"Commitment" understood in its broad moral and religious connotation was the underlying concept in Horace, Plato and Aristotle as each of these classical exponents, tried to define the nature, extent and aims of literature in general or of different genres of literature. Spenser down to Dr. Johnson in England spelt out the purpose or aim of writing in terms of a concrete moral or spiritual or intellectual or behavioural change to be achieved in human beings. Invariably every one of these writers emphasises the pragmatic view of art as a means to achieving either pleasure or instruction. According to M.H. Abrams, it is this manner of viewing art as an instrument for getting something done and of judging its value according to its success in achieving that aim, that has been the principal aesthetic attitude of the Western World from the time of Horace to the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson’s following statement almost approximates to the notion of commitment as understood today. "It is a writer’s duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time and place".

(Raleigh, 1908: 16, 20-21)

Commitment took on a social and political hue with the emergence of the Romantics burning with a passion for the dawn of a new humanity and new society free from corruption and
injustice. They were poet-prophets steeped in the "politics of vision". Being rooted in the mundane realities of existence they envisioned and proclaimed liberty and equality as ideals to be cherished and fostered. The Victorian Age witnessed the emergence of a new literary genre - prose of thought perfected by Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill. The Victorian novelists such as Dickens, Thackeray, Bronte and Mrs. Gaskell with their eloquent and vivid portrayal of contemporary social evils and iniquities allied to poverty and social disparity, were admired by even Marx. The political novel became a powerful tool for expressing social commitment in the hands of Disraeli, George Eliot and Trollope. The Victorian Age also saw the growth of the Religion of Beauty and the aesthetic doctrine of "art for art's sake".

The Marxist writers' thinking is founded on two basic postulates, both stated by Marx. The first, stated in A contribution to the Critique of political Economy, says: "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence determines their consciousness". The second constitutes the eleventh of the Theses on Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point however is to change it'.

Jean-Paul Sartre’s *What is Literature?* (1947) made a vehement plea for "engaged", or committed literature. Sartre wrote of "Littérature-engageé" in the aftermath of the years of German occupation in France, recapturing and reflecting the disillusionment, indignation, despair and pessimism of a defeated nation. Sartre underscores in this treatise the social responsibility of the writer and demands that the writer must be at pains to discover the work within his unique historical situation. Commitment is a translation of the French word "engagement" used by Sartre. The central theme of *What is Literature?* is that the writer should propose, in each work, a concrete liberation on the basis of a specific situation.

Sartre being an Existentialist philosopher proclaimed man as freedom and regarded liberty as an integral feature of human condition itself. He declares:

The writer, a free man addressing freemen, has only one subject - freedom.

*(Sartre, 1947: 46)*

For Sartre this preoccupation with freedom is not a mere attitude. It needs a political purpose. Literature must be subservient to a political cause. For him literature, truth, liberty and other human values are bound up in a kind of programme.
This brings us to the current debate on the question of propaganda and literature. Accusation of propagandism is thrown at any writer taking the side of the poor and the downtrodden or speaking on their behalf, no matter what forms or techniques he/she may employ. It cannot be denied that every writer has a belief or doctrine or a point of view which he/she is trying to put across through the particular work of art. Does it mean then that he/she is trying to impose a point of view on the unwary reader or advocating a specific ideology? To a large extent writers are doing this in one way or another, according to several critics. But then this is what is expected of them after all. Writing is an outcome of their commitment to a concept or cause with or without a particular political affiliation or programme.

But those who equate 'propagandism' with commitment are labouring under the notion that commitment is another form for the political assault on the freedom of the writer engendered and engineered by the Marxists. Thus a sinister Left-wing plot to impose on the artist hard fetters of doctrine is suspected by such critics. John Mander has reformulated the whole question thus:

.... But is there no more to be said on the subject of commitment? Is not rather more implied in "committing oneself" to a concept or cause than merely showing the flag whether red,
white or blue? Is it not in the first place, a moral rather than a directly political question? But is it not, also a question to be asked of an artist's work rather than his life? And could one not reverse the question and ask whether, since every artist is committed to something (even if only to the significance of his own art), the idea of a wholly uncommitted art is not a contradiction in terms?

(Mander, 1981: 7)

Thus commitment can be contra-distinguished from propaganda and accepted as a multi-faceted concept signifying not just a political stance but a moral responsibility of the writer vis-a-vis his existential situation and his society. The writer is not only committed to his belief or point of view or vision of society but also to his art. Thus it becomes a two-fold commitment. While propaganda in the right perspective is permissible and at times inevitable, one cannot by the same token assert that propaganda is necessarily conducive to great literature. What matters is the way in which a writer conveys his message: is it too overt and explicit or subtle and imperceptible? Ezekiel Mphahlele has this to say regarding the issue:
Propaganda is always to be with us. There will always be the passionate outcry against injustice, war, fascism, poverty etc. It will keep coming at us, reminding us that man is as wicked as he is noble and that the mass audience out there is waiting to be stirred by passionate word.... It was Brecht who said: 'I have noticed that we frighten many people away from our doctrines, because we appear to have an answer to everything. Should we not in the interests of our propaganda, draw up a list of those problems that we consider totally unsolved?'

(Brecht: Keunergreshichten)

Indeed in great literature propaganda cannot be easily separated from the way thought is conceived by the author and the manner in which he presents it.

(Mphahlele: Villi)

While it becomes obvious that commitment in literature need not lead to propaganda it may not be all too crudely propagandist if the writer can make his stand known without advocating it openly. Nevertheless people tend to suspect political commitment. The underlying fallacy in this general
attitude derives from the misplaced concept of politics as narrow or partisan loyalty to a party. This fear or misunderstanding is based on a false dichotomy of "politics" from other human activities. As John Mander points out, "... this is a heresy peculiar to our age; it is not the traditional view."

(Mander 1961: 13)

In Ancient Greece and in the Middle Ages there was not this dividing line between politics and other areas of human activity. Thus it follows that there is no criticism of life - and literature is in the Arnoldian sense "criticism of life" - that does not have both 'social' and 'political' implications. Therefore political commitment need not be misconstrued as a left-wing plot to deprive writers of their freedom or to impose a party line of thinking on innocent readers. It is well within the framework of a work of art arising out of a given socio-political milieu and addressing specific issues confronting contemporary society.

One will do well to remember in this context that contrary to what the so-called vulgar Marxists declare, both Marx and Engels took a highly complex view of literature, marked by a sensitive response to literary works. Nkosi Lewis asserts:

There was never a crudely reductionist view of literature which merely means reducing poem to the political conditions of its existence.

"In no sense" wrote Marx in the manuscripts
"does the writer regard his work as a means". They are an end in themselves. Neither is art reducible to ideology, although it enjoys a close coexistence with ideology. Art continually undermines the ideology of the author himself. This is what enabled Lenin to call Tolstoy a "great" writer in spite of his connection with the landed Russian aristocracy. "Indeed, art is so ideologically powerful", writes a latter day Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, "precisely because it isn't just propaganda'.

(Lewis, N 1965: 163-164)

Having cleared this misapprehension and misplaced fear, the crucial question of whether commitment of any artist must be sought within the work itself or in his/her views about the work, has to be squarely faced. There are critics who favour the idea that the writer's commitment should be sought in the work itself and not in his other writings or pronouncements. There are others who categorically maintain that in order to understand or assess the commitment of the writer it is useful and often necessary to know his/her views on the work and on his/her perception of commitment and literature in general.
In this connection it may be helpful to take a look at the poetry and belief debate involving great literary luminaries like T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards. T.S. Eliot has formulated the problem clearly in his essay "Goethe as the Sage" in the following manner:

The question is as to the place of 'ideas' in poetry and as to any 'philosophy' or system of beliefs held by the poet. Does the poet hold an idea in the same way that a philosopher holds it; and, when he expresses a particular philosophy in his poetry, should we be expected to believe this philosophy or may we legitimately treat it merely as suitable for a poem? And furthermore is the reader's acceptance of the same philosophy a necessary condition for his full appreciation of the poem?

(Eliot, 1957: 222)

The first aspect of this question relates to the basic honesty or veracity of the writer. While the general opinion maintains that no poet will commit to verses an idea in which he doesn't believe, it is common knowledge that certain poets have made such attempts at least in some poems.

The second and probably the more crucial aspect of this question is, if the reader should have faith in the doctrine or
belief system embodied in a poem or work or art in order to appreciate it fully. While numerous critics in the past were of the opinion that a corresponding belief on the part of the reader was essential, the same is disputed given today’s culture of pluralism in the sphere of knowledge and belief. While Coleridge advocates a "willing suspension of disbelief", Matthew Arnold argues for an objectless religion which can give us the emotional satisfaction without demanding the commitment.

I.A. Richards in his Principles of Literary Criticism, Science and Poetry, and Practical Criticism has posited two types of knowledge or truth. He distinguishes between scientific truth which is empirically verifiable and the "truth" of poetry which he calls "pseudo-statement". According to him the poem’s worth is to be found in the nature of the right response to it. It can be inferred from this that it is not what the writer says that makes it great but the manner in which he/she says it.

Eliot’s views on this question traversed a whole spectrum till at last he settled for a very flexible and broad perspective including the possibility of poetic inspiration, the indispensability of religion to art and the extreme position of considering doubt and uncertainty as a variety of belief.

Between the two extremes of Montgomery Belgion’s "I like poetry merely for what it has to say" and of I.A. Richard’s "I like the poetry because the poet has manipulated his material into
perfect art", T.S. Eliot has posited a middle position. He saw the possibility of a continuous range of appreciations each of which having limited validity. Eliot has remarked that "poetry is not the assertion that something is true, but the making that truth more fully real to us". Thus Eliot has indirectly commented on the relationship between commitment and art or belief and form. While belief or commitment need not distort the art form or expression, the formal side of the work enhances and enriches the content. Eliot in a sense touches the core of commitment when he asserts that belief has infinite gradations from doubt to assent, concerns all activities of life at a given time, comprising thought, feeling and will. He moreover, hints at the intrinsic relationship that should exist between commitment and art when he points out that this belief system depends on the emotions of the reader and therefore a matter of sympathetic understanding, not of mere rational demonstrability. Here T.S. Eliot has instinctively arrived at a sharp perception of the essence of art and its relationship of mutual enrichment and transformation to commitment.

It is in the light of this brief analysis of the debate on poetry and belief that one should examine the premises and arguments of those who criticise committed art as being entirely content-oriented.
According to some critics commitment seems to be at odds with modernism on the one hand and formalism on the other. Marxist critics have accused the modernists of being isolationist and defeatist despite their avowed espousal of the cause of society in general. Lukacs has gone so far as to equate realism with the forces of peace, and modernism with those of war in the post-war world. He has paid a rich tribute to the great bourgeois critical realists such as Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, Theodore Dreiser, Heinrich and Thomas Mann for their effective contribution to a progressive rearguard action against the dominant forces of imperialism and war.

Perhaps the more interesting literary wrangle that should engage our attention is the one between the avant-garde and the committed writers. The former have severely censured the committed writers as biased in favour of content and theme to the total neglect of art and form. With its insistence on the primacy of form it questions if the so-called committed art has a right to call itself art.

Several critics are inclined to agree with this view as they find most committed writers, the Marxists in particular, not interested in literature as art. While there is some substance in the above criticism, the fact that a considerable number of Marxist writers and committed writers in general display keen
interest in art and form makes such a sweeping generalisation untenable and unfounded. Moreover Marx and Engels have expressed themselves very clearly on the autonomy of art and its potential for social transformation.

The prejudice against all committed art seems to stem from a misplaced belief that literary commitment is the preserve of the Left. Matei Calinescu contradicts this position when he observes:

"The first advocates of the idea that writers should commit themselves politically and use the aesthetic means at their disposal for the achievement of a political goal were representatives of reaction during the period that followed the French Revolution of 1789.

(Calinescu, 1982: 126)

The strange irony of it all is that the same censorious critics not only accommodate but single out for exceptional eulogy writers of the Rightist line who are ultra-conservative and even reactionary. The answer to this is not far to seek. It is their ideological stance vis-a-vis the Eastern bloc and its system of Government that warps and distorts their critical perception. David Caute, expresses the same view when he asks:

"Could it be that Sartre, rather than Camus, provides the whipping boy for nine out of ten
critics hostile to commitment, because, Sartre's commitment tended in one political direction and Camus in another?"

(Caute, 1971: 37)

Brecht was by his own confession a committed writer, who nevertheless respected his art and its inner dynamics. He was wedded to the concept of "Litterature-engagée" and in fact perfected this art by his deft, intelligent and innovative handling of his artistic tools, forms or models. Thus Brecht provides us with a model wherein the content and form or commitment and art fuse into one whole, interlocked unit. While his commitment or responsible writing is lent credibility and respectibility by his artistic expression, the latter get a polished and perfected as a fit medium for committed writing.

John Mander has not only paid an extraordinary tribute to Brecht's commitment as an artist, but has moreover highlighted the paramount value of an artist's handling of his medium in relation to his content in the following words:

... the biographical fact that Brecht never became a member of the Communist Party does not help us to decide the important and difficult question of how far Brecht realised his Marxist ideology in his dramatic work. Brecht's commitment like that of any other artist, must be sought in the work itself, not in Brecht's views about his own work.

(Mander, 1961: 13).
Likewise the real reason for Tolstoy's greatness, as G. Lukacs has it, has nothing to do with the eternal verities of the human condition, but to his having given coherent expression to the world-view of the peasantry.

Thus it becomes clear that any committed writer worth his name does not have to depend for his credibility on props such as his speeches, letters or lectures or other writings for vindicating his bona fides or honesty as a writer. One need not seek his/her ideology or belief outside his/her work. Instead the work of art itself bears sufficient testimony to his authenticity and commitment and carries indelible marks of his creed as a writer and his attitude to art and aesthetics.

Now we are in a better position to situate the third world writers vis-a-vis commitment or committed literature. First of all it is imperative to remember that any literature emerging from a third world country is ipso facto conditioned by the environment social political and cultural, peculiar to that country. The overriding concern of the third world writers has been with vindicating their own native culture and restoring it to a position of pre-eminence, autonomy and dignity. In other words, the committed writer of the third world wants to be recognised as a third world person and therefore strives to identify himself with the most oppressed people of his country.
and to be their spokesperson. In the words of Peter Nazareth, commitment for the third world writer "is to accept an identity, an identity with the wretched of the earth... (and) to determine to end all exploitation and oppression".

It moreover can be perceived in Achebe's cultural assertion and cultural reconstruction. Almost echoing Sartre's verdict about a writer that "Willynilly he is involved in his time; impartiality is impossible", Diana Brydon says that the idea of the uncommitted writer, like that of the totally objective scientist is a myth. Of course she is referring to the third world writers.

With this background knowledge of the nature of commitment and its relationship to art and its scope and sweep we come to the study of Anand and Achebe as committed artists of the third world. While both these writers have the reputation of being writers of "litterature engagée", they are also known as writers of political engagement or of revolt or of dissent. Anand for one has been in the centre of a storm of controversy over the nature of his commitment and has been severely criticised and hostilely reviewed over the years by partisan critics and academics who charged him with "Propagandism".
Probably it is this trend among critics both Western and Indian that has been the stimulus to Anand’s apologies including his work titled *Apology for Heroism*. He has, besides, a score of other articles and speeches that constitute in effect, Anand’s ‘apologia pro vita sua’. More correctly this corpus of writing should be termed as Anand’s defence of his literary creed and his Weltanschauung. In Anand’s Credo as a novelist the content or sensibility has the highest priority. According to several critics and in Anand’s own admission, he attaches greater importance to content than to form. Saros Cowasjee one of the better known and more objective critics and commentators of Anand has this to say of Anand’s creed as a novelist:

> Marxian dialectics, the social impulse is as with the writers of the thirties, at the heart of his writings. A work of art, be it a novel or a painting or a play, is first of all a social event. This explains why he gives maximum emphasis to the duties of a novelist (and what a good novel should be), and very little to the tools at his disposal. In his dozen or so articles concerned with the novel, he has to my knowledge only one comment on the need for a style. "Of course it is not enough to want to say something. Everthing depends on how one says - how the imagination
of a writer can transform the various realities, inter-penetrate characters with insight and connect the poetry and prose. And certainly there has to be some kind of style" (Creative writing is the Present Crisis" in Indian Literature, VI, No.1, 1963, p.74).

This is a half-hearted acceptance of the importance of style, almost a concession, since there seems no way out of it. However, Anand seems to leave the impression that neither style nor form is basically fundamental to the novel. "What is the use" he wrote to me angrily, 'of keeping the form, the kerb and the edge all right and destroy the bloody horse - Roy Campell's phrase, not mine'. This outburst is not without its irony, for his novels are not formless nor is he a writer without style.

(Cowasjee, 1976: 10)

Cowasjee warns us against being taken in by the specious arguments Anand advances in his Apology for Heroism in disapproval of propaganda. At the same time he states that
Anand "is no facile propagandist; he is what George Orwell was, an expositor, a political novelist, one who sees his characters and their actions in relation to the social, economic and political upheavals of his time".

(Cowasjee, 1976: 11)

Although Cowasjee himself employs considerable quotations from Anand's non-fictional writings, letters and lectures, he is not in favour of simplistically accepting his ideas and comments without critical scrutiny. Although he discourages such uncritical or unquestioning attitude, he is not averse to using Anand's writings where necessary in order to clarify a point or affirm an opinion. His own essays on Anand are studded with a string of quotations from Anand's essays and lectures. But Cowasjee is able to approach Anand's works of art with an extraordinary detachment and objectivity.

S.C. Harrex takes an altogether different approach to Anand's works and particularly to the formal and technical aspects of his fiction. He goes to the extent of asserting that a study of the formal and technical aspects of Anand's fiction necessitates consideration of Anand's intentions, attitude and themes. He states:
Anand explores aspects of the human condition mainly Indian, from the point of view of certain assumptions; his stories, characters and themes evolve out of the interactions of these assumptions with mirror images of "real life", his dramatization of these interactions constitutes a quest for a coherent world view. I would therefore postulate a close correlation between this quest for ideological structure and his quest for the fictional form compatible with his instincts and prejudices as a writer. Whether the ideological pursuit initiates or takes precedence over the formal pursuit (or vice-versa) is difficult to determine though I suspect that in most of his novels Anand has taken the view that form should be subservient to content.

(Harrex, 1982: 142)

Harrex offers the theory that for Anand both the ideological pursuit of the socialist humanist restructuring and his own fictional pursuit of the appropriate form and technique are complementary aspects of one and the same process. Harrex describes his standpoint or ethical base as
cosmopolitan-Indian, anti-Brahmin, this rather than other world-oriented and gives his ultimate form of fiction the name of the socio-political messianic novel.

Harrex moreover contends that there is often a fusion or merger of Anand's intentions as a writer and social reformer. He is able to achieve, probably consciously, a perfect unison between the moral, social questions he is addressing and the formal technique of the narrative, so much so, one can't suspect the commitment at both these levels. An examination of the structure of his first novel Untouchable, does illustrate this point. The writer's basic problem must have been how to perceive and express experience from the untouchables' point of view. As a socialist humanist his dilemma is: how to enter such an alien, individual and caste consciousness? The final product, the novel, demonstrates beyond doubt Anand's exquisite handling of this two-fold problem in such a way that at both levels Anand's commitment is unmistakable. He has succeeded remarkably in identifying, agencies and aspirations of the untouchables that Bakha is both an individual and type. His moving portrayal of Bakha's revolutions, resentment and dejection in the face of public humiliation such as the slapping by the brahmin and the high caste woman's contemptuous flinging of bread, is a tribute to his mastery over form. He finds a congenial medium for his
social content or purpose in the technique of stream-of-consciousness. It has enabled him to enter imperceptibly as it were into the inner and most intimate recesses of Bakha's self-tortured, agonising and dehumanising feelings and above all his seething anger. He used this method because he was convinced that "the application of this technique to the labyrinths and substrata of Indian mind could alone metamorphose the inner realities of our soul".

Anand has masterfully employed the method of interior monologue in unravelling Bakha's unarticulated but intense feelings and reactions in the face of indignities heaped on him just because he is an untouchable.

The scene where Bhakha is being insulted and slapped by a caste Hindu whom Bakha is supposed to have inadvertently touched and defiled is a masterpiece of Anand's craftsmanship. He builds up the crescendo of Bakha's discomfiture and embarrassment, confusion and anger through cleverly contrived incidents that heighten Bakha's pathetic state and by mirroring his conflicting emotions and feelings now and again. As if to relieve the mounting tension and to offset the overwhelmingly hostile scene, Anand introduces the tonga-wallah with a refreshing sense of sympathy for the abused and ill-treated Bakha.

The climax of the scene is yet to be. Anand is still to probe the mind and inner feelings of Bakha who has barely managed
to bottle up his surging rage and to present a humble and repentant face thus staving off any further abuses or physical assault. Anand begins to probe the consciousness of Bakha at this hour when his cup of woe and humiliation was overflowing:

And in the smoky atmosphere of his mind arose dim ghosts of forms peopling the scene he had been through...."Why was all this?" he asked himself in the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions, which was his usual way of communicating with himself. "Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him'... I should have been the high-caste people in the street. That man; That he should have hit me; My poor jelebis; I should have eaten them. But why couldn't I say something?... The slap on my face: But why couldn't I say something?.... The slap on my face; The coward: How he ran away, like a dog with the tail between his legs. The child: The liar: Let me come across him one day. He knew I was being abused. Not one of them spoke for me. The cruel crowd; All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we
always abused?.... They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too. That's why I came here... They don't mind touching us, the Muhammadans and the Sahibs, It is only the Hindus, and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I'm a sweeper, sweeper - untouchable: untouchable: untouchable: That's the word: untouchable: I'm an untouchable:

(Untouchable : p.56)

Bakha has achieved a singular illumination as to the root cause of all his iniquities. "Untouchable" is the answer to his soul-searching, tormenting question "Why all this". This single passage is an eloquent exposition of the reality of untouchability, its extent and intensity and the mute passivity of the majority who through their silence acquiesce in it. The authorial voice may be heard here and there, but every word uttered has the area of authenticity and realism reflecting the goings on in the mind of Bakha whose perception of his own situation has matured and crystallised, thanks to his sensitive and intelligent nature.

The whole story evolves and progresses as the by-product of Bakha's interaction with his neighbours and the continuous process of reflection and introspection that he is engaged in.
The realization of Bakha's own inferior status and the injustice of it has aroused the smouldering rage in him. His own experiences of maltreatment and exploitation and those of his fellow-untouchables become so many experiments with the truth. The novelist not only allows the character of Bakha to blossom gradually but in the process, develops the story woven around Bakha's experiences and maturated as an individual untouchable and a type of the untouchables come of age.

Anand has achieved a high degree of success in correlating moral, social questions to formal narrative problems. He has not only succeeded supremely in identifying himself with the life and experiences of the untouchables in India but in finding the most appropriate medium to express these. There is a perfect fusion of Anand's view of the situation of the untouchables and his attempt to artistically project it. In this, he has masterfully employed techniques such as the 'stream of consciousness' and the 'interior monologue'. He has moreover made the structure of the novel taut by restricting the entire action of the novel to a single day - a remarkable achievement for an Indian novelist writing in the thirties. Anand himself calls his fictional form "poetic realism" by which he meant a synthesis of the subjective formalism and social realism of the Western schools of literature. Anand could probably have cut out the last part made up of three long and monotonous harangues on alternatives and still have preserved the organic unity of the entire novel.
While Anand has skilfully and consciously avoided turning Bakha into an intellectual abstraction, his obsession with societal change or transformation has got the better of the artist in the final section of the novel. Nevertheless it must be admitted that his fictional strategy in this novel and particularly his style which is his own are a landmark in the history of Indian writing in English particularly in the field of novel.

William Walsh comments on the novel's content and style in these words: His sharpest, best organised novel is Untouchable which was very highly thought of by E.M. Forster. It is an interesting combination of hard material, narrow specific theme and throbbing Shelleyan manner.

(Walsh: p.7)

The Big Heart is another successful novel of Anand wherein he has handled a theme probably hinted at in Untouchable and Coolie. It is the classical question of man or the machine that finds a fictional presentation in this novel. In other words, Anand is trying to grapple with issue of conflict between tradition and modernity, a very real problem for India at the threshold of an industrial and scientific era. Anand uses the terms "the age of truth" and "the iron age" to denote the two eras.

While Anand's purpose as a socialist humanist believing in modernisation and mechanization is quite obvious all through the novel, he hasn't sacrificed the character of the hero Ananta
or the form of the novel in the interest of propaganda. Alastair Niven's book titled, *The Voke of Pity* makes the following comment:

Though the novel is undoubtedly propagandist it has a wide and humane scope, surveying the problem - humanitarian, social, cultural, economic, political - which are inherent in the radical changes which India has to undergo if the lot of the common people is to be improved.

*(Niven A, 1978: p.81)*

While we can easily perceive Anand's own biases and pet theories voiced by the protagonist and the poet Puran Bhagat Singh, we admire the manner in which Anand has carefully drawn the main characters and the events which ultimately lead to the climax. The didactical overtones of the debates featuring the coppersmiths and their warring groups do not in any way detract from the powerful delineation of the closing scenes that hasten the dramatic finale by heightening the tension and triggering a crisis of leadership. The sober ending that caps the dramatic and gripping action wherein Ananta's mistress Janki is integrated into the mainstream of struggling coppersmiths is a stroke of genius on Anand's part. The sudden void created by Ananta's
death is more than compensated in the hint that the struggle will be carried on by his comrades. The novel ends on a note of hope for the future of the struggle of the workers against the exploitation of the employers eventually against the capitalist system geared to profit at the expense of the labour. Ananta who dies a martyr for the cause of the worker's unity and unionizing, epitomises Anand's stand for replacing the present capitalist, profit-oriented, power-mongering and elitist form of business and commerce by a more humane, egalitarian, worker-oriented and democratic form of business and government. Anand perceives the nexus between the Government and the big business class and therefore pleads for proletarian unity for over throwing such an oppressive and powerful system.

While caste-discrimination is the central problem in Untouchable, the class-consciousness is at the heart of Coolie. The Big Heart deals with both these problem but emphasises the truth that the class is more powerful than caste and may eventually relegate caste into the background. The novel underscores the importance of the solidarity of labourers by exposing the lack of unity of workers and the forces that undermine such a unity. Undergirding this discrimination and polarisation is the conflict between tradition and modernity.
The divide between the two groups is so pronounced that an ultimate resolution is not to be expected. Hence Anand makes the protagonist undergo a martyr's death which signals the release of ongoing and invincible revolutionary zeal rooted in the life and ethos of the labour class. Poet Bhagat Singh sums up this belief of Anand in these words addressed to a heart-broken Janki:

"... Perhaps you are right. 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 lived may be 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 loved them".

(Pp.228-229)

These words of Anand's spokesman poet Bhagat Singh embody the outlook of the author which is crystallised in the word "bhakti" meaning service of one's fellow human beings out of selfless love. Anand believed this to be the foundation for a classless, casteless, just and egalitarian society. The marvel is that Anand hasn't produced a political or moralistic tract or documentary to convey this philosophy. Rather he has created an
absorbing life-like story filled with living and credible people acting out a body-soul drama in a given socio-economic situation that could be witnessed in any part of India in the thirties. And this he had done by narrowing down the action to the happenings of a single day.

G.S. Balarama Gupta sums up this unique harmony—of the political vision and artistic commitment on the part of Anand in the following manner in his essay "Anand's The Big Heart" A study:

The conflict between the capitalists and the labourers is a theme which could easily have produced a propagandist novel. But The Big Heart escapes this criticism not only because of Anand's intimate knowledge of the problems he writes about—he himself is a descendant of coppersmiths—but also because there is perfect naturalness in what the various characters say or do. It is a merit of novel that there is a perfect integration between the novelist's philosophy of humanism and the novel's artistic excellence."

(Gupta in B.P.13, 43)
Anand may not have been as successful in maintaining this balance between his political creed and demands of an art form in his other novels. Nevertheless an examination of one of his other novels may be fruitful at this stage. In Coolie Anand has used a much wider canvas. Not content with one aspect of the spectrum of exploitation and discrimination in Indian Society as in Untouchable, Anand has widened the horizons of his fictional world by introducing the theme of the consequence of industrialisation in the towns and cities and its impact on the middle classes and the poor peasants in the villages. Munoo the innocent and sprightly lad from the hills is made to go through a series of chance contacts, accidents and circumstances, as a result of a remorseless historical process. Although Anand has peopled this novel with numerous good, benevolent, malicious, evil, and even comical characters, the focus is always on Munoo and his response to the situations he is faced with.

The tragedy of Munoo’s life, as, in fact it is of a majority of the poor and the downtrodden, consists in his suffering and deprivation despite his desire to ameliorate his lot and his earnest efforts to realise his dream. He is an innocent victim, unaware of the hostile forces and structures he is pitted against. Although he is not discriminated on the ground of caste, as he is a Rajput, he is nonetheless tortured and hounded
out simply because he is indigent and seeks to eke out an existence by clutching at whatever job may be offered to him. He arrives at the following inference after some painful experiences and humiliations:

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

(p.69)

Coolie's single most striking feature is the treatment of Munoo with his variegated experiences and existential situations till his premature death. It is Munoo who provides the thematic unity in the novel. It is through the sieve of his adolescent mind that Anand analyses and criticises the world of the capitalists. While Anand exposes the foibles, psychoses, machinations and inadequacies of the ambitious middle class people, the bourgeoisie and the white bureaucrats, he displays tremendous sympathy, compassion and concern when he deals with Munoo and the working classes. Anand's technique of expressing the general and the universal through a careful portrayal of the particular has paid him rich dividends in this novel. Almost all
the characters of the novel, including Munoo are meticulously drawn and individualised, still the reader can’t fail to realise that each of these characters typifies a group or class. As Jack Lindsay avers, this novel has been well-conceived and excellently structured till the point when the abortive strike in the mill takes place. With the advent of Mrs Mainwaring the tight structure and the absorbing narrative of the novel, nay even the theme and message seem to suffer a setback. This phase of the story lacks the organic quality which we perceive in the other parts of the novel.

The language and style of Anand is consistent with his theme and fictional objective. The manner of narrative being picaresque, the style and language are extremely relevant. One instance of Anand’s capacity for adapting the tempo and rhythm of his prose is where the narration is attuned to the varying speed of the train suggestive of the urban and rural scenes that are passed. Even the abusive language and the swear words of different characters do not jar as they sound natural in the mouths of the respective characters. Although Anand does not always exercise artistic restraint in the use of such ‘uncivil’ language, he has struck the right measure in this novel. In fact the artistic value of this work is immensely enhanced by the style and language that Anand has masterfully contrived and employed. Anand adapts and modulates his language to suit
different characters and situations thus providing a raciness to it. A word about the conclusion of this novel may not be out of place. Anand subjects his protagonist to an agonised death caused by tuberculosis. He is a victim of fate and circumstances. Munoo seems to succumb to his fate without even a semblance of a fight. This ending seems a logical outcome of the passive self-suffering character that Munoo is. However, we feel, as C.D. Narasimhaiah and Saros Cowasjee have declared, that Anand contradicts himself by legitimizing the fatalistic view of life and by allowing much good to go waste. C.D. Narasimhaiah has observed:

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

*(Narasimhaiah 1969: p.119)*

The author, however, seems to have a difficulty about resolving the riddle of the life of Munoo endowed with irrepressible zest for life and for the good things in life. Anand can not consciously advocate a meek submission or resignation to the so-called fate, given his refutation of doctrines like fate and Karma. Nevertheless he finds himself in a tight spot as to the ending of the novel. There is a pervading
sense of hopelessness and despair looming large in the final scenes. The smouldering ember of revolt and ambition in Munoo could have been creatively used by the writer to spark off other currents of revolutionary fervour geared to the toppling of the oppressive system that is built on cut-throat competition, profiteering and cash nexus. The lust for life in Munoo, sparks of which are occasionally revealed in his musings and reactions, amounts in the ultimate analysis, to a desire for liberation, personal and communal, physical, material and spiritual. In an otherwise well-constructed and beautifully designed novel, the way Munoo ends up strikes a discordant note. One is tempted to say, Anand has missed out the prophetic under-current that could have heightened the narrative verve and enhanced the personal and universal value of the theme of the novel.

These three novels have been singled out for investigating the relationship between Anand the humanist and Anand the artist, as these novels, more than others highlight both these aspects in an abundant measure. The social motive or theory is the solid rock on which the fictional matrix of these novels revolves. Moreover, it is in these three novels that Anand has not consciously allowed himself to be dominated or swept off the feet by his theory or ideology. The structure and the fictional strategies employed by Anand in these three novels have a
dialectical or mutually enriching and transforming relationship to the content or sensibility, powerfully expressed by Anand. William Walsh while finding fault with his habit of preaching remarks:

But when his imagination burns and the dross of propaganda is consumed, as in Untouchable, Coolie and The Big Heart (1945) there is no doubt that he is a novelist of considerable power.

(Walsh: p.7)

It is no mean achievement on the part of Anand that despite his personal involvement in the topics or problems he is analysing, he has been able to maintain that measure of detachment that makes for a successful novel, probably because, most of his novels are concerned with people not of his own caste or class. All said and done, it has to be admitted that where this artistic detachment or objectivity deserts him and his compassion for his characters who are all victims at some level, gets the better of him, his plots are loose, narrative monotonous and language and style artificial or far-fetched.

Chinua Achebe has time and again declared that he considers the restoration of African 'dignity' and 'self-respect' as his as well as what ought to be every African writer's responsibility. In his essay, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", Achebe says:
that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value, and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain.

(Achebe, 1964: p.158)

Thus Achebe by his own conscious choice has committed himself to convey to his people "What happened" and "what they lost". In other words he has tremendous respect for the past as he is deeply involved, in his people's present reality and its transformation. However Achebe insists that a novelist must do this "by showing in human terms what happened to them". And Nkosi Lewis in his book entitled *Tasks and Masks* says that Achebe means to do it through a social reconstruction of the past in novels which deal with recognisable people in recognisable human situation.

Achebe has styled himself a political writer. And he has defined his politics as universal human communication across racial and cultural boundaries as a means of fostering respect
for all people. True to this definition Achebe has addressed himself in all his novels to clearing the channels of communication by removing the misconceptions and misinformations in the minds not only of Nigerians but also of others regarding the precolonial past of Nigeria and how they lost it in their encounter with the Europeans. With his characteristic raciness he asserts:

The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them. After all the writer's duty is not to beat this morning's headline in topicality, it is to explore in depths the human condition. In Africa he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history. He should moreover be concerned with the question of human values.

(Achebe, 1964: p.158)

Achebe believes in educating the people. He terms the writer a teacher. Therefore the writer has to be committed to his task. The task becomes all the more difficult as the legacy left behind by the Whites, together with the positive gains to the country, has done untold harm in engendering in the minds of the people self-defeating and self-negating values and complexes. In other words if Africa is viewed as the negation of Europe one
could imagine the magnitude of psychological harm perpetrated by the colonial masters during the colonial regime and afterwards.

Achebe is no starry-eyed romantic. He is aware that he and his fellow writers are up against a very complex situation. He is convinced that their colonial past with all its gruesome and bitter memories is not altogether devoid of brighter moments. Nor for that matter is the history of the Nigerian people before the colonial period one long 'technicolour idyll'. He warns fellow African writers against the temptation to select in their writing only those facts which flatter them. He further adds that "it's not the writer's personal integrity as an artist that is involved, but the credibility of the world he is attempting to recreate". Achebe maintains that "any serious African writer who wants to plead the cause of the past must not only be God's advocate, he must also do duty for the devil".

While Achebe's sole purpose in all his five novels is without doubt an analysis of the Igbo historical past which encompasses the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial or pre-independence and post-independence days, his choice or material, organisation and treatment of it, his narrative techniques and characterization differ from novel to novel. His first novel Things Fall Apart presents a view of the Igbo tribe in Umuofia with its daily ritual of work and play, its religious
rites and its own administrative set up. Okonkwo is the central character through whose vicissitudes, strengths, and weaknesses Achebe examines the internal cohesion and harmony of the Igbo society showing signs of exhaustion and internal disintegration. The fortunes of the tribe seem to rise and fall with Okonkwo as he is portrayed as the representative and key figure of the entire community.

The first part of the novel reveals the composite picture of traditional Igbo life cut off from any outside or foreign influences. It is a self-sufficient, harmonious, self-enclosed society not brooking any threat, to its internal cohesion. There is virtually no plot as such in the sense of a well-knit cause and effect structure in this part. There is no major conflict confronting the protagonist except the minor day-to-day problems. It is only in the last chapter of the first part that there is some attempt to create a major problem leading to a crisis. That is Okonkwo's exile as a punishment for accidentally killing a tribesman. And it is only at this stage that we come across the first encounter between this closed but ordered Igbo society and the twin foreign forces of Christianity and the British colonial rule.

The "plotless" nature of the narrative of the first part has made a lot of critics point to the structural weakness of the
novel. According to Gerald Moore this structural flaw is the consequence of Achebe's introduction of several digressions removing the reader from Okonkwo: anthropological background and explanations, substories and several forms of old traditions. Benedict Chiaka Njoku however takes exception to this criticism:

One of the points made by critics of the novel is that it is structurally weak because many of its main events turn upon chance rather than by design. True, great literature has design, where one set of action leads to another and leaves nothing to chance. But the sober reality is that Achebe seems to have overcome this problem by his masterful control of the narrative voice. *Things Fall Apart* is told in third person by a third person narrator, not by an omniscient being who acts as a God capable of being in many places at the same time, knowing the Igbo past, nineteenth century world view and the future, able to penetrate into the psyche of every character and capable of creating and motivating other characters by his
infallibility. But Achebe’s story is narrated by a seemingly wise and compassionate and sympathetic elder, who is ably conversant with Igbo worldview, philosophy and culture. He is aware of the past and is cognizant of the intrusion of Christianity and European cultures, which are making "Things Fall Apart".

(Njoku, B.C., 1984: pp.16-17)

Invoking the Igbo cultural and social background Achebe has made a liberal but judicious use of the village meetings a permanent feature of the Igbo social organisation and of music and the big drum or the gong which played a significant role in the communal drama. The egwuwu, the Igbo traditional cult was used to settle disputes within the community, thereby ensuring order, tranquillity and solidarity. Achebe has taken pains to bring out the role played by the communal drama and the egwuwu in the daily rituals of the Igbos.

Ancestral worship signified by egwuwu, respect for the elders and dead relations and place of importance and eminence given to the doyens of the community are all hoary traditions recreated artistically by Achebe. The local meetings which Achebe has sought to introduce into the action of the novel are not only foci of major decisions but contain veritable gems of
literature. Igbo idioms abound in these meetings and poetry and rhetoric blend to refine the speech constructs. In fact, Achebe's merit lies in the dynamic building up of events and details that go to enrich the narrative.

As oral traditions were part of the everyday life of the people, Achebe strews his novels with oral forms such as stories, folktales, proverbs, anecdotes and songs. They play a significant role in shaping the values and beliefs, actions and behaviours of the people. For Achebe, as for many modern Nigerian writers, traditional forms, rituals and ceremonies provide a frame work for expressing reality. Achebe uses folk tales as affording answers to certain practical needs in inculcating moral and social values. Ekwefi's tale of how the tortoise broke its shell conveys the moral of the evil consequences of greed and selfishness and the value of sharing. Again Uchendu, Okonkwo's uncle, suggests a strategy for confronting the Whiteman by means of a folk-lore. Like the mother kite, who warned her offspring to keep away from the silent duckling, the villagers must avoid and fear the silent white stranger.

Achebe draws his tales and stories from the traditional repertoire and renders them with consummate skill. The tales are integral to the framework of the novel and become a part of his narrative technique.
The other oral form which Achebe introduces is the folk song. He has certainly blazed a trail in integrating folk-songs into the novels, basically a western form, without violating conventional norms. One of the gripping songs appears in this novel, the song sung by Ikemefuna as he is led to be slaughtered. The song is part of a game which he often played as a little boy. It is left untranslated as if to heighten its evocative power and the suspense and the pathos of the scene:

Eze, elina, elina! Sala
Eze ilikwa ya
Ikwaba akwa oligholi
Ebe Danda nechi eze
Ebe uzuzu nete egwu Sala

He sang it in his mind and walked to its beat. If the song ended on his right foot his mother was alive. If it ended on his left, she was dead. No, not dead, but ill. It ended on the right. She was alive and well. He sang the song again and it ended on the left. But the second time he did not count. The first voice gets to Chukwu or God's house. That was a favourite saying of children. Ikemefuna felt like a child once more. It must be thought of going home to his mother.

(p.54)
The liberal but skilful use of stories and folklore in his novels can be seen in proper perspective if one understands the great importance Achebe attached to the function of imagination in the context of liberal-mindedness and materialistic outlook of the modern dispensation. According to him, there is an imperative need for the "creative energy of stories" in the process of diagnosing Nigeria's social ills and cultural malaise and application of the corrective. "People create stories create people; or rather, stories create people create stories".

Achebe's prose in this novel has been described as "leisurely" and "stately". Probably Achebe's emotional and intellectual detachment from the issues he describes and dramatizes in the novel has influenced his style of writing. The fact is, even the restrained pace of his style enables the novelist to move the story forward with a sense of inevitability. It is Achebe's supreme craftmanship that has enabled him to sustain the ironic mode of narrating all through, even to the extent of toning down or completely veiling the intensity of the life the novel evokes through a casual approach and leisurely style. G.D. Killam points out:

The novel is in fact a structure of ironies-irony of the tragic kind which shows an exceptional man see his best hopes and
achievement destroyed through an inexorable flow of events which he is powerless to restrain, tragic irony suggested and supported by a carefully integrated pattern of minor ironies throughout the work - the accidental shooting which brings about his exile, the irony of the appeal of Christianity to Nwoye, Okonkwo's first born in whom he placed his hopes, the irony contained in the persistent comment by Okonkwo that his daughter Ezinma ought to have been born a male child.

(Killam: 1975, Pp.32-33)

It should be stated to Achebe's credit as a novelist that he never once deviates from his central purpose of presenting forthrightly the clash of ideological beliefs and cultural traditions between the two systems and pointing out unambiguously that the basic problem is the de facto divergence and disparity in terms of ideas and attitudes between the two sets of people. The image of the "iron horse" (bicycle) as used by Obierika in his matter-of-fact narration of the story of the advent of the British administrators and missionaries serves to throw into relief the two disparate worlds, these two categories of people belong to. Even the casual and matter-of-fact manner of announcing the descent of the British missionaries, administrators and traders on the peaceful and self-sufficient
Igbo society is characteristic of Achebe's artistic approach. He thus maintains a low key in terms of his narrative style in order to forcefully bring out the conflict which is volcanic in its emergence and subsequent manifestations.

The characters in the novel are real and credible. The central character, Okonkwo, displays inexhaustible energy and optimism although plagued by a fear of failing in life like his father. He is highly individualistic but epitomizes the views and aspirations of the entire community. He is ambitious, expansive, self-willed and self-opinionated and strongly entrenched in the traditional beliefs of his people. It is this lack of a broad vision that finally brings about his own doom and signifies the crumbling of the foundations of the Igbo society at the impact of new doctrines, new structures, new government and new ways of trade and commerce. He is in one sense a pre-eminent symbol and embodiment of the Umuofia community which races to its dislocation and downfall as a result of its own internal inadequacies evidenced by disruptive trends and polarization based on some irrational rules and customs. That was a centrifugal impulse challenging the very idea of order. After all Okonkwo, his valour as a fighter, his wealth and his influence notwithstanding, becomes a target of attack that comes in the form of a protest current that refuses to accept his physical power as the ultimate power granting stability to society. The whiteman could not have succeeded as they did if these
disintegrating trends were not already discernible in the clan. Okonkwo was unable to understand or accept the writings on the wall forcefully signalled by his son Nwouye's desertion to the new religion. His ultimate decision to commit suicide need not be construed as an act of cowardice or aimlessness. His action proceeds from a profound sense of loss of traditional values as crystallised in his Kinsmen's betrayal of him. In other words he is not prepared to live an alien in his own land. There is a certain aura of pride and invincibility even about his self-destruction.

Prafulla C. Kar, says that Okonkwo, .... becomes a victim both of an error of judgement and an unknown deterministic force operating from outside.

(Gowda; 1983: P.154)

Okonkwo's friend Obierika has been portrayed by Achebe as a counterpoint to the former. He almost becomes Achebe's spokesman in his realistic conception of the change overtaking Africa, his philosophical approach to different issues and sober but critical comments on customs, events and behaviour. His sagacity is obvious when he comments on the irruption of the white administrators and missionaries into the Igbo heartland:

The White man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were
amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the thing that held us together and we have fallen apart. (p.160)

Achebe’s third novel *Arrow of God* depicts the state of shock and confusion experienced by an Igbo clan living in Umuaro under the inescapable impact of the colonial religion, administration and trade. While *Things Fall Apart* and this novel have a similar background of the Igbo people’s daily routine, religious practices, rituals, festivals, and other colourful celebrations, the situation is quite different as the colonial power is well entrenched in African soil with its concomitant erosion of the tribe’s power centres. It is clear that these two worlds or structures are locked in an acrimonious tussle for supremacy. Hence this novel cannot be called in any strict sense a continuation of *Things Fall Apart*. Moreover the protagonists of the two novels have nothing in common. Achebe himself has endorsed this view in his interview in *African Writers Talking*: 
It is the same area - the supporting background and scenery are the same. I am writing about the same people. But the story itself is not - in fact I see it as the exact opposite. Ezulu the chief character in AOG is a different kind of man from Okonkwo.... He sees the value of change and therefore his reaction to Europe is completely different from Okonkwo's. He is ready to come to terms with it - up to a point - except where his dignity is involved. This he could not accept, he is very proud. So you see it is really the other side of the coin, and the tragedy is that they come to the same sticky end.

(Duerden and Pieterse: 1978, P.17)

The situation gets complicated as Achebe introduces a third force in the form of African missionaries who are converts to the White men's religion. The conflict in this group arises over the method of proselytising and preaching, and advocating extreme intolerant approach and the other a less extreme form of peaceful, coexistence. Achebe allows these three groups each with its own intragroup conflict to interact. A series of
incidents occur, the Okperi war, Oduche's imprisoning the sacred python and the whipping of the second son of Ezeulu by the White man. These incidents further compound the already strained relations between the three worlds.

In Ezeulu's own life there are a number of incidents which, beginning with his imprisonment by Winterbottom for no culpable fault of his, conspire to pit him against the entire community as a lonely adversary who is finally driven mad when his son Obika dies after performing as Ogbazulobodo. Achebe has masterfully interwoven these different strands and fashioned a plot that is quite well structured and relentlessly moving to the climax.

In Ezeulu's character and behaviour Achebe had made a very incisive analysis of power and power equations in the Igbo clan. It is his power-consciousness that blinds his eyes to see the total inhumanity and illegality of not announcing the New Yam Festival. He contrives, to some extent, of course egged on by his god Ulu, the final catastrophe. And Achebe uses his inimitable ironic touch to give the climax a twist that is as breath-taking as it is cataclysmic for the clan. The Christian Church's announcement of the festival and the immunity offered by them draws the clansmen in large numbers. The Igbo saying that no one ever won a judgement against his clan provides the enigmatic answer. In this case, the clan wins over its haughty
but well-meaning high priest, no doubt. But at what cost? The whole cultural, social and religious fabric is lost in the exodus of clan's people to the Whitemen's religion. The last few lines of Achebe are masterstrokes, providing as it were the punchline to the tragedy not merely of a single individual, but of a whole people, a civilization:

If this was so then Ulu had chosen a dangerous time to uphold his wisdom. In destroying his priest, he had also brought disaster on himself like the lizard in the fable who ruined his mother's funeral by his own hand.... the Christian harvest which took place a few days after Obika's death saw more people than even Goodcountry could have dreamed. In his extremity many an Umuaro man had sent his son with a yam or two to offer to the new religion and to bring back the promised immunity. Thereafter any yam that was harvested in the man's field was harvested in the name of the son.

(Pp. 262-263)
Achebe has used a number of proverbs and stories in the narrative that highlights the simmering tension between the old religion and the new and the eventual collapse of the old order and the ascendancy of the new dispensation. This is one of the devices by which Achebe sustains the ironic mode and underlines the ambiguous and ambivalent trend of the Umuaro dynamics. In and through all these events, Achebe drives home his perception of the colonial encounter that a series of errors of judgement committed by the colonial rulers eventually culminated in the total rupture between the two realities. The worst evil that befell the clan, according to Achebe, is the supplanting of the spiritual and communitarian values of this society by materialism of the worst kind. Achebe regrets this loss more than all the others.

The criticism that Achebe's handling of the scenes devoted to Winterbottom amounts to a polemic attack on the Europeans' style of administering and their attitudes to the natives, seems to be a little misplaced. While Achebe does strain to point out the lack of apprehension of the Igbo customs on the part of the British rulers, it should be mentioned that he does not fail to lay the blame on the natives squarely. Achebe endorses the theory of Ezeulu who tells Akwebue that the white man has been shown the way to their house and given a place to sit on. In
other words, the European colonisers could not make any headway in their scheme to subjugate the Africans unless they are helped by the Africans themselves.

Artistically this book is a masterpiece as Achebe seems to realize his goal as a writer to the full. He proceeded to instruct through an imaginative recreation of the Igbo world soon after the take-over by the British. The psychological trauma of the characters and social and cultural convulsions suffered by the clan while encountering a hostile foreign power are clinically investigated by the author and convincingly presented by evocation of the Igbo past in all its manifold forms, multifarious activities and rituals, not without its flaws and peccadilloes. It is a marvellous portrayal of the diverse ways power operates vis-a-vis the colonised. Through his judicious and controlled use of ironies and ambiguities, Achebe has succeeded in making "the tragic pathetic, the inevitable accidental, the final relative".

A glance through Achebe’s latest novel Anthills of the Savannah published in 1987 impresses one by its extreme economy, novelty of narrative technique and of course the topicality of its story and theme. It is a subtle indictment of the political system operating in Nigeria. The fictional locale is Kongan a backward West African state that replicates the political scenario of contemporary Nigeria. The satiric mode that Achebe has so appropriately adopted has paid him rich dividends.
This novel more than its predecessors, affirms Chinua Achebe's predilection for the themes of power in human relationships and its pluriform manifestations, aberration, corruption, abuses and their tragic consequences. His perspective in all his novels seems to pertain to the concept and functions of power in the context of the colonial oppression of the natives in Nigeria. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* Achebe has depicted the collapse and virtual liquidation of native power structures and the mounting of colonial power. *No Longer At Ease* is a critique of the handling or mishandling of power by the native elite. *A Man of the People* is a sad commentary on the fiasco that was the first Republic. And now it is *Anthills of the Savannah*, a cryptic and crisp account of the vagaries and misadventures of the military junta in power.

It is the story of three intimate but "connected" friends Sam (His Excellency), Christopher Oriko (the Minister for Information) and Ikem Osidi (the editor of the National Gazette).

The Sandhurst trained army officer Sam transmutes himself into a dictator overnight. The cabinet consists of officious and slavish sycophants who are lawyers, professors, university graduates, in short, the hope of the African nation. Fear appears to be the inseparable twin of power. The powerless fear "power" while those in power fear losing it.
Chris, the commissioner for Information, turns sour and becomes a critic of the projects and policies of His Excellency. Ikem, the editor of the National Gazette is wedded to action and turns anti-authority. He begins to articulate an alternative political creed, "a new radicalism". Ikem done to death by the government attains a martyr's glory. Sam His Excellency is kidnapped and killed and his dead body abandoned even without a funeral. Chris gets killed in a bizarre incident wherein he was rescuing a girl from a molesting cop.

It is, however, Beatrice a spinster and a highly placed bureaucrat with an Honours Degree in English literature from the London University, who comprehends the nuances of the present situation better than others. She is clear-sighted and quite objective in her judgement. She becomes Achebe's image of the new woman of Africa in the throes of becoming a modern nation. She begins to articulate and synthesise their experiences by writing. She inhabits simultaneously the world of modern politics and that of ancient myths. She is not a model woman in the sense of a feminist, but moulded after the Igbo tradition of "the village priestess who prophesies when her divinity rides her". Beatrice puts on the mantle of a prophetess when she utters these words.

It is on now and I see trouble building up for us. It will get to Ikem first. No joking, Chris, he will be the precursor to
make straight the way. But after him it will be you. We are all in it. Ikem, you, me and even Him".

(Anthills, Pp.114-115)

The triumvirate is eliminated and only Beatrice is left to guide the future generation.

Achebe is quite surely back again on his avowed goal of reeducating and reorienting the intelligentsia, the writers and the artists. They are at the centre as keepers and decoders of ideology. It is their responsibility to replace old hegemonic pattern with power structures more consistent with liberation and equality. This presupposes identification with the disinheritied masses. They should get to the core of the indigenous culture. Innes C.L. observes in her book Chinua Achebe:

The way in which the future role of women may be glimpsed is characteristic of Achebe; the intellectual debate is abandoned and the past is recovered.

(Innes: 1990, P.176)

The myth of Idemili is abruptly introduced into the narrative; Achebe elaborates the myth of Idemili thus:

Idemili comes down as a pillar of water linking the earth and heaven. People in various parts of Africa worshipped her in the form of "a dry stick". To this emblem of the Daughter of Almighty, any rich and powerful man to come and offer sacrifices
and seek blessing in order to gain "admission into the powerful hierarchy of ozo". He must be accompanied as mediator, by his daughter or the daughter of some Kinsman. If Idemili finds the aspirant unfit, she sends death to smite him. If she approves of the plea "he will be alive in three years' time". The myth of Idemili is an expression of the divine disapproval of man's "unquenchable thirst to sit in authority on his fellow" (p.104)

This, according to some critics, is a very crucial moment in the novel when there is a shift from the realistic mode to the mythic and Achebe's prose is vested with poetic and oracular quality. The result seems to be to dismantle unilateral power and the notion of "centrality".

Even as Achebe condemns concentration of power, he feels the need for diffusion of narrative or narrational authority in the text. He is so democratic that he desists from prescribing one way of seeing or one formulaic alternative. Hence he adopts the technique of multiple participant points of view. The author intervenes occasionally. Thus the narration shifts from one to the other signifying that the insignia of power should also rotate without vesting or concentrating in one individual. The reader is faced with a revolving narrational pattern and therefore it is for him to reconstruct the text.

The leader of the Abazonian delegation to meet the Excellency narrates the parables of the "tortoise and the leopard". This parable serves as a metaphor for the framework of
the novel underlining the need for struggle even in the face of a formidable opposition to checkmate power.

The leopard is always on the lookout to kill the tortoise. When the latter is about to die he pleads with his killer to give him a few minutes for mentally preparing himself for death. The leopard granted the innocuous last wish of the tortoise. The tortoise began to behave crazily, scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions. The leopard asked the tortoise what his curious behaviour meant. Pat came the reply: .... even after I'm dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here"

(p.128)

Achebe's motif of the imperative of struggle is embodied and forcefully expressed in this parable. As a matter of fact the final phases of the novel underscore the necessity and the inevitability of struggle, if justice, liberation and equality have to be realised.

Another novelty of Achebe is when he makes Beatrice accept Agatha a born-again Christian, and a "prophetess of Jehova" and
when she herself is transformed into prophetess, a reincarnation of the priestess and prophetess of the hills and caves. The motif of the apocalypse and eschatology is writ large right through the novel. This has been a persistent strand in Achebe’s fiction going by the title of the first two novels.

Achebe has drawn with his own magic touch the culminating incident where Beatrice comes forward to sponsor, conduct and direct the naming ceremony of the child of Ikem and Elewa, ordinarily a man’s privilege. The baby girl is given a boy’s name, Amaechina, meaning "May-the-path-never-close". Beatrice in this manner fathers the child. The overawed uncle of Elewa exclaims:

"...in you young people our world has met its match"

(p.227)

Thus Achebe articulates his own response to the problem, artistically told in the novel, particularly through the myth of Idemili, of, who is to provide the alternative. The women now left with the charge of carrying on the task, so valiantly begun by Ikem, start the process in the naming ceremony. While Achebe refrains from naming the alternative, he certainly highlights the unique role of the women in the process of "re-form", of society around its "core of reality". The celebration that follows is a tribute to the potentialities of a community in solidarity not
only among themselves, but with the past precursors and road-makers, a people who can consciously transcend factors that divide and regroup to engage in our ongoing struggle.

More than his multiple narrative technique, which is certainly a laudable device to make his theme more powerful is the mythic dimension of metamorphosis and reincarnation. Achebe becomes a master story-teller. One is reminded of the ringing line of Achebe "Stories create people create stories". The myths and legends provide meaning and continuity amidst the anarchy of power. Innes, C.L. concludes her comprehensive study of this novel with the following words:

... As Achebe writes in one of his recent essays: 'stories create people create stories'. It is this universal "creative rondo" that we experience as the characters inform and are informed by the myths and legends which provide meaning and continuity amidst the anarchy of power. And for the novelist, it seems to provide hope also. The despair at the end of A man of the People has been replaced by a belief in some kind of renewal through an engagement with the oppressed. "At such
critical moments new versions of old stories or entirely fresh ones tend to be brought into being to mediate the changes and sometimes to consecrate opportunistic defections into more honourable rites of passage. In the story the people’s ‘struggle will stand reincarnated before us; – like the scorched anthills of the Savannah, both as a warning and promise.


The greatest merit of this novel is Achebe’s evolving of a new fictional form dictated by the exigency of the theme of the novel. Thus a transformative relationship is established between the text and the ideology thereby allowing the reader to have an insight into the ordinarily concealed aspects of ideology.

This innovative exercise consists in the multiple protagonism and the concomitant multiple narrational technique with everyone of the central characters taking on the narrative role by turns. The message that his novel method conveys is Achebe’s and in general people’s disenchantment with the colonial model of governance which is unilateral and authoritarian as well as the leader-centred despotic military regimes of the neo-colonial variety. Achebe has turned into an ideologue and therefore evaluates and censures certain developments in Nigeria in the last two decades.
While Achebe's attempt at providing re-education and regeneration to the intellectuals of present day Nigeria hasn't been very convincing, he has certainly achieved a fantastic feat in enriching his art by incorporating African myth and legend in a novel of contemporary politics. In other words, his strength in this novel lies in his belief in story and its various expressions in myth, legend, parable and folk-tale. It is a pioneering experiment that will stand the test of time as a model for relevant fiction in the context of not only African socio-political milieu but that of any third world country.

It may be fruitful at this stage to compare these two writers with reference to their mode of expressing their beliefs or stand point through the medium of the novel. While Anand and Achebe are committed to radical change of social structures, there are shades of variation of perception and point of view. The peculiar individual, religious, educational, cultural and experimental background of each writer accounts for this.

Achebe has had his share of alienation as he grew up in an exclusively Christian milieu as his parents were converts of Christianity and his father himself was a missionary. In Nigeria those days the distinction between the natives and the Christian converts was clear cut in terms of their style of life, habits, living quarters, spiritual practices and even culture.
Necessarily, as it is obvious to us, there was a degree of alienation that Achebe experienced from his own cultural roots, history and heritage. It is Achebe's unique merit that he has overcome the enormous handicap and has on top of that acquired not only valuable knowledge and insights in terms of Igbo history and culture but a philosophical approach supported by a scientific, analytical mind.

Anand by his own admission is a rationalist not believing in any established religion or a personal God. For him "man is the measure of all things" as the Greek dictum goes. He has summed up his credo as, "I believe in man". He formulated his philosophical system under the influence of Greek philosophy and modern Western Philosophers. Nevertheless his comprehensive historical humanism reflects the influence of Karl Marx's theories and hypotheses. Anand has no hesitation in declaring that he has no faith in God and that he has no respect for the social customs and institutions that oppress man in the name of religion, or caste or creed. He advocates a brand of humanism that upholds the dignity and centrality of man historically conditioned and culturally circumscribed. He is not in love with man in the abstract but the human being in his precise historical and existential context. In other words he is for comprehensive historical humanism. He is a humanist cozing love for the man in the street.
Despite an alienated education in the West Anand has succeeded in retaining a basic respect for his culture and people. All his novels and other writings demonstrate the deep interest he has cultivated in Indian history, culture, heritage and socio-political situation. One finds a similar trait in Achebe’s personality. Both these writers deserve all praise for a consistent involvement in the political and social upheavals and developments of their countries. Achebe’s oeuvre is an eloquent testimony to this unassailable pride in his country’s past, its philosophy, poetry and dignity. Achebe and Anand have a remarkable grasp over their national history, culture and contemporary problems. Achebe’s re-creation of the Nigeria a hundred years ago is a veritable treat to any reader and offers a rich multispangled panorama of the Igbo land, its people, customs, rituals, beliefs and folklore. Anand’s commitment to the oppressed sons and daughters of India during and after the colonial regime is so intense and overwhelming that his portrayal of culture, customs and institutions is, though colourful, not of such epic dimension. While Achebe is committed to expose to the world the glorious rituals and beliefs and thus bring out the essential antinomy between their world and the colonial world, Anand ruthlessly undercuts the British regime and exposes its chinks and fatal flaws.
Achebe as a novelist could not admit any dichotomy between art and social commitment. He however made a distinction between pure art and applied art and qualifies his own as applied art. Art and education, which in his concept of an artist's role, need not be mutually exclusive. He insists that "social protest is not antithetical to art and that the best craftsmen are not those who have turned their backs to the social problems of their time. For the African, 'the task of re-education and re-generation', is by far more important than the bogus and idle theory of art for art's sake".

(Madubuike in BW: 1974, 67).

Anand's views on art or on his use of the novel as a literary medium are available. Nevertheless it becomes difficult to construct a coherent view of his literary creed given the fragmentary statements made by Anand, passim, in his writings and the gap between his statement and enactment. Achebe's concept of art, though mentioned in an equally scanty measure, can be constructed from his works in a very convincing manner. Achebe is reputed to be a conscious artist and master craftsman, linguistically and materially equal to his task.

One has only to glance through his novels from Things Fall Apart to Anthills of the Savannah to realise the almost effortless and easy manner in which he uses the art form for
producing convincing portrayals of the Igbo clansmen, be it in their primitive egalitarianism and pristine glory or in the undivided social fabric being torn by divisive forces within and without or in the sense of self-defeat and discomfiture brought on by the leaders of the new independent Nigeria. The Igbo rituals, customs, beliefs, social and religious institutions that Achebe so magnificently recreates conjure up the magic world of the Igbo clan in Things Fall Apart and in The Arrow of God. Achebe's way of recreating the Igbo past and heritage is so natural that one need not be an Igbo to appreciate this rich and colourful world. Of course, Achebe adopts different techniques by which he is able to accomplish his task with an uncanny adorntness. He introduces into the narrative the folk language, the folk tales, myths, symbols, songs and proverbs that form a pattern in the whole narrative. The plot sometimes appears weak or loose in structure probably because of the manifold events and incidents that Achebe piles up in order to make the story more true to life. Nevertheless it should be mentioned that his plots are well-wrought with every event or incident moving the action forward to a crisis or climax.

Anand's strength as an artist lies in his remarkable command over the language which he is able to manipulate. The fluency of Anand is just proverbial. In novels like Coolie, Two
Leaves and a Bud and the Big Heart, Anand has recreated the world of the protagonists and the environments, be it rural or urban with such minute details of colour, sound, tone and atmosphere, that one wonders if he was an eye witness of all these scenes or events. His descriptive style is sharp, mellifluous, meticulous and captivating. His style achieves the cutting edge when he wields his punitive pen to flay the colonial masters for their insolence and vanity as in Two Leaves and a Bud.

While Achebe's English is structurally faultless, he feels free to innovate structures by infusing Igbo cultural patterns into the English linguistic structure. He transliterates the imagistic, symbolical and metaphorical views of the people of his country into a foreign idiom. This is not to say his English is faulty or that he is unconsciously influenced by the linguistic patterns of his mother tongue. Without destroying the structural patterns of the English language, Achebe is creating a new English, full of vitality and freshness. Madubuike says in his essay, "Achebe’s Ideas on Literatures":

The linguistic originality of Achebe, the pleasures his language gives us when we read him, all derive from the effective and efficient use of Igbo verbal style which is so evident in his writings.

(Madubuike in Black World: 1974, 67)
Even Achebe's use of pidgin in novels like *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of Savannah* becomes a positive quality in him as Achebe's purpose seems to be only to convey the rhythm of the language. And the reader does not have to continuously work to get meaning from context.

Anand hardly innovates with his language. He does not introduce new linguistic structures. But there is a certain plasticity of his language which enables him to create the language or idiom suited to the particular character or the specific situation. He has been found fault with for using Hindi or Punjabi words or expressions specially in conversations. There is also an abundance of swear words which although are natural in the mouths of the speakers sound offensive when repeatedly used. Some critics justify Anand's use of the swear words and phrases as suggestive of the situation and characters indulging in them. Nevertheless one can not legitimise a habitual use of such offensive expressions by a writer of the calibre of Anand. An overdose of even a good technique can vitiate an otherwise-well-written narrative. Anand's occasional display of metaphorical style and rhetoric gives one the proof of the master who is behind it. For instance, in the following passage from *The Big Heart* Anand handles the language with a lyrical touch:
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 Big Heart: p.15)

C.D. Narasimhaiah has pointed out that in contrast to the above passage, Anand has overdone his rhetoric and it vitiates the portrait of Ananta, the protagonist in The Big Heart. The writer ends by piling up the abstract adjectives to the neglect of the concrete:

But all the moral condemnation of himself and others and his attainment of the splendidous heights above the spurts of sulphurous regrets in him, did not prevent him from succumbing to the abysses of delivery in the volcanoes below the stomach.

(The Big Heart)

C.D. Narasimhaiah further remarks that Anand at times offends by exuding sentimentality in his language, as for example, in a sentence like this:
The incarcerated sorrow wellled up in his eyes, the saliva gathered in his throat, and the whole of his fluid nature slipped across the rocks of principles and the drifts of ideas wept over all the languages, he spoke and understood, and flooded across the cheeks and his beard in hot scalding tears.

(The Big Heart)

It is when Anand the artist is overpowered by an onrush of his sensibility or the social impulse that he commits mistakes of becoming excessively sentimental or gushy and of packing too much emotion into words and phrases or heightening the effect by piling up adjectives. In fact there are numerous places where Anand delights the reader by employing the right word or phrase or expression to highlight the action or emotion that is depicted. He is further guilty of repeating expressions to the point of exasperation in a bid to reproduce sounds.

It is from this perspective that Achebe who has his sight set on his goal as a novelist, comes across to us as a self disciplined artist and craftsman. Where Anand fails as a consequence of his inability to restrain the flow of his fertile imagination or to hammer his raw material into an artistic whole, Achebe has his grip unrelaxed over his creative mind even when
the story or theme he is treating is intrinsic to his world vision or his stand vis-a-vis the refashioning of the African state.

All said and done, Anand is predominantly a novelist of character, character as shaped by environment and strength of will. The individual, for Anand, is in the process of change or evaluation. He is not a plaything of the gods or Karma or any sort of predeterministic or mechanistic force. Life experiences and confrontation of reality shape him, his personality. True to this theory Anand has created characters who are drawn from real life and from his intimate experience of such people in his life. After placing his Bakhas, Munoos, Gangus, Bikhus and Anantas in situations hostile to the destiny of society, Anand probes their consciousness at different levels. It is thus that his plots evolve and create the type of catharsis that Anand as a novelist expects to produce; compassion or karuna which is expiation through art.

Anand's success with character delineation is certainly of a high order. Most of his characters are convincing, real, and fit into his pattern of the inter-relationship between art and vision, content and form.

Achebe's characters, specially his protagonists such as Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obi and Odili are really life-size characters given the content of the pre-colonial or post colonial African or
Nigerian predicament. Achebe does develop his stories and build up his plots by allowing his central characters to interact among themselves, with their environment and with their fellow human beings. Nevertheless it must be said to the credit of Achebe that he maintains an emotional detachment from his characters that is extraordinary. Anand gets involved in his characters and rightly so, but is loath to distance himself from them, thus interfering with their individual development in some of his novels. Where he is able to maintain a posture of a detached observer his success is unprecedented. Certainly his delineation of Munoo, Bakha and Gauri is convincing and realistic as the omniscient author's interference is kept to the minimum. The characterization of Ananta on the other hand is hampered because of Anand's frequent intrusions and sermonizing through him.

Both Anand and Achebe are in the habit of intruding into the narrative in order to preach or comment or probe consciousness and events. While Achebe's authorial voice is modulated or disguised by means of distancing techniques employed by him, Anand tends to be at times all too visible and recognizable, through the prophetic frenzy of the tone of the speeches.

Althusser has struck the key note of this tantalizingly complex but inevitable relationship between form and ideology in the following words in his book *Lenin and Philosophy*: 
.... the peculiarity of art is to make us see, make us perceive, make us feel something which alludes to reality ... What art makes us see is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes.

(Althusser: 1971, Pp.203-204.)

Looked at from this perspective of a dialectical, transformative relationship between art and sensibility, Achebe comes through as a near perfect model while Anand, shorn of some of his glaring inconsistencies and imperfections, passes muster.