UNDER THE SPELL OF THE WHITE DREAM
Quest of the Absolute, claims Raja Rao, is the inspiration of his writing which he regards as sadhana. Since Raja Rao's quest is essentially metaphysical, *The Serpent and The Rope* juxtaposes two contrary metaphysics and endeavours to vindicate the non-dualism of Sankara against a predominantly dualist worldview of the west. Ramaswami's return to the upanisadic heritage from the western civilisation is portrayed not in a concrete socio-historical context for "neither situation nor character is primary; it is the quest" that counts for Raja Rao. Consequently, what could have been a creative encounter of two contrary perspectives ends up in evasion and a haloed return to the timeless past.

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1 "... for me, writing is a sadhana. It is a mode of prayer. Writing is a prayer for me.... I write just because I wish to write. It is a sadhana for me.... sadhana means to try to be in contact with the ultimate reality. It has been my endeavour all my life to be face to face with the ultimate."


Against Baja Bao's denial of the here and now and an absolutist affirmation of the timeless ultimate reality, Mulk Raj Anand maintains:

"I wanted to write in the time-bound contemporary world, about the here and the now, seeing everyone with a naked vision, in all the starkness of human situation... I wanted to see people as they were growing in this world."

I had discarded the monism of the Advaita. To me there is only one vast universe, with man, woman and other living beings, face to face with the elements, and others, alone, but seeking human solidarity. There are not two worlds, heaven above and the earth below. There is no 'spiritual' world separate from the material world. The soul is body and the body is soul. 3

Mulk Raj Anand's vision of society commits him "to the historical process, to the here and now and to the appreciation of culture and to the efflorescence of all the contradictory impulses of civilisation which form the loose kind of pattern". 4 It is not difficult to


It would not be out of place to emphasise that Anand's views on the nature and purpose of literature, his view of man's place in society, are derived largely from the orthodox Marxist tradition. Despite his disclaimers to the contrary, he has been influenced by Social Realism and Materialist Interpretation of history.

discern that Anand's viewpoint is anti-Vedantin and is oriented towards the here and now rather than the eternal. He does not fall back upon the myths of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata for he has a strong faith in the possibility of creating new contemporary myths. At the heart of Anand's novels, from Untouchable to Confessions of A Lover, is an intense struggle and search for a new image of man in terms of the western rational, scientific, liberal, humanistic tradition. Anand is one of the first Indo-Anglian novelists to depict the predicament of individual in relation to the socio-economic and political upheavals of his times.

Anand's attempts to portray the social life of colonial India have evoked, like The Serpent And The Rope, conflicting reactions from his readers. On the one hand, Anand's novels have been hailed as -

5 "I would like to prove that a new contemporary myth (of growth to awareness) of the whole potential man is possible against the myths of Ramayana and Mahabharata. ... It is possible to have a contemporary myth."


6 Anand told Marlene Fisher in 1973, "Self-consciously, I've taken my humanism from the Hellenic tradition, from Europe, because it was not here."

"a new kind of 'folk epic' and is by its very nature deliberately explosive but luminiscent "in recognition of the quick of life". The narrative "bounces" the reader by its vitalistic emissions - a quality which is the sine qua non of all great art."7

Contrary to the above laudation, H.M. Williams contends that

"Anand's novels are far from perfect as works of art, but their passionate realism is arresting in a powerful, if crude way, and they remain compulsive (and occasionally repulsive to the tender sensibility) reading to this day."6 (emphasis added)


Besides Satyanarain Singh, the other critics who have hailed Anand's novels include E.M. Forster, Anros Cowasjee, Edward Burra, John Lehmann, K. Nagarajan and many others.

8 Williams, H.M., Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970 a survey, p. 36.

Not only that Anand's novels are seen as 'far from perfect as works of art', he is even accused of confused and incoherent ideas. William Walsh points out:

"Mulk Raj Anand's semi-Marxist categories, his furious, and one must say well grounded, indignation, and his habit of undue implicitness, together with a deficiency in self-criticism makes him a writer whose work has to be severely sifted... the defect which constrains his real creative capacity is the habit of allowing his moral and social purposes to become separate from the particular actuality of the fiction, so that they frequently lead a collateral rather than a unified fiction."

The central theme in Anand's novels is exploitation, injustice and tyranny in contemporary Indian social set-up. He seeks to identify the structural and institutional sources of man's inhumanity to man and the consequential blighting of the possibilities of human relationships in hierarchy-ridden Indian society. Anand decries metaphysicalising of human nature and abstracting it from the complex of social and economic institutions and structures. He also decries myth making of Indo-Anglian novelists regarding Indian culture and hypostatising it in terms of absolutes. According to the novelist's professions, the dominant concern of his fiction is focussing human predicament in the context of history as a dynamic evolving reality.

9 "... an abstract analysis of the motives of human behaviour and psychology, as if human nature were an unchanging, timeless entity... would only lead to a flatulent gradiloquence about eternal moods embodying nothing except that some minute and spurious truisms about one or two intense moments might result from the metaphysical wrappings of dissociated states of awareness. Equally, the historical process was too complex and intricate, and there was no license for the wild hopes for the coming of the millennium tomorrow if only one understood history for it is not easy to know all the facts, and febrile gestures fall flat in the tests of actual struggles".


10 Ibid., pp. 100 ff.

Anand's account of evolution of Indian society in Apology does acknowledge the influence of Marxism on his approach towards the analysis of Indian society.
Anand claims that he has attempted to expound revolutionary humanism through his fiction and non-fictional writings:

"Though I believe in realism, as an attitude towards the total reality, I am, as I said, for a poetic realism. I would like, for instance, to stress the importance of the desire image, or the romantic will, in writing... as I desired a total and truly human view of experience, a view of the whole man, in order that a completely new kind of revolutionary human may arise, so I have been inclined to stress the need for a truly humanist art commensurate with the needs of our time, dominantly in the search of freedom as the highest aspiration." 11

Anand's claims regarding the function of the writer and the purpose of his writing clearly indicate that he regards his writing as a saga of protest against the oppression and exploitation in society. In view of these claims it would be appropriate to review Anand's novels against his own professions, and to consider

11 Ibid., pp. 138-39.

Anand goes on to say that, "I want to emphasise the revolutionary aspect of art, I mean the way in which it can change life." (Ibid., p. 131). He further adds, "By giving vent to their inmost desires, by revealing to them the true nature of man and by informing their will, the writer thus helps men to take part in the drama of revolt from which emerges the new society. And he trains the higher type of human being who... will bend before no tyrants but only follow his own enlightened will." (Ibid., p. 135).
the ways in which western influences on Anand have shaped his perception of the Indian social reality. Since it is not possible to take vast corpus of Anand's fiction within the purview of this study, only three of his novels, i.e. Untouchable, Coolie and Private Life of An Indian Prince are being analysed here. These novels have been chosen not merely on the basis of their reputation but because they also represent important themes, untouchability, capitalist and colonial exploitation, and the decay of the feudal order, which Anand has touched upon in most of his novels.

UNTOUCHABLE

A day in the life of a sweeper is the canvas of Anand's first novel Untouchable. In the fictional space of successive events of a day Anand claims to depict 'the serfdom of thousands of years' through caste-tyranny in action. That mere touch of a human being does pollute another and that one has to shout one's presence while moving at a public place and that temple can also be pollution-prone, is the socio-cultural milieu against which the stirrings in the soul of an untouchable (bakha) are dramatised. Humiliation cumulatively heaped on the protagonist during the span of a day precipitates a crisis which ends up in his running away from home. But he returns to his condemned destiny under the lure of
"That machine which can remove dung without anyone having to handle it."\textsuperscript{12}

Apparently the machine holding the promise of redemption inspires Bakha to return, but his return, in fact, is symptomatic of the exhaustion of psychological and moral resources in him for having to live in a closed universe where the continued sway of the oppressive and exploitative force does not leave him any other option but to acquiesce. It is significant to observe that Anand's proclamations regarding Bakha's anger, rebellion and despair are at odds with Bakha's actual behaviour. Here, strangely enough 'The Serpent and The Rope' and 'Untouchable' share the super-imposition of the novelists' predelictions on the characters which stick out of the action and consciousness structure of the novels. Since the novelist's interjections are not related to the structure of the novel, whatever remains of the novel has to be examined on its own terms. In the context of the novel, Bakha's return is crucial and not the rhetoric of the three alternatives which Forster claims gives the whole book "a coherence and shape which it otherwise

\textsuperscript{12}Untouchable, p. 172. All quotes from the novels would be referred to in the text itself.
Besides, Bakha's return is a vindication of the aesthetic of realism which Anand so vehemently denounces and yet cannot free himself from—the failure to act and glorify it as a vindication of sensibility. Bakha does not, because he cannot act in the most provocative and outrageous situations and that is because of "the cumulative weight of the centuries" as the novelist would have it.

Lost in daydreaming, having bought four annas worth Jalebis, Eakha unwittingly runs into a high caste brahmin who stands polluted and slaps him. Bakha is dazed. To add insult to the injury is a crowd of bystanders whose sympathies are with the outraged brahmin rather than with Bakha. It is extremely shattering to see Bakha stomach it and resume frantically shouting his presence while moving on the road. On the stairs of the temple, Bakha is again dazed when he hears the priest raising hue and cry over the pollution of the temple because his sister Sohni narrowly escapes the molestation bid of the priest. The crowd in the precinct of the temple disperses in utter insensitivity to the trespass on the honour of an untouchable girl. The trespass on the temple is more alarming. Even Bakha's father is assailed with fear.

\[\text{Forster, E.M.}, \text{"Afterword" to Untouchable}, \text{p. 178.}\]
and apprehension when Eakha tells him of it and he merely

\[ \text{\textit{say}, "No you didn't abuse or hit back did you?" (p. 87).} \]

The high-class brahmin slapping him and the priest

molesting his sister are climaxed after a series of
glimpses of caste-oppression; since they cannot draw water,
untouchable women are waiting at the well for somebody to
turn up (p. 24), the betel-leaf seller throwing water at
the coins (p. 46), the shopkeeper overcharging for pollution
(pp. 49-50) and Bakha's thwarted ambition of going to the
school (pp. 42-43) and the crowds keeping at a pollution
free distance (p. 42), and Bakha's preception: "But then
he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a
physical barrier, because one push from his hafty shoulders
would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like
bodies of the onlookers, but a moral one." (p. 42). What
is so moral about the barrier does not occur at all to
Bakha, and the novelist's ever-explicating voice is also
quiet about it.

That is about all; the caste-oppression and the
consciousness of inability to break through the 'magic
circle' of centuries that protects the priest and the
'moral barrier' which an untouchable cannot cross over.

and yet there was a futility written on his

\[ \text{\textit{face. He couldn't overstep the barriers
which the conventions of his superiors had
built up to protect their weakness against
him. He could not invade the magic circle
which protects a priest from attack by anybody,
especially by a low caste man." (p. 71).} \]
This sordid inhuman caste-oppression is sought to be sharply contrasted against the fine sensitivity of Bakha:

"His wealth of inner experience, however, was extraordinary. It was a kind of crude sense of the world in the round, such as the peasant has, or the Arab seaman who sails the seas in a small boat and casually determines his direction by the position of the sun, or like the beggar singer who recites an epic from door to door. But it wanted the force and vivacity of thought to transmute his vague sense into the superior, instinct of the self-conscious man."¹⁴ (pp. 103-104).

This focus on Bakha's sensitivity brings about a severance between the psychological and social reality. The social reality is reduced to a mere background and a reified and alienated consciousness becomes the theatre of action. Anand justifies this play on consciousness as a process of the growth of character which he calls 'self-realization'. But this 'self-realization' remains as little realized in Bakha as

¹⁴ Anand refers to Bakha's sensitivity through his frequent interjections in the novel, e.g.

"And though his job was dirty he remained comparatively clean... A bit superior to his job, one would have said, 'not the kind of man who ought to be doing this'. For he looked intelligent, even sensitive, with a sort of dignity that does not belong to the ordinary scavenger who is as a rule uncouth and unclean." (pp. 16-17).

"And it gave him a nobility, strangely in contrast with his filthy profession and of the sub-human status to which he was born." (p. 22).

Such contrasting of Bakha's superiority to his 'filthy profession' makes Anand's protestations about dignity of work suspect.
vehemently it is professed. What happens instead is an increasing awareness of alienation not precipitated by the caste-oppression but because "working in the barracks of a British regiment for some years on probation with a remote uncle, Bakha had been caught by the glamour of the 'whiteman's' life. The tommys had treated him as a human being and he had learnt to think of himself as superior to his fellow outcastes". (pp. 9-10). A visit to the Tommies' barracks is psychologically the most unsettling experience for Bakha. He feels so completely alienated from his fellow out-castes (p. 39) and their way of living that everything Indian appears to him ridiculous. Indian way of performing ablutions nauseates him (p. 19) and so desperately he guards himself from 'all base taint of Indianness' that he keeps shivering with cold at night in Gora's blankets rather than 'risk the formlessness of an Indian quilt'. (p. 12). He would have his lips scalded rather than blow his tea cool as his father and uncle would do it. (p. 35), snubs his childhood dream of wearing rings, for that would not correspond to his image of a Sahib.  

15 as a child, Bakha had often expressed a desire to wear rings on his fingers and liked to look at his mother adorned with silver ornaments. Now that he had been to the British barracks and known that the English didn't like jewellery, he was full of disgust for the florid, minutely studded designs of native ornaments." (pp. 60-61).
So thoroughly had his visit to the barracks uprooted him from his moorings that "He didn't like his home, his street, his town." (p. 86). He forgets even the shattering experience of being slapped by the polluted Brahmin at the mere sight of the English band:

"The sight of the brass instruments and uniforms in the band-shop took his mind back to the military band of the 38th Dogras which he saw almost everyday practising in the Cantonment, and he partly forgot the insult and the injury which he had suffered." (p. 60)

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Wrath of Colonel Hutchinson's wife is a greater disaster than his humiliation at the hands of a caste-Hindu. "To Bakha, therefore, the few words which she had uttered carried a dread a hundred times more terrible than the fear inspired by the whole tirade of abuse by the touched man." (p. 147). That Colonel Hutchinson, an Englishman showed concern for him acquires aspect of a dream. While Hutchinson is canvassing on Bakha the virtues of Christianity, he is playing in his mind with the prospect of getting his cast-off trousers:

"But he still hoped he might give him a pair of his cast-off trousers. And he followed him half unwillingly." (p. 144). "I would certainly have asked him for a pair of white trousers had the mem-sahib not been angry." (p. 146). This craving for the

16 "... the Sahib is generosity itself. And he wondered if he were dreaming." (p. 136).
western clothes is also expressed in his moments of highest aspiration, "... there appeared before him the vague form of Bakha clad in a superior military uniform, cleaning the commodes of the Sahibs in the British barracks." (p. 85).

It is the glamour of the whiteman's life and not the caste-tyranny, as Anand unconvincingly tries to project, that has penetrated into the core of Bakha's consciousness. It may be argued by Anand that Bakha seeks an escape from the caste-oppression and tries to find refuge in his fantasies of the white glamour. But then a retreat into escape does not turn out to be a journey of 'self-realisation'. Bakha's devout and persistent clinging to his fantasies makes the reader wonder whether to see the contours of his personality in his fantasies or in the novelists running commentary on him. It is not being denied that Bakha's experience of discrimination at the hands of caste-Hindus does make him tense and restless. On occasions this tension is depicted as smouldering into rage - but a rage which is rendered impotent by the spirit of resignation. Bakha's visits to the barracks has such unhinging effect on him that it is not an exaggeration to see it as becoming the nucleus of his whole existence. So much so that it cuts him above his fellow out-castes. Anand may point out that this has to do with Tommies treating Bakha like a human being (p. 10) but this recognition
is not of Bakha but that of Anand. Instead of highlighting the kind of humanity that is doled out in a slave-master relationship in the colonial context, Anand chooses to underscore it. And in so doing Anand reveals, like Bakha's, his own subconscious infatuation with an Englishman's way of looking at things.

Bakha holds his friends, Chotta, Ramcharan and others, in contempt for they do not share his obsession with white glamour. His father's sense of resignation irks him but he feels alienated from him also for different reasons altogether - his lack of sympathy for Bakha's anglo-mania. He cherishes the memory of his mother's overwhelming affection towards him, but would not admit a sense of grief because she too was not sympathetic to his white fantasies.

He didn't feel sad, however, to think that she was dead. He could not summon sorrow to the world he lived in, the world of his English clothes and 'Red-lamp cigarettes', because it seemed that she was not of that world, had no connection with it." (pp. 14-15).

17 It is Anand who contends "Tommies had treated him as a human being and he had learnt to think of himself as superior to his fellow-outcastes." (p. 10). But Bakha's perception goes contrary to Anand's contention, as for him "All the sahibs were... a bit nasty because they abused their servants a great deal." (p. 137) emphasis added.

The way Bakha is treated by Colonel Hutchinson's wife (p. 147) exposes the white-man's humanity towards the natives.
One could have taken it as a symbolic breaking of the umbilical chord in case Bakha was to reject the values and the style of living which his mother embodied. But what happens instead is that even the relationship with his mother stands undermined due to his obsession with the glamour. Bakha, in fact, inhabits two worlds, his dream world which is associated with the white-glamour and the sordid social surroundings. It is his dream world which unequivocally overrides the matter of fact social surroundings.

Bakha's relationship with his sister is also projected in terms of his subliminal fantasies. Even in terms of Anand's poetic realism, what is most grotesque about Bakha's character portrayal is that he is made aware of his lascivious proclivity towards his sister at a time when her honour is assaulted by the lecherous priest. It is not to suggest that the awareness of surreptitious sex is a non-eastern attribute of consciousness but the way in which the moral charge of the situation is defused makes the intentions of the novelist suspect and brings out the Freudian undertones in rationalization of the libidinal thrust. A play on Bakha's lascivious fantasies regarding his sister strikes an unconscious alliance between Bakha and the priest whereby both of them stand ritualistically humanized in terms of Freudian mystique of sex:
"The sight of her walking along with him, however, sent a wave of anguish into his soul. So frail she looked and so beautiful... He could not think of her being brutalized by anyone, even by a husband married to her according to the rites of religion... He loathed the ghost of her would be husband... He could see the stranger holding her full breasts and she responding with a modest acquiescence... He dared not think what he would be losing. He dared not think that, be himself - 'I am her brother', he said to himself, to rectify his thoughts which seemed to be going wrong. But there seemed no difference to his naked mind between his own feeling for her and what might be her husband's love... Facing his mind was the figure of the little priest." (pp. 70-71)

The dominant impression of "Untouchable" is not the caste-oppression that Bakha has to live through but the sense of alienation caused by the white spell on him which corrodes his moorings. The only part of Bakha that survives the corroding influence of his Anglo-mania is his faith in religion. "... he had refused to leave the Hindu fold, saying that the religion which was good enough for his forefathers was good enough for him" (p. 136). Despite his father's remark that "it is religion which prevents them from touching us." (p. 91). Anand's comment that even while recognizing this aspect of religion, Bakha's father "had never throughout his narrative renounced his deep sense of inferiority and the docile acceptance of laws of fate" (p. 91) holds true of Bakha as well. The only difference is that for Bakha this sense is fastened on the white man, too. So
pervasive is the religious influence on Bakha that his hands instinctively fold, and his blood courses along the rhythm of the prayer chant in the temple (p. 66) even though "the temple seemed to advance towards him like a monster, and to envelope him." (p. 65).

Bakha is so thoroughly alienated that only under the hypnotic spell of Gandhi's presence he could divert himself away from his white dreams, and that too for a short while.

"Bakha's attention was switched off the man who held the sceptre of British rule in the form of his formidable truncheon, and twined to the diminutive figure of the Mahatma.... In the stillness of the moment, Bakha forgot all the details of his experience during the day, the touched man, the priest, the woman in the alley, his father, Chotta, Ram Charan, the walk in the hills, the missionary and his wife." (pp. 156-59).

Yet this hypnotic spell fails to sustain him for long for Bakha's reactions towards Gandhi's speech so erratically fluctuate that while at one moment he thinks that to Gandhi he could make an absolute surrender, and do anything for him, at another moment he feels repelled by his mystical mumbo-jumbo. Gandhi's mixing up the cause of untouchables with the cow-slaughter, and his admonishing Harijans for their filthy habits and unclean living, make him restless. "He hoped the Mahatma would not go on speaking of things he could not understand." (p. 161). Consequently, Bakha is torn
between his enthusiasm for Gandhi and his white dreams. He cannot but respect Gandhi's work-ethic, yet he wonders whether Gandhi meant that he should go on scavenging.

"Yes, said Bakha, 'I shall go on doing what Gandhi says'. But shall I never be able to leave the latrines?" came the disturbing thought. But I can. Did not the poet say there is a machine which can do my work?" The prospect of never being able to wear the clothes that the sahibs wore, of never being able to become a Sahib was horrible. 'But it doesn't matter', he said to console himself, and pictured in his mind the English policeman, whom he had seen before the meeting, standing there, ignored by everybody." (p. 173).

Obviously, Bakha is only consoling himself, and the consolation is far too fragile to make up for his lost dreams. Even his decision to share with his father the spell on him of Gandhi is tentative (p. 173) for serious reservations have crept into his mind.

This is understandable in the context of Anand's description that Bakha was "torn between his enthusiasm for Gandhi, and the difficulties in his own awkward naive self." (p. 173). Bakha is returning home with the hope that "Perhaps I can find the poet on the way and ask him about his machine." (p. 174). Rejecting conversion to Christianity and Gandhian change of heart, Anand seems to pin his revolutionary idealism on the flush system which would make the sweepers "free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of
their status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society." (p. 171). In lending plausibility to this mechanical solution to the problem of untouchability, Anand seems to betray a typical Englishman's reaction to the problem which has its roots tangled in the socio-cultural milieu buttressed by a distorted understanding of the tradition. Anand's depiction of the caste-discrimination, its inhuman and irrational character, is offset by his exaggerated emphasis on its white fantasies and dreams.

"But in the early hours of one unreal white night he passed away - the tide of his life having reached back to the deeps". (Cooie, p. 317). Munoo's death in Cooie is the symbolic finale of native's fate in a colonial set-up. Munoo has been cut in the prime of his life under the shadow of 'one unreal white night' but how unreal is the white night, does not at all emerge either in the depiction of gruesome colonial situation or from its awareness in the natives or from the protestations of the novelist which are structurally incorporated in the exhortations of Sam, a trade-union leader in Bombay, and Mohan, a middle class radical idealist, living in the midst of coolies at Simla.
Sauda’s and Mohan’s revolutionary exhortations fall flat on their audience. Sauda’s attempt to organise a strike in the Mill is frustrated by the white establishment through an insidious engineering of communal riots. But Sauda’s failure has its roots also in his rhetoric which betrays his elitist proclivities. One of the coolies even reacts to Sauda’s exhortations to protest:

"But what can we do, Sahib? You are a clever man and like a sahib. So you can fight the other sahibs, but who are we to protest?" (p. 251).

Sauda’s admonishing tone smacks of superseriousness which betrays his unwitting contempt for the coolies. Sauda says:

"... stand up then, stand up for your rights, you roofless wretches, stand up for justice! Stand up, you frightened fools. Stand up and fight. Stand up and be the men that you were meant to be and don’t crawl back to the factories like the worms you are!" (p. 266)

Though Mohan does not show a sense of superiority like Sauda, he remains an impractical romantic revolutionary. Mohan tells Munoo, "you are superior to all these colonels and generals and Maharajahs. But still you go on driving their rickshaws". (p. 313) But this cuts no ice with Munoo and merely evokes an intrigued reaction from a coolie over Mohan’s belonging to a
good family and yet mixing up with them. Or when he
tells another coolie to go back and work on his land
and is told that it had already been mortgaged with the
landlord, he exhorts him to rebel: "Then come with me,
and we shall kill the landlord one day and get your land",
and the coolie says, "You can keep your wild notions
for others.... I want to live here, work, smoke the
hookah, play cards now and then, and never be too tired
to pick up another fare, if it comes my way." (p. 310).
Mohan seems to be attempting to bring about a revolution
through frivolous indulging in small gossip with the
coolies. 'Never be too tired to pick up another fare'
and 'let the tide of his life' ebb away like that of
Munoo is the nature of consciousness that emerges as
the ultimate impression from 'Coolie' despite the
novelist's claims regarding the revolutionary elan of
his fiction. Why is Munoo's death, Prabha's debacle
and return to the hills as a broken man, Rattan's
dismissal in the Sir George Cotton Mill, the failure
of the strike and the coolies volunteering themselves
as grist to the colonial mill, just a casualty and
does not precipitate a sense of crisis and much less
stir the human potential of resistance and revolt.
are the questions that deserve consideration.

The chronicle of Munoo's life in 'Coolie' is
a moving document of the unquestioning, perpetually
acquiescing, perpetually kicked about under-dog, in a colonial society. And this theme has been worked out in terms of human relationships inexorably constricted by the socio-historical conditions. Munoo, his uncle, Babasa Nathu Ram, Prachha, Lady and Todar Mal, Sauda, Mohan, Rattan, Hari and the mass of coolies at Sir George Cotton Mill are creatures of a specific socio-historical period. Their sufferings are not communicated in terms of the innergoings of their minds but dramatically objectified in conditions of their living. Anand depicts the suffering of the coolies not through the focus of the sensitivity of an individual (as in Untouchable) but as collective suffering of a mass of humanity.

In Coolie, Anand has struck upon various forms of exploitation which prevail in a transitional society moving from feudalism towards capitalism in a colonial situation. The complex structuring of human relationships in the first phase of the novel presents a caricature of the social climbers in the colonial society and their British masters. Later on Anand proceeds to portray the reality of human beings as treacherous creatures, sycophants, exploiters and agents of the colonial regime by making Munoo move to work in a pickle-factory at Daulatpur. In the third phase, Munoo lands up in Bombay where he finds himself a part of the herd
of anonymous mass of workers who are exploited and cheated by the colonial and capitalist masters. Munoo runs into Hari who has brought his family from the village. They both start looking for a place in Bombay to spend the night somewhere on the pavement. What a sigh of relief they heave on learning that a coolie had died last night and they could occupy that corner."

"... and at the edge of a foot-path in a corner a coolie lay huddled pillowing his head on his arm, shrinking into himself as if he were afraid to occupy too much space." (p. 179)

This makes Munoo recall what the elephant driver crawling under the buffer train had said "The bigger the city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam... You have to pay even for the breath that you breathe." (p. 177). This life in the city at the Cotton Mill and the world by night on the pavements of Bombay exposes the ruthless exploitative character of imperialist capitalist machinery in a colonial set up which has reduced people to utter degradation.

On exploitation and degradation, Anand strikes variations: working it out in the feudal conditions at Prabha's Pickle Factory at Daulatpur, in Babu Nathu Ram's house, in the serfdom of a bonded slave which characterises Munoo's relationship with his uncle. Whether the theme is extended, gains in depth and range
and diversity, depends on what Anand upto? Through this kind of juxtaposition of various forms of exploitation in a single narrative, Anand only achieves a diminution of the grotesqueness of each of them for their intensity and momentum gets defused. How Prabha is cheated by Ganpathi and under what inhuman working conditions from early morning to late night the coolies work, how Prabha is maltreated at the police station by his creditors and the Lady Todar Mall and her chand o son, portray the extent to which the natives can be debased in their dealings with one another. Having run away from Ram Nathu Ram's house hungry, Munoo mercilessly hit by his uncle cries,

"Oh, don't hit me please don't beat me uncle, I only want food."... "The pitiful cries did not seem to have any effect on Daya Ram, however. He had been hardened into cruelty by his love of money by the fear of poverty and by the sense of inferiority that his job as a peon in the bank gave him." (p. 61).

Coming from the mountains this very world had appeared to him "a land of romance where every thing was gilded and grand...." (p. 19). It is in the town that Munoo plunges for the first time in his life into the world of cash-nexus where money is the be all of human existence. Money is the villain of the piece and the sense of inferiority which Daya Ram's job in the Imperial Bank gave him. Anand plays upon the innocence of Munoo perhaps
to dramatically heighten the effect of his pitiable plight. But the sting of exploitation is rubbed off when anand starts metaphysicalising the villainy of poverty and the brutality and dehumanisation of the natives' character.

"Money is everything!, his uncle had said on the day of his journey to town. 'Money is, indeed, everything', Munoo thought. And his mind dwelt for the first time on the difference between himself, the poor boy, and his masters, the rich people, between all the poor people in the village and Jay Singh's father, the landlord... whether there were more rich or more poor people there seemed to be only two kinds of people in the world... The babus are like the Sahib logs and all servants look alike. There must be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor." (p. 69).

This metaphysicalisation of poverty and exploitation is not only the response of naive Munoo but also of the politically enlightened Sauda. He says:

"There are only two kinds of people in the world; the rich and the poor and between the two there is no connection." (p. 265).

This kind of metaphysicalising shifts the focus from the villainy of an exploitative system to the villainy of human nature. Even this kind of debunking of human nature could sharpen the effect if the role of the system in villainising human nature were not obscured. And then the dice against the idealists is so heavily loaded that all of them - Rattan, Mohan,
Prabha come inevitably to a sorry pass. This inevitability, besides being a measure of realistic appraisal of the situation, could generate the consciousness of revulsion and resistance and here the lack of clarity of the novelists’ vision becomes glaring.

Metaphysicalisation of money and the sense of inferiority which the natives suffer from in having to live under the shadow of the master-culture is explored from the comic as well as the pathetic aspects of dehumanization. The fiasco over Mr. England’s visit to Babu Nathu Ram’s house over the invitation to tea exploits the comic potential inherent in a slave-master relationship. The discomfiture and shame of Babu and Nathu Ram, even Munoo’s defecating at their door step, is occasioned by loss of their social prestige in the eyes of Sahibs. Mr. England is representative of the master culture and how he is held in obsequious adulation by Nathu Ram and his children percolates down to the psyche of Munoo in his relationship with others.

"The other coolies seemed apathetic, and he was rather irritated by their lack of interest in this exalting atmosphere of European grandeur. He even criticised them as uncouth rustics in his mind and, recalling that he could read and write and could have become a babu or a sahib if he had not been an orphan, felt superior." (p. 302).

Like Babu Munoo also is a victim of the white-glamour which makes him feel as if he belonged to a superior world.
Being in the same room with a Sahib at Shamnagar, like Bakha's visit to the Tommies barracks, is the most crucial turning point in the life of Munoo.

"He felt he belonged to a superior world because he had enjoyed the privilege of walking through a superior world. 'I have read up to the fifth class,' he said to himself, to confirm his claim to superiority, 'and I have served in a Babu's house where a sahib once paid a visit.'" (p. 161).

Gandhiji would like his readers to believe that he is offering a close-up of the real life of the people, but closer he seems to be the remoter he remains for he does not care to provide a focus on the working of the exploitative structures and power relationships which subjugate the psyche of the subjects he is portraying.

Though both Bakha and Munoo are hung on to their white fantasies and uprooted from the very soil of their culture and tradition their faith in God and the principle of Karma continues to hang over a margin of their consciousness:

"... everything was the blessing of God... that all suffering was the result of having committed evil deeds... Munoo felt a superstitions awe for Ratan's fate; a sense of doom crept into his soul as he thought of him." (pp. 247-248).

It is not only Munoo who invokes the Almighty in moments of despair, but other coolies also refer to the names of God and their past Karma to reconcile themselves
with their wretched lot. Even the barbarity of Chimta Sahib instills the fear of God in the gullible coolies:

"a flourish of the hand, a curse or oath or abuse was the greeting he offered in exchange. This conduct was well suited to the preservation of peace in the mill, as even the sight of his big, beefy body cowed the coolies and put the fear of God into them, and they were in the right frame of mind to perform their duties." (p. 248).

Identification of fear of God with fear of the white master has far reaching implications. The natives are robbed of their self-identity and acquire a borrowed self-image, their image in the eyes of the master. Munoo frequently refers to his dirty body and his dirty clothes. Munoo is himself intrigued at his audacity in ordering a soda water bottle in a restaurant and the sense of discomfiture he is ascribed with over his dirty clothes.

"He felt he would like to drink a bottle now. But the clothes of the people who sat in the shop, as he saw them from the wide open door, were clean. They looked to be rich babus or merchants and he felt he was only a dirty coolie." (pp. 180-61).

Feeling of inferiority makes him so nervous that he gulps down the soda water as fast as he can. This makes him an untouchable in the eyes of the shopkeeper. Munoo tries to overcome his feeling of inferiority by reminding himself that he is a Khashatriya Hindu, a Rajpoot:
"I should have fought hard if he had dared
to turn me out or abused me, 'he said to
himself. 'I let him put me in my place as
a coolie but I was paying for the soda water
and I am not an Untouchable." (p. 182).

'I let him put me in my place' - is how the
native conspires with the master against his self respect
and draws gratification in self laceration. But
strangely enough there is hardly any awareness of even
discomfiture much less a sense of anguish towards this
erosion of identity. In an altercation with the policeman, Munoo
tells him so complacently. "It must have been some
one else/sarkar/ some one like me. All we coolies look
alike" (p. 159). This is certainly not Munoo's self
perception. Anand may be suggesting the extent and
measure of depravity and self defacement forced on the
natives by the colonial master. But what is Anand's
stance towards this self defacement? Anand does
not relate it to the inhuman working of the colonial
system. His stress, however, is on the self dehumanization
of the natives and how, in their relationship with each
other, they supersede, in fact, the cruelty inflicted on
them by the colonial system. No revulsion against
exploitation and oppression is built up, for the brutalization
and degradation of human nature under the duress of poverty
dissipates instead of heightening the righteous indignation
against exploitation.
Despite Anand's penchant for concentrated intense dramatic effect, no sense of trauma or crisis is built up. It is diffused, instead, in his platitudes on poverty and human nature. These attempts to portray Indian society under the yoke of colonialism betray his perceptions as the projection of the perspective of the master on the slave and Anand's complicity with it. It also explains why the sense of solidarity which the coolies discover in their wretchedness does not crystallize into a consciousness of combat resistance and struggle but degenerates into a strategy of escape and solace. It is ironical that having moved from aloofness of individual sensibility into the vortex of community and solidarity, in 'Coolie' Anand is not able to exploit its potential for struggle. It brings out the ambivalence in Anand's ideological make up: the divided loyalty of the native towards himself and the master. Since he has so much internalized the image of the master about him and his situation and is not even remotely guilty or sorry for this.

The only thing that relieved these fits of depression was the silent comradeship which existed between him and the other coolies when Ganpat was away they would all fall to singing a hill tune as they raked the fire, watched the essences brew in the cauldrons, drew pair of water from the well, or peeled the print in the caverns.... Munoo then regained the wild freedom of his childhood and wooed a quicker tempo....
It was these hours spent in companionship, in the actual act of living/sentient contact with other coolies that seem to him the happiest. He felt he was learning to be a grown up man. He believed he would soon be a full mana" (p. 239).

It is to be noted that the sense of comradeship is found not in their struggle against the conditions which oppress them but in a nostalgic indulgence in the primitive forms of gregariousness. And isn’t the novelist’s observation: ‘a whipped dog hides in a corner, a whipped human seeks escape’ (p. 73) his master’s voice, a borrowing from the colonial master of the image of a native.

PRIVATE LIFE OF AN INDIAN PRINCE

Bakha’s suffering in Untouchable is outgrowth of an alienated sensibility and Munoo’s death in the prime of his life characterises the fate of natives in a colonial set-up. But neither in Untouchable nor in Coolie, Anand is able to undercut the hegemony of the exploitative and the oppressive forces. In Private Life of an Indian Prince, Anand hits upon a metaphor for the utter degeneration and decay of the feudal system. The obsolete and unregenerate character of tradition is symbolised in the person of Maharaja Ashok Kumar, Vicky as he is called in the novel, in his erratic, profligate
living which ultimately lands him into a lunatic asylum. In crumbling of the sanity of Indian prince, Anand insinuates the inevitable sweep and thrust of Indian history. Though Anand does attempt to situate his characters in history, the relationship between individuals and history, in his earlier novels, remains arbitrary and passive. The arbitrariness and passivity of the relationship are not transcended even in Private Life of An Indian Prince.

The sight of an English woman talking to herself while looking idiotically at the dresses in a window of Burlington Arcade, makes Dr. Hari Shankar, physician narrator of the novel remark that "neurosis seemed so widespread a phenomenon in our age that it must have a great deal more to do with the corrupt social system in which we are living than the healers accepted." (p. 286).

Anand has himself claimed that "the neutral character of Dr. Shankar was invented to become Shiva's third eye and to burn out the cross, confusion and the chaos of emotions in order to achieve a certain balance.... If there is any alliance between myself and a character it is with the narrator."


Even if Anand had not made the above claim about Dr. Hari Shankar, it would not have been unjustified to regard Dr. Hari Shankar as the exponent of the novelist's perspective on the problem of commitment in the process of history in the making as dealt in the novel.
The crisis of individual is seen as a reflection of the crisis in history. Vicky's malady is that he is clinging to a dead past which cannot hold itself and is doomed to extinction. About Vicky, Dr. Hari Shankar says:

"I often reflected on the nature of the more dramatic illness of Victor, because his soul was even more sick than mine and because I could see how, like a marionette, his life had been thrust out of the old grooves and pulled by social and human forces, and pushed, not only into minor clashes with the various layers of the feudal and modern life, but confronted with a final challenge by his peoples. In essence, I suppose, the name of the malady, which affects individuals like Victor in the transition that we see before us today, is rootlessness." (p. 262).

Failure to recognise the rise of the people against the prerogatives of the privileged enshrined in the Hindu Shastra or any other obscurantist scripture, in fact, is the real malady and source of Vicky's rootlessness. Vicky is crushed between two hereditities and the contradictions that he fails to resolve between his feudal aristocratic hang up and the forces that were being unleashed by a new vision of society:

"All the old values and the new demons have been increasingly at war with each other in his soul. And there was no knowing where they would take him, since the will through which alone such powers could be harnessed had been sedulously crushed by the angrezi Sarkar and his own parents a long time ago. He had few resources left after these two hereditities had done their work." (p. 43).
This rootlessness made Vicky a 'ghost of himself', a 'mere apparition of the feudal monarch' (p. 264).

Though he makes desparate attempts to win the confidence of his subjects by pretending to act, in public life, in accordance with the injunctions laid down in the Hindu shastras for a king, he fails to regain contact with his people. Consequently, as Dr. Hari Shankar points out:

"he could not... extend the orbit of his consciousness to draw into himself the urges of the life-force, which still uprushed and coursed through their unquenchable blood stream, he was like a fish out of water." (p. 265).

The fish out of water is not aware of it. The mantle of awareness falls on Dr. Hari Shankar, who apart from diagnosing Victor's malady is himself afflicted with it, the diagnosis only compounding the malady in his case. The clash of the two heredities leads to

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19 "I came to know a few things about myself which I had hitherto only vaguely glimmered: that I was weak, vain and timid, that I did not have the courage of my convictions and could not act in a crisis with the single-minded zeal of a good moral person." (p. 141)

Dr. Shankar's fits of self-chastisment may appear to be 'most damning' but the vicarious sense of power always gets better of his sense of guilt. Neither the 'dishevelled young man's' call to Dr. Hari Shankar to leave the Maharaja and join the struggle (p. 148) nor the letter from the peasant leader detenu in Shampur Jail (pp. 157-160) make him decide to "walk upright among the men who were straightening their backs". (p. 350).
a disjunction between sensibility and history. Sensibility alienated from history is Vicky's terrain of poetry.

With regard to the rising of the people, Vicky thinks:

"... as for the Praja mandal crowd, I can buy them off. At any rate, they agree with me, because if they believe in Gandhiji, they believe in Ram raj. I too want a state in which the Raja and Praja can live as father and sons. I want to renew in the people the belief that I have their interests at heart... I am not like the other rulers who despise their people." (p. 111)

The invocations of Gandhi JI's Ram Raj and the paternal humanism along with citations from Manu cannot disguise Vicky's contempt for democracy. Vicky's problem lies in his incapacity to face the changing socio-political reality. Neither Vicky's mystical mumbo-jumbo nor his mechiavellianism can stem the tide of history. He cannot stand the clash between the poetry and prose of his life and ultimately ends up in the lunatic asylum.

20 "'People like you and the Praja Mandalis keep shouting, 'Democracy, democracy'. What is democracy? Where is it practised?' His Highness came to the attack, his face reddening. 'To attain equality with the ignorant rabble, to reduce everyone to uniformity with the stupid herd! Wah, what barking is this?'" (p. 113).
Vicky's ending up in the lunatic asylum is counterpointed in Dr. Hari Shankar crisis of conscience. The disjunction between sensibility and history is highlighted even in the predicament of Dr. Hari Shankar who is seized with an awareness of the historical process and the inevitable crumbling of the citadel of authority and privilege in the wake of upsurge of the masses, but is unable to break through the cocoon of his false consciousness. He thrives on a sense of guilt, remorse and inability to act. He decides ultimately to join the struggle of the masses by opening a dispensary in the forest of Shampur, but only when the Prince has landed himself in the lunatic asylum and he is not left with any alternative. He switches over his sympathy and affiliations from Vicky to the people of Shampur.

21 "I was myself corrupt, wanting power and privilege and a leisured life. I had refused to break the boundaries of a personal life and, in spite of all my kicking against the pricks, I had ignored the fact that I was only one small part of the great social fabric which was in decay." (p. 348).

22 "I began vaguely to feel that I must do something to help these people which might make me a little more useful than I had been to them while I was in the service of Maharaja. Only in healing the poor could I live an intrinsic life, which had been dead in me while I had been living only for the gratification of my five senses. Something for myself but also something for other people, as they said." (pp. 348-49).

Dr. Hari Shankar's principle of "something for myself but also something for other people" betrays his idealism with stakes i.e. expedient idealism.
It is rather an act of expediency - perhaps an attempt on his part to ward off the prospect of joining Vicky in the lunatic asylum.

Dr. Hari Shankar's crisis of conscience has to do with his lost sense of identity and his complicity with the puteriscent, decadent social order. He apparently tries to resolve it by shedding the trappings of his guilt-ridden existence by opening the dispensary. How far the course of history is going to be influenced by such a gesture on the part of Dr. Hari Shankar is dubious, for his gesture is primarily oriented towards washing his guilt rather than mobilise or accelerate the cause of struggle against the exploitative forces. Through Dr. Hari Shankar's gesture, Anand treats the 'struggle' as a mere abstraction rather than concrete praxis.

Against the tide of history, Anand counterposes the libidinal fantasies of private living. The emergence of people, the dawn of new era of man from the dark pre-history/remains an invocation, a rhetorical possibility. What engages Anand's creativity is the private life of the prince. The focus shifts from the tumultuous impersonal history to the reckless bizarre incestuous exploits of Vicky. The novel begins on a note of scandal caused by Vicky's disappearing with Hunity Russell.
to the ravens at Simla and ends up on his exotic liaison with June Wither, a shop assistant of a store in London, as a prelude to his final breakdown and landing up in the lunatic asylum.

Vicky's affair with Ganga Dasi is a symbolic counterpointing of his relationship with a new upsurge of history. Neither can he recognize the emergence of people from the dark era of exploitation and tyranny nor can he appreciate the neurotic character of his relationship with Ganga Dasi. The correspondence and parallelism which Anand has built between loosening of Vicky's hold on the historical situation and his mistress betrays his predilection for the personal as against the historical. Dr. Hari Shankar, the narrator remarks:

"There is no such thing as good and evil in the ordinary moral sense of those words. There is only knowledge and ignorance. All our lives are lived on the quicksands of uncertainty and doubt and inconstancy. And we have a large heritage of darkness in the subterranean caves of our natures. So to work up moral indignation, in the face of what is called evil, is only to disguise envy and hate in the cloak of virtue." (p. 296).

The centre of Vicky's existence is his vacillating relationship with Ganga Dasi which is reflected in the whole range of his behaviour with his subjects, with
In fact, the fragile, insecure/erotic domination of Vicky over his mistress becomes the central metaphor of experience. Erotic domination is a key to Victor's relationship with history as well as with his mistress. After Victor is forced to sign an instrument of accession at the behest of Government of India and realizes that he is king no more, he thinks that being disinherited, he would get closer to Ganga Lasi. 

Int Victor's relationship with Ganga Lasi also meets the same fate. She escapes his grip and gives him a slip at the end of every union.

Though the novel closes on a gesture of joining struggle of the masses on the part of the narrator, it remains a close-up into the erotic extravaganza of an Indian prince. One wonders what kind of revolutionary humanism would be served by "the spicy bits of good

23 "...his strategy in tackling the Diwan, the Commander-in-Chief, the rebellious sardars, the Praja Mandal leaders, and almost everyone else, was based on the insecure foundations of his relationship with Ganga Lasi, and that, deep within, he knew he was doomed." (p. 107).

24 "Now I shall be more or less in the same position as Gangi, one of the disinherited! Maybe, this will bring us closer together." (p. 242).
humoured conversation about the loves of princes and princesses" (pp. 247-48) as claimed by the narrator of the novel.

Even though, Anand is up against all forms of tyranny and oppression, he does not betray any sense of discomfiture over the cultural domination of the natives by the colonial master. Some critics have made much of Anand's hatred of imperialism, but somehow ignore a core of ambivalence in Anand's anti-imperialistic stance. Despite his vehement denunciation of imperialism, there is a fanatic adulation of the messianic role of imperialism in his novels, and no attempt to fight a battle against it at the level of consciousness. It is, of course, a fact of history that the values of secularism, democracy, socialism and also the scientific outlook, as they are talked about in the third world countries, percolated down to us, through the colonial experience; but ironically enough these values have only hardened the crust of the master-culture and stultified the native psyche. What is merely contingent, and incidental fact of history is taken as an act of benediction. Anand panders both to the guilt as well as the re-deemer
complex of the colonial conscience. This drives him into a precarious bit of tight rope walking which betrays his liberal bourgeois orientation, which he cannot shun off. He, in fact, is himself aware of his elitism - "To mine was secondary humiliation. The humiliation I have seen in other people suffering, I do not know to what extent, envy of the rich on my part was disguising itself as hunger for social justice." What Anand is not aware of, however, is the basic source of his secondary humiliation and the envy of the rich — the impact on his revolutionary humanism of his bloomed heritage and grounding in liberal bourgeois ideology compounded by the depraved subservience of native psyche in a colonial set-up. In fact, the divided loyalty

25 It is not out of place to mention here that the trade union run by Indians in 'Coolie' is deplored and the trade union run by Mr. Jackson, an Englishman is lauded. The colonial masters, Anand seems to think has a lesson even in trade unionism to learn to the natives. It is confirmed by the following observation of Edward Burra as well:

"Mr. Anand at least leaves little no doubt that the Indians cannot help themselves. They appear here as thoughtless and as cruel to one another as birds that turn on a wounded member of the flock and destroy it."


26 Anand, Mulk Raj, Apology For Heroism, pp. 116-17.
between his revolutionary humanism and the reflexive subservience to the master culture is the keynote of his fiction. One can discern here a hiatus between his non-fictional writing and his fiction, where the revolutionary rhetoric is undercut by the poignant poetic delineation of the white dreams and fantasies of his characters.

Cowasjee and many other critics make much of Anand's characters' inability to revolt against their social milieu. In *Untouchable*, Cowasjee, in fact, discovers Anand's strength as a novelist in

"... almost physical inability to revolt, his submission, habitual subservience to superiors who insult him, he is one with the vast majority of the outcastes. After heredity and two thousand years of oppression have done their work on him, there are few resources left in him." 27


William Walsh also has noted, "A certain passivity on the part of the characters, apt no doubt when they are the victims of circumstances, which they so frequently are, but out of place in those parts of his work where the individual should be more energetically active in the working out of his nature." (William Walsh, *Commonwealth Literature*, p. 8.)
Anand seems to regard the passivity of his characters as the vindication of their humanity in the circumstances which are not of their choosing and over which they have no control. Perhaps, Anand has a point but one cannot give him an unqualified assent; for the metaphor of 'passivity' would aptly describe their humanity only if they would manipulate it for transcending their placing in society. The propensity to mere passivity is a threat to the cause of freedom which Anand espouses in his writings.

Anand turns out to be the champion of all those who do not wish to act, of all the 'hangers on' in the welter of change, be they victims of feudalism, capitalism or colonialism, who have lost or never had any status in the changing society. In seeking the so-called human truth, through poetic realism, he makes his characters retreat from the confrontation of reality into regressive phantasies. It would not be far fetched to find in Anand an apostle of regressive longings and reluctant revolt.

The inability to revolt which has been acclaimed both as a strength and failure of the novelist, is failure of his art at the core of which lies a moral ambiguity. Because of the native's love-hatred complex towards the master-culture. Otherwise, one cannot
explain why the white fantasies and dreams are portrayed more convincingly than the possibility of resistance and combat in the consciousness of his characters. In bleak despair of colonial situation, craving to assimilate the master-culture is a more plausible reaction than invoking the will to resist and combat. Which is more responsible, the circumstantial predicament of his characters or their moral subversiveness reinforced by the ideological predilections of the novelist? The most crucial experience for Bakha in Untouchable is his visit to the Tommie's barracks where he caught a glimpse of the white glamour and since then has never been the same in his relationship with the other fellow outcastes, his father, his mother, his sister and even himself. The only other important event in his life is listening to Gandhi's speech where, under whose impact he felt emboldened enough not to care even for a policeman in

28 "anand evidently does not realize that even the theme of poverty and hunger can be so worked on as to inspire courage, wonderment, industry and to achieve a purification of head and heart. The extravagantly contentions and incantatory quality of anand's writing has a lacerating effect on the reader - as if it were a fearful monument of animosity and acrimony."

British dress but the prospect of not being able to become a Sahib is more shattering than the experience of his humiliation and molestation of his sister. For Munno (Coolie) the most crucial event has been the visit of Mr. England's in Babu Nathu Ram's house whereas a servant he had his first glimpse of a white sahib, and the relationship with his uncle, with whom the only tie that binds him is that he is a symbol of Angrezi Sarkar. In Private Life of an Indian Prince the Englishmen remain an object of fear, adulation and envy because of his remoteness and hateur of authority. In Private Life of an Indian Prince, Dr. Shankar plays upon the deformity and perversion of human relationship in a colonial context, the sight of an Englishman scares natives out of their wits for the Englishman remains for the natives an unknown quantity in his assiduous cultivated arrogance and remoteness. There is a strange irony in Vicky's obsequious fawning on the European characters, despite his supercilious haughty and regal pretensions.

At the core of Anand's novels, there is a dissonance between his professed revolutionary humanism and his creative predilections spurred by unconscious subservience to the master-culture. This contradiction could have conferred on his exploring of the mysterious complexity of a native psyche a richness and depth.
But his novels are a massive evidence of an opportunity missed because of lack of awareness on the part of the novelist of this ambivalence and daring to creatively face it.

Besides the dissonance between the subliminal and attitudinal level of awareness, the kind of persona that emerges from Anand's fiction is the protege of the Western tradition. Even though Anand claims that his growth as a novelist has been a "journey away from Bloomsbury literary consciousness to the non-literary worlds, whose denizens have always been considered 'vulgar' and unfit for the respectable worlds," yet his Bakhsh and Munnos -- the underdogs whose cause he professes to champion -- are conceived in terms of Bloomsbury literary consciousness. Meenakshi Mookerjee contends that Anand's protagonists belong neither to the intellectual tradition of twentieth century European literature nor to the Indian socio-cultural context:

"Anand's characters are lonely misfits - not lonely in the tradition of the modern European protagonist of fiction whose loneliness is a form of intellectual alienation, but lonely because they do not arise out of the soil they inhabit, because Anand has stuffed them with his own beliefs. They lack the necessary

Anand's characters suffer from an inability to act. They are far too passive and acquiescent. Either they do not confront their situation or they confront at the level of sensibility dissociated from the contingent socio-historical conditions. Eshu does not act even in the most provocative and outrageous situations and the 'enmeshed lion' in him is allowed far too easy a walk over by the slave in him. And 'the enmeshed lion' is made to seek consolation in the contemplation of nature:

"Necessity had forced him to the contemplation of the charms of nature in search of fresh one. Heredity had furrowed no deep groves in his soul where flowers could grow or grass abound." (p. 1033)."

Munno becomes aware of 'the unconscious life force' in him only through his sexual stirrings.

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30Mukerjee, Meenakshi, The Twice-born Fiction, p. 76.

31"The defect which constricts his real creative capacity is the habit of allowing his moral and social purposes to become separate from the particular actuality of the fiction, so that they frequently are but out of place in those parts of his work where the individual should be more energetically active in the working out of his own nature."

or seeking solace in fraternizing with other coolies in their wretchedness. In *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Anand builds a full-fledged mystique around sexual aberrations of the prince in his frantic bid to be 'human' rather than face up to his situation. Anand's protagonists seek to define themselves in terms of their sensibility or that of the author rather through their action. This implies a severance between sensibility and situation on the one hand and between sensibility and action on the other. Since Anand does not explore literary potential of action, his protagonists work out their nature in terms of their fantasies rather than action. Anand indulges in feeble psychologism by merely depicting their predicament in terms of sentimentalizing and wishful thinking.\[^32\]

\[^32\] Baj Narsimhan has also made this point regarding Anand's portrayal of Bakha in *Untouchable*:

"The whole psychology of Bakha delineated in the work is a piece of wishful thinking. To write about the oppression inflicted on Bakha is one thing; to write about Bakha's feeling of being oppressed quite another."


Even Narsimhan ignores that writing about Bakha's rebellion against his oppression would still be another different kind of writing for Bakha's feeling being oppressed is not a sufficient condition for his revolt - he may feel oppressed and yet acquiesce.
The novel as 'soul drama in historical time' turns out to be a shadow play. Since the individual in Anand's view is not a creature of 'Karma' but an ever-evolving historical reality, one wonders how eschewing action these creatures evolve and attain 'self-realization' as anand claims.

A protagonist in Anand's novels remarks, "one can take the vitality of impulse from the past, one cannot take the dead routine of an old culture. The guardians of tradition often kill the new by repeating the old old mantras." and in novel after novel, Anand chooses to depict the sacred as a 'dead routine', a 'dead myth', as a mere sanction of exploitation and tyranny, as an air of resignation - as a fixity in cultural space. It is rather a pre-emptory dismissal...

33"The individual in Anand's view is in the process of evolution and the purpose of the novelist is to depict such an evolution. Thus if it is not a "pre-determined karmic process, it is "a kind of evolutionary dialectic of conflicts" that shapes character."


34Dr. Hari Shankar in Private Life of An Indian Prince, p. 343.
and a failure to distinguish between what is still living and dead in Indian tradition. Axioms of the sacred which people invariably invoke to combat despair and sustain hope cannot be so summarily dismissed. Anand evades or bypasses the challenge of 'the crushing weight' of what he alleges is a 'dead myth'. How the dead myth operates, emasculates and blinds vital energy of a culture is not even implicitly brought out but uncritically taken for granted. Even the operation sabotage of the 'sacred' could have been worked out in the challenge and response dynamics in the cross-cultural colonial context. Anand has not taken into account that the relationship between psyche of the people and their social conditions in the Indian context is rather subtle, complex and binding because of the inroads which the sacred has made into the very construction and perception of social reality.

The ambivalence between the attitudinal and the subliminal levels of awareness also manifests unmistakably in the image of man, history and society which emerges from his novels. The impact of study of western imperialism and evolution of social structures in the west is so pronounced that he seeks mechanically to apply those on the Indian social conditions in utter disregard of its culture psyche. There is, however,
an implicit recognition of the sacred in our perception of the new socio-political economic realities; of how it acts like a psychological block, a barrier that his protagonist cannot cross over. And for this inability to cross over, the novelist's ideological make-up is as responsible as the socio-cultural milieu. Anand seems to presume that cultural environment is like physical environment about which nothing can be done except indulging in rhetorical ravings. Even the perception of crisis of culture bears the unmistakable impact of the western orientation. Indian culture is undergoing no less a crisis and the pressures of new historical forces have caused heavy strains in the citadel of the Sacred. And who else but a novelist with a sense of history as a dynamic reality could identify these cracks and fissures.