

Dr D. Riemenschneider has also a very high opinion of the novel: 'Death of a Hero is indeed, is not only the deepest probe
into the potentiality of man but also the most satisfying artistic achievement.'22

A balanced view should prompt one to reject the two extremes of opinion. Death of a Hero is too slight to compare with the major achievements of Anand. But it has its own claims to be considered a minor masterpiece.

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