Chapter - 9

Private Life of an Indian Prince:

Realms – where neither a virgin nor a rupee was safe

Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953), is the last of Anand's novels to be published in England. It is one of his most impressive work, since it lends variety and range to his thematic vision. It is most innovative also. The subject matter is different, but Anand's concern for the lowly and the lost is the same. In this novel, Anand focuses on the self-indulgence of an Indian Prince, after the independence of the country. The princes' were generally an embodiment of grandeur and carnal pleasure. Their only commitment was to feudalism. Anand's political brooding and his intense moral vision found the princely pattern unsavoury. It was antagonistic to the basic tenets of human equality and liberty. Private Life of an Indian Prince, is the depiction of the chaotic state of affairs in one of the states of India on the eve of independence and thereafter the dilemma of the princes. The realistic picture has been painted by giving the specific details of the Prince of Shampur. All the princely states wanted to retain their independent existence for their vested interests and hence their accession to the Indian Union was a singularly appalling idea to them. Anand locates India's post-independence difficulties and the national failure to develop the idea of political freedom. Anand is inclined for a kind of political system which ensures just and socialistic pattern in society. He raised voice against political exploitation, since after independence too, the countrymen those who fought for independence were not given due recognition. Their role was thrown into the dustbin of history. It was politicians who benefited by it and they aspired to establish their dynasties. As Anand remarked much later, about the
masses: “After one hundred years of slavery our people came into a wretchedness beyond wretchedness.”

The novel appeared in the world of fiction on the princes and their exotic life style. It was a favourite topic with the writers after independence of the country. The romantic treatment of the princes’ and their ultimate doom, appealed to the readers. E.M. Foster’s *The Hill of Devi* (1953), Phillip Woodruff’s *The Island of Chamba* (1950), Malgonkar’s *The Princes* and Dewan Jarmani Dass’s *Maharaja* (1960), are some of the most authentic accounts of the Indian princes. These novels are the reflection of the topsy-turvy state of the five hundred odd princes, whose identity was in crisis. The inability of the rulers to come to grips with facts is an interesting point. Anand’s *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, is based on the theme of politics and love. The political scenario is generally depicted in all the novels of Anand, but in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, it is more conspicuous and detailed. Anand is able to assess the degradation that had set into the political values and practices. Anand’s comments on the novel are illuminating:

*Actually my knowledge of Indian life at various levels had always convinced me that I should try to do a 'comedie humaine'. In this the poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one kind of outcastes. The middle section, and nawabs and rajas were also to be included as a species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show the poor-rich of our country, who deserve pity more than contempt. As usual, all the characters are taken from real life and transformed creatively from within in an almost Dostoevskian mood of*
A personal tragedy and an experience also prompted Anand to write this novel. A very strong love affair of Anand with Anil d'silva, a very intelligent woman, broke off, leading to a lot of agony. After that his very sincere friend Melpo, a Greek dancer, nursed him in Bombay and she advised him to write a novel to give an outlet to his pent-up feelings and frustrations. He was madly in love with his beloved Anil who ditched him and got married to another man. He completed the novel in a month and a half, in 1948. As, Saros Cowasjee, observes that “Private Life of an Indian Prince... was written from the white heat of a tremendous crisis.” The novel might be an instrument of a personal catharsis, but eventually Anand transcends that experience and creates fiction of abiding interest.

The subject matter totally gripped Anand. Private Life of an Indian Prince is the story of an idiosyncratic Indian prince, Maharaja Ashok Kumar, better known as Victor or Vicky, who ruled the Shampur state. He is adamant about not merging his state into the Indian Union, after the Independence of the country. The prince is wallowing in sloth and sex, and he is squandering the state funds. Anand’s craftsmanship is fantastic. He unravels Victor’s life story by adding required salt and pepper, with other ingredients. The opening scene is a public scandal. The young prince Victor has taken Bunti Russell to the khuds (ravine) for a sexual encounter, though it could not happen but the news spread like wild fire. Captain Russell the father of Bunti is in a hysterical state and the
Maharaja is equally tense. The duel takes place between the two of them and Maharaja roared at him:

Tell him to go to his mother's !...... who does he think he is !...... Doesn't he realize who I am ? Ask him to get out of my house.... get out ! Get out!..... We all rushed towards him, whispering hoarsely : 'Highness! Highness! He lay down frothing and struggling , his eyes looking upwards with a look which was distant and forbidding.4

Right, at the outset we are in no doubt about Victor's immoral personality. He has inherited traits of his order, his vices outnumber the few virtues that he has. Anand has deliberately focused on the prince's lecherous behaviour. He is projected as an irresponsible and weak character, both mentally and physically. The state is on the verge of political disaster and his own existence is in peril. Anand makes it crystal clear, that such rulers could do no good to their subjects. Victor is sucking the life blood of his subjects by inflicting various illegal taxes on them. The Prince ill-treats his married wives and is caught in the web of an enchanting seductress, a nymphomaniac woman Ganga Dassi. In Private Life of an Indian Prince, the Prince's relationship with his mistress Ganga, is ecstatic, complete and fulfilled:

I had a satisfactory personal life. She used to bathe me with her own hands and fuss after me a good deal in the beginning... the nights were relieved by the high-powered love-making and the reaching out of an insouciance where both of them felt calm and assured, having touched the
There is a gradual awakening among the harassed masses. There is an awareness about their rights. They form a Praja Mandal and demand justice from the autocratic Prince. He is pressurised by Sardar Patel to sign the Instrument of Accession. Very soon, the Maharaja receives a wire message from the Prime Minister but he is reluctant to respond him. His encounter with the Diwan who is government’s representative, makes his status very clear:

Maharaja Sahib I am here in Shampur to fulfil the orders of the Sardar. I am an administrator and I have been sent here on duty...... I think you should consider acceding, because most of the princes in India have already done so. After all, these accessions are intended to promote the unity of the country. And as a patriot, I am sure you will consider it your duty to come into the family. (P.L., p.110)

Prince Victor makes fool-hardy plans without realizing the gravity of the situation. He is confident and discusses his plans with Ganga Dassi and Dr. Shankar.

I have American friends...... I shall call them here for Shikar...... Actually, one of them sounded me about making a pact for Shampur borders upon Tibet as well as Kashmir and India. I will show this Diwan a thing or two...... I shall be strong enough to stand my ground against the states department. I will offer the British and Americans......
Ironically, even as the Prince is planning a rosy future inside the palace, the activists of Praja Mandal under the leadership of Pandit Gobind Das are preparing for a hartal to protest against the misrule of Victor, and to garner support for the accession of the state of Shampur to the Indian Union. Victor lives in a fool’s paradise, he is totally unaware of the imminent – hartal. He makes lavish arrangements for the foreign guests from America. But, Victor is brutal by nature. His beastly encounter with the Chief Shikari Buta, horrifies the visitors. They lose all interest and all enthusiasm in his plans. So, they leave for Delhi, without offering any patronage for the independence of Shampur. Victor has to sign the papers for the accession of Shampur to the Indian Union.

On the other hand, his mistress Ganga Dassi elopes with his subordinate Bool Chand. He can not bear it and loses control of his mind. The ultimate accession of the Shampur state to the Indian Union, epitomizes, what actually happened in several other princely states. Saros Cowasjee writes about the inclination of Anand that

*He had thought about a novel with a prince as the central character, sometime before World War II, when a prince he had taught in Simla in the twenties finished up in an asylum, just as his hero does. He had observed the princes carefully.*

The Prince is sent away to London, because he is in a highly perturbed state of mind. After sometime, he is summoned back to India, for he is found to be involved in the murder of Bool Chand, the paramour of Ganga Dassi. The destruction of the prince is now complete. The emotionally weak character
dissipates when he cannot have his way. He turns eccentric and lands in a lunatic asylum of Poona. His wife Maharani Indira, whom he had neglected all his life, reaches the asylum to look after him. Anand comments:

"... the irony and tenderness of a woman's love that would pursue a man even to hell, to rescue him when the love was selfless and real (P.L., p.340)"

During my talk with Dr. Anand, I asked him whether the novel is a projection of universal human weaknesses especially the man-woman relationship and is there any inherent flaw in the two main characters. Anand does not see them as being inherently wicked.

*In 'Private Life of an Indian Prince', I tried to show and reflect the sexual egotism of the Prince, which makes him discard his married wife and he chooses to live with a nymphomaniac woman who is psychologically ill and not subject to moral censure. I took all the characters even if they are forced to be evil, as victim of social fate and not as wicked by intent. Ganga Dassi is a victim of nymphomania.*

Anand follows a symmetrical pattern in all his novels. There is always one character, who is larger than life. In *Untouchable*, it is Colonel Hutchinson, in *Coolie*, it is Seth Prabha Dyal, in *Two Leaves and the Bud* Dr. John de la Havre, and in *Gauri*, it is Dr. Mohindra. In *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* Dr. Shankar is the redeeming figure. He is a post graduate in medicine from London like the author himself, who had a post-doctoral degree
from England. The creation of a magnanimous doctor is in contrast to the fragile, and fickle minded prince. Saros Cowasjee commented:

There is as much of prince as in his narrator and this partly accounts for the penetrating analysis of the prince’s character. Dr. Shankar is the rational side of the author, analysing the irrational side as seen in the prince.

The whole novel and the knotted situations are depicted in a style of flashback. The author has warned the reader against identifying the narrator’s persona with Anand. The "Author Note" tells us:

The neutral "I" of the first person singular has tended, in this book, to become a character in his own right. Most writers know how a character in a novel, sometimes takes control and runs away with the story. The author has been content to allow Dr. Shankar to take possession of the narrative as well as become Sancho Panza to the Prince’s Don Quixote. Therefore the ‘I’ in this novel is not to be mistaken for the author, who has reverted to the Indian tradition of anonymity and looks on, like Shiva's searing third eye, at the unfolding of this tragi-comedy (P.L., p. 7)

Though, the prince was educated in good schools, yet he has imbibed all hedonistic values. The motto of his life is picked up from Shelley’s passionate poem:

I was never attached to that great sect

198
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of a crowd, a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise commend
To cold Oblivion though it is in the code
Of modern morals...
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates
The life that wears the spirit – that creates,
One object and one form...

Once again the major moral concern in the novel is the growing poverty. Here, it is caused by the irresponsible and lecherous rulers. They are feudalistic and totally insensitive to the suffering of the masses. The oppressed masses called the prince “the tyrant of Shampur, the levier of Illegal taxes and the egotistical head of a lawlessly lawful government, whose sanction lay in his whims and fancies”. (P.L. p. 320) The schemes of exhorbitant taxes were introduced to extract more and more from the people who were merely subsisting. Prince Victor’s only serious concern is to build up a good fortune for his mistress Ganga Dassi, whom he could not give anything legally. The personal properties of the people are confiscated and the public could not dare to disobey the decrees of the ruler. The prince is a reckless womaniser. He is devoid of all morals and scruples. He treats woman as play things. The details of his libidinous craving are that the “most beastly individual trait of the prince was that his uxoriousness for Ganga did not prevent him to cohabit with other woman. He demanded any woman who came within the orbit of his lustful vision.” (P.L., p. 195) He kept agents to procure beautiful girls for him. The prince is beastly in his lust and greed. Rather than concentrating upon the plight
of the miserable masses of the state, he would arrest them, and put them behind bars for no solid reasons. His brutal oppression is total and awesome, no one could raise a voice against him. “Not a virgin or a rupee was safe in his realms”. (P.L., p. 43)

Infact, the libertine and profligate figure of the prince is quite similar to what Dryden says “When nature prompted and no law denied, Promiscuous use of concubine and bride”. The opening scene of the novel, ‘a first class scandal’ involving captain Russell’s daughter and the prince establishes his personal traits. It is because of Victor’s weak and lustful personality, that he is so easily trapped by Ganga Dassi. Once she leaves him, he gets into the state of delinquency and soliloquies: ‘where have you gone? Oh where have you gone?… Why have you done this? Why? … why do you want to destroy me….?’ (P.L., p.261). Again he mutters, ‘Only in death shall I be able to get rid of her’ (P.L., p. 282).

M.K.Naik’s comments on the novel:

a work of schizophrrenics as its own protagonist... the element of caricature is indeed ubiquitous ... and the total result is a picture as lop-sided as the mental world of Maharaja... .... The novel is a titillating exercise in sensationalism.

Srinivasadhyengar’s views are also very interesting and illuminating:

Bad and mad though he may be and pursued by fatality, the prince is not devoid of a certain distinction, he quotes Manu and Plato and Shelley; he discusses philosophy
and statecraft; he is cunning and cruel; he is vily and vain; he is self-righteous and self pitying and always he has a residual human charm of his own. Both Prince and “Queen Bee” are Dostoevskian characters in the sense that they exemplify the Russian novelist's dictum “Human nature is broad”. And Dostoevskian too is the Prince's capacity to indulge endlessly in the hopeless wailing of the helpless.\textsuperscript{10}

The plot of the novel is well constructed, it moves at the right pace and into the right direction. After the accession of Shampur to Indian Union, the Administrator suggested to the Maharaja to take a holiday in Europe. Though, a suggestion, yet it emanated from an order to keep him out of the state. Infact, the Prince is so deeply obsessed by his mistress that his repeated utterances are, 'I want her, I want her'. (P.L., p. 320). For a short while, he is infatuated with an English girl Miss June Withers. It is just a tiny mile-stone in his journey. It’s a very temporary phase.

\begin{quote}
\textit{a kind of stop gap before the bigger reality of Ganga Dassi, whose memories were bearing him down, compelling, encompassing him, murdering him, annihilating him} (P.L., p. 340)
\end{quote}

He confessed, ‘I have lost my throne… but that would not have mattered. Only, only the woman whom I loved also left me.’ (P.L., p. 300)

Anand has handled the shocked state of mind of the prince in a realistic manner. The mental torture of the prince is quite visible in his eccentric
activities. Once, he was a prince, now he has lost everything. 'Power' and 'Beloved' both have flown together. He talks meaningless things:

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\text{I can fly... ... I can fly away on my own. And he got up and stretching his arms out, began to flap then like a bird taking off. And he fell so that his head dangled on the side of his bed.} \quad (P.L., \text{p. 331})
\]

Then, he begins to weep and sing. The next day, he leaves for India after his stay in London. His insanity evokes sympathy. “Throughout the flight he kept up a continuous monologue, interrupted by songs sung in a raucous voice, and by sporadic violence, until he became a complete nuisance to the other passengers and had to be strapped up and bound to his chair.” (P.L., p. 332). The prince's madness is appalling.

Anand's vivid description of the loathsome condition of the state prisons, is in a way reminiscent of Dickens's treatment of prisons in his novels. The jails under the prince Victor is almost a veritable hell. The prisons are the actual reflection of the extreme callousness and apathy of the rulers towards the ruled.

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The \text{Class I cell of the prison is only a small black hole continually stinking of the smell of their own urine in open pots. The Class III dormitory was without toilet and the détentes had to relieve themselves at night in one corner which had caused all of them to go down one by one with malaria, hook-worms, anaemia and T.B.} \quad (P.L., \text{p. 182})
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The prisoners’ necks, hands and feet are bound in fetters with heavy iron chains causing pus-formation. In the evening, they are made to recite the compulsory prayers and chant the mantra of “Maharaja Sahib ke Jai! Shampur Raj ke jai” (P.L., p. 180) The prisoners manage to survive. They pray to God that he should send his messengers, to relieve them of such filthy life. Death would indeed be a relief. Their condition is comparable to the concentration camps of the Nazis. Anand’s account is of pre-independence era, but the reality is that the condition of the Jails is not much better even after so many decades of the independence of the country. Kiran Bedi (A biography) reveals certain facts in chapters “Jailhouse Shocks” and “The Inherited Legacy : Tihar Jail”. It reflects the pathetic condition of the prisoners and the prisons:

There are always two classes of prisoners in jails, the have and the have-nots. Some of the have in Tihar were powerful criminals, who still wielded influence outside. They generated a fear of money and muscle... The atmosphere here breeds. Criminality, Prisoners with lesser or petty crimes were indoctrinated by the more hardened ones... The prisoners were beaten mercilessly. A youngster, sentenced to seven days on a passport case, was beaten to death. People would be thirsty and there would be no clean water. People were dying here, seriously and no help came."

Anand and Kiran Bedi seem to be contemporaries!

There is stark and glaring contrast between the lives of the have and the have-nots in the state of Shampur. When the people are starving to death, the
prince is busy squandering state funds, to entertain his American friends with the world's most rare delicacies:

*the villagers particularly the shrivelled-up old men, the large stomached, naked little children and wry Shikaris, gathered together on the fringes of the garden, admiring the exalted guests and nursing various hopes in their hearts for bounteous gifts of baksheesh* (P.L., p. 197).

The prince is reluctant to pay the charges of the Chief Shikari, Buta Singh. He kicks him and his mouth and nose bleed. The Prince is heartless, brutal and at times barbaric. He deems himself a demi-god. He is symbolic of the feudal tendencies which turn him to be despotic. The long suppression of the masses, for many centuries had a lasting impact on their mind. They developed a kind of mystical faith in the divine right of the ruler. The British left but the feudal tendencies persisted. As the author remarks, “The trouble with liberal democracy is that it takes a long time to mature” (P.L., p. 285) Anand emphasises on the economic and moral independence of the masses. After the accession of the princely state takes place, there is a lot of apparent disruption of the whole system. “intrigues, corruption, nepotism and black-market spread in intricate coils around the houses and offices of Shampur, until, in the darkness that was day light, one could not recognize oneself or anything else”. (P.L., p. 283. Dr. Shankar reflects:

... the invisible mass lying... in wait to ambush the intriguing, agonized, decadent prince and his courtiers and ready to wipe out the whole putrescent order with a ruthless determination to clean up the Augean stables of the feudalist oligarchy. (P.L., p. 220)
Anand desires the complete overhauling of the social and economic system of the country, to achieve the principle of democratic socialism and equality of all men and woman.

Like all his previous novels, especially *Coolie* and *The Trilogy*, Anand denounces the age old superstitions and obsolete practices. He promotes the belief that prerequisite of an enlightened and progressive society is to get rid of such practices. The prince has an instable personality. He is oscillating between the two extremes. It is because of his mental make up and his upbringing by an over indulgent mother. As the author tells, “He was a prince who had been educated in the English Public School tradition and yet whose home background encouraged the darkest superstitions and the most obscurantist ideas. The most barbaric impulses of both civilizations dominated him”. (P.L.,p.79). The discovery of the mahurat by the state astrologer is an essential ritual for Victor. Even the routine life of Maharaja is regulated by the absurd calculations of the Pandit Dhanpat Rai, “Why are we waiting here when we know that Pandit Dhanpat Rai can pervade the stars to get into an auspicious array any time he likes?” (P.L.,p.72) While the predictions of the astrologer said, ‘The hour and the moment is ever auspicious for you. And your path is strewn with flowers all the way’. (P.L., p. 75) Dr. Shankar, the logical educated man warns, ‘Please look out for the few thorns that might have got mixed up with the roses.’ (P.L., p. 75) The Prince oscillates between the two opposing worlds:

*The Spirits of his dead ancestors were pulling him towards the old values, prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, generosity, heroism in battle.... while a number of new demons, the fashions of the hour were pulling him into another direction.* (P.L., p. 50)
It was through the prince’s outlook towards life that Anand tries to break the shackles of the remnants of regressive and primitive thinking.

Unlike *Gauri*, *Untouchable* and *Coolie* where the main characters are not educated and their philosophical speeches, sometimes appear out of place. The impact of the sermons is less credible. In *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, most of the characters are literate and their discussion on Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, or O’Casey’s conception of State of Chasis or the status of Woman in Europe, appeared quite befitting and seemly. Ironically, inspite of being educated and intelligent, the predicament of Victor’s own married wife Maharani Indira is quite dishonorable.

*Private Life of an Indian Prince* weaves the various themes successfully. The prince’s passionate infatuation with a nymphomaniac woman ends in a disaster. All his troubles are of his own making and an outcome of his blunders. The most interesting thing about this novel is Anand’s technique of arranging the various incidents. From the opening scene to the end, the novel is gripping and the interest of the reader does not flag at any point. Saros Cowasjee’s observation is quite apt in this context:

> He opens the novel (which) is divided into four parts with (a) scandal, then tells us enough about Vicky to arouse our curiosity. What is Vicky doing in Simla when the fate of his state’s is in the balance? ... Who is Ganga Dassi? From whose grip the Prince cannot free himself? The information Anand divulged to the reader during the royal party’s return to the state, a journey which has become necessary because of the scandal, the exhortation of the Prime Minister and the compulsions of Vicky’s
mistress

Had Anand opened his book with the tangled history of the prince’s life and that of his state, the reader might have lost interest in the story. (He) wisely defers it.........

Anand’s autobiographical experiences pass through the fine sieve of his creativity. Marlene Fisher opines that the prince is “excellently drawn if melancholy creation of an over-refined sensibility caught in the turmoils and contradictions of his own nature and of the world, he inhabits”. Saros Cowasjee argues that “the novel has fascinating Dostoevskian touch and it has schizophrenic quality. The style is of mock-heroic and anti-climax”.

Critics differ on their opinion of the artistic quality of the Private Life of an Indian Prince. Balarama Gupta considered the novel “a failure, particularly in so far as there is no close integration between its artistic texture and author’s philosophy of humanism?” On the other hand, Jack Lindsay’s comments on the novel:

As a psychological novel on a grand scale its scope is Dostoevskian... We felt the conflict of the old and the new in India with an evocative force that marked this book out as a most impressively sustained performance.

But K.N. Sinha differed with the above critic that Dostoevskian “etching of life in its depths cannot be realised in Private Life of an Indian Prince.”

Great thinkers like Julian Huxley and Maugham rejected the separate existence of the body and the soul, in man’s being. Anand conveys the same ideology through Dr. Shankar and Mr. Gibson, in the novel.
The bifurcation of soul and body is a vulgar heresy. The truth is that man is body, body and soul and a great many other things besides. And the whole man cannot admit of the stupid dualism between “spirit” and “matter”.

(P.L., p.331)

C.J. George has openly contradicted the above ideas depicted in the novel. He called it “topics unsuitable at that grave situation permeated with trepidation of Maharaja’s madness.” Dr. George's assertion is not admissible, because the acknowledged facts which are conveyed by Dr. Shankar are the elementary truths which are relevant for all times to come and they were definitely correlated with Prince Victor’s madness. The prince could not understand the sanctity of relationships because he is obsessed with body and material fulfilment only. Infact this particular trait is found in the writings of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, who are his most dominant contemporaries. Uppinder Mehan in her study of The Construction of Self in Selected novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayana and Raja Rao, enunciates that:

In their early fiction, Anand, Narayana and Rao portray the body as highly moral and classically beautiful, in keeping with the terms of insurgent nationalist discourse. Their independence era novels support many of the ideals of the new nation, but the body begins to register resistance against the nationalist conception of self. The study also examines the interaction of Indian nationalism, Vedantic metaphysics, humanism, tradition and the body and sexuality in the construction of self in Anand’s Private Life of an Indian Prince.
C.J. George, observes a close semblance between *Private Life of an Indian Prince* and the Shakespearean tragedy. He opines:

> Of all the Shakespearean plays, *King Lear* seems to have influenced *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, the most. Mad Victor talks and acts like mad Lear. Dr. Shankar is like the Fool in that Shakespearean tragedy, a philosopher and guide to the king.... Apart from these similarities the novel has many echoes of the Shakespearean voice. The words of one of the detenus in Udham Pur Jail, “And the whole hierarchy of officials and warders resembles the big flies who suck the blood of the butter flies... ‘As flies to the wanton boys we are to the gods, They kill us for their sport’.”

*Private Life of an Indian Prince* shows Anand’s perceptive concern for the princes. Anand feels that though the princes are degraded yet, they are an isolated lot. They invite contempt but they also require sympathy and understanding. Victor’s thoughts in the lunatic asylum are:

> I feel there are more disasters coming my way.... I am afraid? I dread the future! I fear myself.... my own thoughts! I feel a terrible sense of foreboding! It is all darkness.... (P.L., p. 283)

Their vicious, immoral deeds are in a way the result of their so called aristocratic upbringing, over-indulgent mothers, and fawning courtiers. It was much later that Anand confessed to Fisher that it is not entirely a question of rejection of all the aristocracy merely because they have not been elected, but:
I did not believe also that the princes could be blamed all the time for merely being reckless in their love life. I felt that I would like to show that even they who were degenerate from upbringing and from social conditioning had enough capacity for love itself.  

Anand wanted to show that love is the universal human need and the princes are no exception to it. Anand’s deep perception is apparent when he termed the rulers “the poor rich of our country, who deserve pity more than contempt.” It is an artistic accomplishment that Anand conveys everything in an objective and non-partisan manner. The novel was widely discussed. It turned out to be one of the most popular novels. Whether it was also one of his best, the critics differ. Balarama Gupta felt:

It is not by ‘Private Life of an Indian Prince’, that Anand’s name is remembered or shall ever be cherished, but by others, say ‘Untouchable’ or ‘Cannie’ or ‘The Village’.  

Dr. Iyengar pinpointed the main cause of the novel’s failure:

The book rather leaves an impression of cram, like the memory of a nightmare one has been through, Anand does not seem to know his Victor as he seems to know his Bakha, Munoo and Lalu. There is a failure of understanding, and therefore a failure of compassion as well.  

But Iyengar made a very honest confession regarding his review of the novel. He was not aware of the autobiographical nuances in Private Life of an Indian
Prince, when he had put forth his views in *Indian Writing in English*, in 1961. Saros Cowasjee in his Introduction to the new edition of the novel (1970), referred to the autobiographical touch. Saros Cowasjee felt that “Private Life of an Indian Prince which failed to impress Indian critics, is to my mind, Anand’s finest work”. 25 It changed iyengar’s opinion and he remarked:

*I now see things in the novel that I couldn’t see before, and in my long review in Deccan Herald (April, 1971), I have referred to its vivid sense of history, its richness of incident and character, its considerable narrative power, and above all, its fearless compassion. Private Life will surely take its place as an integral part of Anand’s “work in progress”, the comedie humaine for twentieth century India.* 26

Anand has blended various moral components of his art into one compact whole. The English critics had a great adulation for the novel. Walter Allen, called it, “a most impressive work”. 27 Jack Lindsay goes a step further:

*If Anand had written nothing else, his place in the history of the novel would be secure..... his place as a profound interpreter of Indian life in a phase of pervasive crisis.* 28

He has dealt compassionately with the life of a passionate prince. There is sarcasm, wit and humour. The main plot and the subplot are very beautifully interrelated. It is a momentous work in the field of post-colonial Indo-Anglian Literature, taking its due place with other works dealing with the life of Indian princes.
The prince’s madness is horrifying. Anand probably wants to say, ‘As you sow; so shall you reap. As Anand recollected much later.

I know the story of a man, a big landlord, who turned murderer ... when I went to his village ... I heard him in the next room shouting two kinds of things. First he was taking the part of the murderer and then of the victim. He had been deranged by the murders he had committed. 29

The cause and effect must go on. He has delineated the element of avarice in context of the state princes, very perceptively. All magnificence, grandiose and accumulation of wealth is a meaningless pursuit. All this leads to the insanity of the prince, and his downfall is piteous. Anand is objective in his outlook. At one place, he remarked, "Some of these princes have done very wonderful work." 30 Anand’s synthesis of life is to do the right Karmas and the virtuous deeds. They are the only reminiscences which remain in the world and are cherished by others.
References


4. Mulk Raj Anand, Private Life of an Indian Prince, Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1953, p. 13 (All other references from the same novel, same edition, should be read as P.L. p.____)


7. Saros Cowasjee, So Many Freedoms, p. 141.


14. Saros Cowasjee, Introduction to Private Life of an Indian Prince, p. 18 (as cited above).


29. Marlene Fisher, *Wisdom of Heart*, p. 112 (as cited above)