Mulk Raj Anand (born 1905) is said to be one of the foremost Indian writers of fiction in English. With R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, Anand forms the 'Triveni' (the triple stream) of Indo-Anglian fiction, and contributes to its major achievements. If Narayan is a novelist of the middle class, Anand may be described as novelist of the underdog. The major purpose of his art is to present social and political problems as a proletarian humanist: "A scrutinous study of Anand's fictional as well as non-fictional works reveals that what vitalises them is the strong undercurrent of a broad-based philosophy of humanism". In his graphically realistic novels, Anand tries to combine "the passion for social justice", with "the poetry of living", in tune with his faith in man: "What is needed is the big, the understanding, the generous, the wise heart, informed by passion and schooled by a knowledge born of love". With his stress on comprehensive recording of social reality and the pressure, power, and control of society on the individual as the animal rationale, Anand has given a

---


new dimension of naturalistic orientation to the Indian novel in English. His interest in the amelioration of the lot of the under-privileged determines the quality of his works, and lends it a distinct humanistic colouring although, as William Walsh points out, Anand's "habit of allowing his moral and social purposes to become separate from the particular actuality of fiction", often constricts his real creative capacity.5

Anand, being a realistic projector of the national image against the contemporary background, could not remain impervious to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, although the creative expectations of Anand did not adequately fit in the moral contents of Gandhian politics. Anand follows the rational attitude, attacks the unscientific values of past, and launches a crusade for social and economic justice to the have-nots; whereas Gandhi speaks of his abiding faith in God and the Divine in man, and seeks to spiritualize politics through his insistence on Satya, Ahimsa and Satyagraha. Grounded on a scientific approach to contemporary social values, Anand is utterly devoid of any sentimental attachment to the past, or any nostalgic longing for the effete traditions. His ultimate reality is society and not the individual who is but a typical product of his particular environment.

Gandhi who preferred to style himself as a 'practical idealist', laid stress on the moral elevation of the individual and conversion of heart as the pre-requisite for all social...

---

transformations. He could never break with the traditional values. His ideal society could, at best, be Ram Rajya. He counselled restraint in thought, word and deed and sought to reform the individual who, in the ultimate analysis, would reform the society through conscious avoidance of violence. Gandhi being "a sort of indissoluble composite of spiritual and political leadership" or "the strange amalgam of a saint and a politician", could not do without religion, morality and soul-force. Anand advocates, however, industrial, technical and scientific progress, whereas the Mahatma speaks of self-sufficient village economy. There was, therefore, remote possibility for Anand to assimilate the positive and direct impact of the Mahatma.

The National Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi released the energies of men and women slumbering for centuries and roused their conscience against degrading social practices and abject submission to imperialism: "It is inconceivable how anyone could have put pen to paper in the twenties and thirties without reflecting the sense of the age, the spirit of the times that so largely shaped his sensibility".7

Anand's critical response to what Gandhi often said and did was a material proof and a tacit recognition of the fact that Anand could not altogether remain unmindful of the

---


phenomenon that Gandhi was. In the absence of a more appropriate language, I may call it the indirect or formative influence. His novels are replete with references to Gandhi and all that the Mahatma stood for.

There is yet another justification of deeper understanding between these two contemporaries. If Anand has a claim to eminence as a creative writer who has offered the artistic adumbration of the individual's experiences in a hostile social set up, Gandhi was verily an "artist in living", who inspired creativity on a scale surpassed by none. Gandhi stood for the lowest and the lost, and the loin cloth on his bare body was an indivisible part of his inner being. By establishing his complete identification with the common man, Gandhi became a replica of the masses and the downtrodden of India. The literature of the common man was the major offshoot of his immediate impact on Indian writing. Anand, likewise, heralded a new era of fictional writing in India by concentrating on the very common folk of India, untouchables and coolies, the lost and the bareft.

William Walsh traces Anand's approach to the novel back to a distinctly European set of influences operating on him, particularly French and Russian influences: "But he (Anand) has a deep feeling for the deprived, a grasp of the social structure of his society, and an extraordinary fluency of

9 C.S. Balarama Gupta, "Coolie - A Prose Epic of Modern India", *Journal of the Karnatak University*, 12 (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1968), 92.
communication. This fluency of communication has something Russian in it. These influences apart, Anand, like other artists of his age, is a part of the intellectual ferment in post-1918 India, though he upholds a strictly humanistic and materialistic interpretation of life. But, as Haydn Moore Williams suggests, he "belongs essentially to the hectic nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties when Gandhi was leading the non-violent campaign against the Raj and threat of social revolution hung ominously in the air."  

Anand has sought to capture the reality of Gandhi in some of his fictional works i.e. Untouchable (1935); Coolie (1936); Two Leaves and a Bud (1937); and The Sword and the Sickle (1942). Untouchable, Anand's "sharpest, best organised novel", seems to have been written under Gandhi's influence. Anand must have owed his choice of the theme to Gandhi whose crusade for the uplift of the poorest, the lowliest and the most exploited sections of Indian community might have provided inspiration to Anand the artist. The drama of Bakha's psychological tragedy in Untouchable, as determined by his own social dictates, is partly based on Anand's early experiences of his childhood and boyhood days as recorded in his 2000-page Confessions and partly to

12 Contemporary Novelists, p. 49
13 Anand states that he happened to meet a pretty young girl Irene in England. With a view to introducing himself to her, Anand wrote Confessions about him and his family. This unpublished work ran into 2000 pages.

Gandhi and his *Young India*. Anand stayed at Gandhi's Ashram in the early thirties and the work of cleaning latrines that he did there enriched his perception. He simplified his life a good deal, started wearing homespuns and began to dream of "writing only about the poorest of the poor human beings, whom I had known". Anand was inspired to brood on the castaways as "Gandhi also exhorted devotion to the poor". Although Gandhi was amused by Anand's "intellectualisation of all problems", Anand concluded that the "spiritual experience of the Gandhi Ashram had to be communicated in a novel".

While in Gandhi's Ashram, Anand was called upon by Gandhi to write a treatise on the curse of untouchability. Upholding his integrity as an artist, Anand declined to write the treatise. Narasimhaiah rightly feels that "the book (untouchable) will remain a human document long after untouchability as a social evil ceasing for a reformer's treatise has ceased to be a problem of the Hindu society", but the manuscript of *Untouchable* underwent redrafting. Anand discovered that he "could make the very act of cleaning latrines by 'Bakha' seem no better and no worse than any other work".

---

14 "... I was going through some copies of Mahatma Gandhi's magazine, *Young India*. The genuineness of his love for the outcastes moved me more importantly than many of his other ideas...." Mulk Raj Anand, "The story of my Experiment with a white lie," in *Critical Essays*, p.10.


18 *The Swan and the Eagle*, p.117.

Gandhi brought into his writing the love that was lacking. Anand affirms that "the warmth towards Bakha, which has made this character lovable to many people, may, to some extent, have emerged from my warmth towards the person of Gandhi".  

Though Gandhi's views on untouchability find a prominent place in the scheme of the novel, the solution to the basic issue is Anand's own. In this novel, Anand seems to suggest that rapid industrialisation (flush system) can be the right solution of the age-old social evil, which is, in fact, quite contrary to that of Gandhi's. Strictly observing the three classical unities of time, place and action, Untouchable describes humiliations inflicted upon Bakha, the young scavenger, in the course of a single day in a north Indian cantonment town. The narrative coincides with the time when the Ramsay-MacDonald Award of 1932 was announced and Gandhi went on a fast in protest against separate electorates.

Bakha, as usual, is awakened by his father to clean toilets. A man, brushing past the untouchable, abuses him, while a Brahmin priest tries to molest his sister, Sohini, and when frustrated, cries out 'polluted, polluted' so as to get Bakha beaten by the people. He begs for food and a woman throws a loaf of bread as to a dog. The company of his boyhood friends, however, slightly relieves the tedium of his regular routine. Havilder Charat Singh is extremely kind to him and gives him a hockey stick. He meets Colonel Hutchinson who tries to convert him to Christianity. Bakha then goes to the railway station,
where he finds a huge crowd gathered to pay homage to Gandhi. Bakha spends his evening in listening to Gandhi's views on untouchability.

The novel that thus deals with a social problem in the backdrop of resurgent India of the thirties, has political overtones and can safely be placed in the framework of Gandhi novels, though Naik holds that Untouchable "shows him (Anand) coming to grips with one aspect of the theme of tradition versus modernity and handling it with great artistic power." 21

When Bakha finds people going to a public meeting which, he learns, will be addressed by Mahatma Gandhi, he also joins the crowd although "He had not asked himself where he was going. He had not paused to think. The word 'Mahatma' was like a magical magnet to which, he, like all other people rushed blindly". 22 Anand captures the minute details concerning Gandhi's visit and his impact on Bakha with the meticulousness of a radio commentator but also the imagination of a historian. 23 When people jump a fence into a garden to take a short cut to the meeting place, they damage the beautiful garden. Anand views it as symbolic of resurgent India trying to reach out to Gandhi:

It was as if the crowd had determined to crush everything, however ancient or beautiful, that lay in the way of the achievement of all that Gandhi stood for. It was if they knew, by an instinct surer than that of conscious knowledge, that the

23 The Writer's Gandhi, p.64.
things of the old civilization must be destroyed in order to make room for those of the new. It was as if in trampling on the blades of green grass, they were deliberately, brutally trampling on a part of themselves which they had begun to abhor, and from which they wanted to escape to Gandhi (pp.150-51).

Having arrived at the meeting place, as an outcaste the protagonist waits breathlessly for Gandhi in the midst of a humanity which includes him in its fold but still debars him from entering into a living contact with it. He thinks that "Gandhi alone united him with them, in the mind, because Gandhi was in everybody's mind, including Bakha's, Gandhi might unite them really" (p.151).

Anand skillfully portrays the physical personality of Gandhi:

His body was swathed in a milk-white blanket, and only his dark, clean-shaven head was visible, with its protruding ears, its expansive forehead, its long nose, bridged by a pair of glasses. There was a quixotic smile on his thin lips, something Mephistophelean in the determined little chin immediately under his mouth and long toothless jaws resting on his small neck (p.157).

The novelist sums up the impact of this saintly figure on the public through the impressions of Bakha about the Mahatma: "The sage seemed so pure. And there was something intimate and warm about him. He smiled like a child" (p.160).

But more than the physical details is the 'magic' of Gandhi that Anand has been able to recreate. The cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai', 'the Mahatma has come', the eager babble, the excited gestures, the flow of the emotion all point to the magnetic personality of 'the naked faqir', as Churchil often called Gandhi, who has drawn people from all classes and sections: "There was a terror in the devotion, half-expressed, half-suppressed of the panting swarms that pressed round" (p.151).
In a single sentence Anand sums up the mass appeal of Gandhi:
"This strange man seemed to have the genius that could, by a single
dramatic act, rally multi-coloured multi-tongued India to himself"  
(pp.158-59). The stage is set for Gandhi to speak, but his power
lies not so much in his message as in what he has come to signify
to the common mind. It is for this reason that Anand devotes
twice as many pages to the Gandhi legend and the enthusiasm of
the people for their leader.

Gandhi, the prophetic-religious type of man, talking of
Truth, Non-violence and Salvation, inspired mythes about his
powers. Gandhi, as Bakha hears people say, is a saint or an

tar of the gods, Vishnu and Krishna. A rustic has heard
"that a spider had woven a web in the house of the Lat Sahib
(Viceroy) at Dilli (Delhi), making a portrait of the sage, and
writing his name under it in English with the warning that
Gandhi was going to be the Maharaja of the whole Hindustan"
(p.152). It is also being said around that "no sword could cut
Gandhi's body, no bullet could pierce his skin, no fire could
scorch him" (p.152). A literate babu claims that Gandhi has
the 'Shakti' to change the whole world. To the simple peasant,
Gandhi is "a legend, a tradition, an oracle" (p.153). He says
that Gandhi is like Guru Nanak who could perform miracles.
Another son of the soil wants to know if Gandhi would look after
the canals when the ferungs have gone. Still another villager
fails to appreciate Gandhi's insistence on the Village Panchayat,
for the 'five elders' of his village generally exploit the
Panchayat to wreak vengeance on their enemies, or to bring
pressure to bear on the village menials, when they try to assert
themselves as equal citizens. The businessmen, who are to boycott "Manchester Cotton and Bradform fancies" are feared to seize a monopoly of the Swadeshi cloth.

These reactions of the people representing various social strata eminently fit into the realistic technique of the novelist, but also speak of his awareness of the spectrum of responses. Spokesman for India's impoverished and fatalistic millions, the Marxist-oriented Anand cannot subscribe to Gandhi's socio-religious approach. Photographic recording of reactions, thus, seems to be the only alternative left to him.

The speech delivered by Gandhi in the Untouchable is a careful selection of his significant utterances recorded in his books and periodicals. Regarding untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism, Gandhi wishes to be reborn as an untouchable but urges the untouchables to purify their lives, cultivate the habits of cleanliness and to abandon the evil habits of drinking and gambling. He pleads for an equal status to Harijans, who, he believes, are "cleaning Hindu society".

These utterances, taken out of their relevant contexts, that Anand puts into the mouth of Gandhi, allude to a hiatus between the magical personality of Gandhi and a proper appreciation of his ideology by the layman. This contradiction enables us to understand the artistic stance of the novelist. It seems that the popularity of Gandhi is due to the medieval mental pattern of India masses, and not because of enthusiastic response of the people to Gandhian ideology and its appreciation thereof. Gandhi's popularity, the novelist seems to suggest, can be attributed to the instinct of hero-worship in the Indian
mind, but it cannot be presumed that people have understood Gandhi substantially. The novel, therefore, reaches a natural climax when, all of a sudden, the reader is confronted with three happenings that offer different solutions to the problem of untouchability — a burlesque-like encounter with a Salvation Army Colonel, the coincidental arrival of Mahatma Gandhi to deliver a sermon on the subject, and a dull political discussion culminating in an impassioned plea for the flush-toilet system.

The popular image of Gandhi is further completed by the responsive chords he strikes in different people. Bakha feels that 'he is a good man'. A citizen remarks that Gandhi has 'made Hindu and Musulman one'. There is, then, a corrective to this adulation, when a Westernised Indian, Bar-at-law— from England, raises his eyebrows disapprovingly and lavishes scathing criticism of Gandhi in an academic strain:

Gandhi is a humbug....He is a fool. He is a hypocrite (sic). In one breath he says he wants to abolish untouchability, in the other he asserts that he is orthodox Hindu. He is running counter to the spirit of our age, which is democracy. He is in the fourth Century B.C., with his Swadeshi and his spinning wheel (pp.165-66).

These comments not only fit in the realistic treatment of Gandhian myth, but also suggest an absence of coherence and systematic build-up in Gandhian ideology, as the author sees it. Bashir's mockery, as William Walsh argues, partly explains the ideological commitment of Anand although Bashir is not the chief spokesman of the novelist:

Greater efficiency, better salesmanship, more mass production, standardization, dictatorship of the

sweepers, Marxian materialism, and all that. "Yes, Yes," is the reply, "all that, but no catch-words and cheap phrases, the change will be organic and not mechanical (p.171).

Bashir's criticism of Gandhi and his movement is toned down by Iqbal Nath Sarshar, a young and progressive poet and editor of Nevaryug. The poet sums up the evaluation of Gandhi thus: "Mahatma Gandhi is by far the greatest liberating force of our age. But he has his limits, of course" (p.167). The statement balances the two extremes of opinions earlier expressed about the Mahatma. This is probably intended to convey that the progressive forces are aware of his immense mass appeal, but they are not blind to his limitations all the same.

Coolie, being an in-depth study of the exploitation of the under-privileged as the baneful offshoot of capitalism, industrialization and communalism in the early thirties, catches the accents of the Gandhian age, although it cannot be termed as a *Gandhian novel* in the strictest sense of the word. The prime motif of the novelist seems to be to portray the abject misery of the underdog existing as the outcome of the growing affluence of the urban centres, but there also runs a parallel theme of veiled contrast between rural and urban life. The rising phenomenon of Trade Union movement among the industrial workers of Bombay has political overtones. Anand seizes this opportunity to bring Gandhi or his followers (Congress wallas) into the orbit of his artistic ken with the twin purposes of highlighting the positive contributions of the leftists towards the Trade Unionism against the time-serving stance of the so-called followers of Gandhi and also to introduce the elements
of contemporaneity into his tale —— the inglorious odyssey of Munno, an orphaned village boy from the Kangra hills.

What happens to Munno in the course of the narrative gives the impression of a make-believe world of happy coincidences or, as Lindsay remarks, “the improvised character of a set of chance contacts and odd environmental pressures”. Munno’s initiation into the trailing clouds of sorrow begins at the age of fourteen when he becomes a domestic servant at Sham Nagar. Then comes the pleasant interlude of his contact with warm-hearted Seth Prabha Dayal and his noble wife. After working as a porter temporarily in the local vegetables market, there occurs Munno’s chance meeting with kind-hearted elephant-driver, in a circus, with whose help he reaches Bombay. In Bombay, he finds himself attached to a vagrant family of Hari, another landless peasant uprooted from his soil. Munno’s stay with this family provides him with almost parental care of Hari and his wife, though living in leaky straw huts or in dilapidated insanitary tenement houses. His chance meeting with and growing friendship of a warm-hearted Panjabi Wrestler Rattan mitigates Munno’s wretchedness born out of appalling working conditions in Sir George White Cotton Mills in Bombay.

On a closer scrutiny, it observed that the tragic fate of Munno is the dubious outcome of industrialisation and other iniquitous social forces. The landless peasant is condemned to life-long misery and exploitation — all due to the neglect of


villages and concentration on cities and industrialisation. Lindsay, therefore, remarks that "when we finish the book we realise that the set of accidents add up to a remorseless historical pattern, that Munoo has become the typical peasant dragged by forces he cannot understand into the industrial machine".  

This is an echo, perhaps unconscious, of Gandhian emphasis to focus attention on villages and the poor peasants. With his commitment to scientific humanism, Anand cannot be averse to industrialisation, but the burden of his portrait on the dispossession of poor peasant of his wherewithals to live, speaks of the unconscious capturing of the vibrations of the Age that was dominated by Gandhi and his ideology. The virtues of rural life and the naive simplicity and goodness of the rustic folk come out as a marked contrast to the cunning machinations of the town people. Greed of wealth makes them selfish and inhuman, whereas humanity and kindness determine the pattern of living in the villages. Saroj Cowsjee, who also, makes an identical observation about the novel, traces the evil of the city life to the nucleus of wealth and power as the agents of corruption. But this emphasis on the virtuous life of the rustic people is a Gandhian echo, though not very loudly pronounced.

Anand who grew up "though the early Gandhian movement into which I had wandered myself", betray discernible impress

---

27 Ibid., p.23.
of Gandhian postulates on the delineation of some characters in \textit{Coolie}. These characters are not indoctrinated about Gandhian ideology, but they make observations that pass for wisdom of an ancient culture. Gandhi, also, exploited this wisdom of an old living culture which has sustained our peasantry through centuries of misery. Pickle-factory owner Prabha Dayal's nobility and charity is the projection of an abiding faith in the essential goodness of man. Another instance is provided by the Circus elephant-driver who warns Munoo: "The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam."

The plight of Munoo and his kind seems to be the direct result of the industrial revolution, launched without paying sufficient heed to social reforms. The warm togetherness of the poor peasants is reminiscent of their age-old traditions of harmonious living as the well-knit society of the poor peasantry whom Gandhi wanted to preserve their corporate living through peaceful ways. This typical traditional virtue of Indian peasantry appears to be the comradeship of the poor, who have nothing to lose but their poverty. Philip Henderson, therefore, observes that \textit{Coolie} takes us into a world in which comradeship of man for man exists only among the very poorest people. With nothing to hope for, their common humanity is all they possess.

Anand's ambivalence in his aesthetic response to Gandhian myth is exemplified in his transmuting the popular observations of the Mahatma into the landscape of his novel at the unconscious

level and presentation of "Congress Wallas" as the unworthy "Gandhi Wallas" on the conscious level. The followers of Gandhi are shown in ludicrous light and their characterisation borders on the caricature, while the beliefs of the Mahatma are inserted conspicuously into the plot of the novel. Onkar Nath, "a prim, well-groomed man, dressed in a homespun silk tunic and silk dhoti" whose "lower lip was twisted into a sardonic contempt of everything but himself", (p.262) is presented as the President of Trade Union Congress but he is not committed to the cause of the workers. He would not take up the case of strike necessitated by Rattan's dismissal or wage-cut imposed by the mill-owners. He dodges the issue by saying: "It is no use precipitating a hopeless situation by hasty action. I stand for negotiation" (p.263). He seems to echo Gandhi that the interests of the employer and the labourer are identical. The labourers are faced with the immediate question of survival, but Onkar Nath must, first, seek the sanction of Indian National Congress. The workers are called upon to have faith in the Union and the methods "by which it brings about co-operation in industry between labour and capital" (p.264).

Cowasjee offers the contention that the caricaturising of Onkar Nath is an attempt to give the impression that Gandhi's followers are motivated by personal ambitions and they are not to be trusted. It is true that Onkar Nath is shown as side-tracking the issues of wage-cut, termination and the impending strike of the agitated workers. But by chastising the Congress

32  Coolie—An Assessment, p.51.
leaders who mostly belong to 'traditional, orthodox and well-to-do' families, Anand seems to suggest that they can only offer lip-sympathy for the cause of the workers and the downtrodden who have their real saviours in leftist leaders like Comrade Sauda. Anand presents "Congress Wallas" as "Gandhi Wallas" because Gandhi stood for the Congress for most people in India and abroad.

Being a truculent reproval of the evil effects of imperialism, capitalism and its corollaries such as exploitation of helpless labourer, Two Leaves and a Bud, is, thematically, sequel to Coolie. Two Leaves and a Bud takes up where Coolie ends: the Anglo-Indian Community's apathy and even antipathy in its relations with the poor Indians. The adventurous Munoo of Coolie is virtually enslaved as an indentured labourer in Gangu on Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam in Two Leaves and a Bud. Gangu soon discovers that he, his wife and children are caught in the death-trap of the plantation. Another indentured coolie blurts out the depressing truth: "This prison has no bars but it is nevertheless an unbreakable jail."33 Gandhian impact on the action and design of the plot dealing with the theme of exploitation of the under-privileged is as indirect and remote as it is in Coolie, but there are distinct echoes of Gandhian revolution that was sweeping over the plains of India in the Thirties.

Gangu, a landless peasant from Panjab, is lured into a tea estate in Assam as a plantation labourer. His dream of

33 Mulk Raj Anand, Two Leaves and a Bud (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1966; first published in 1937 by Bodley Head, London), p.38. Subsequent references to the novel pertain to this edition will appear in the text.
leading an honourable living is shattered soon when he finds that the earnings of his entire family —— employed as collies — cannot provide the bare needs of life. Gangu's wife dies in a cholera epidemic. He gets a severe rebuff when he approaches the White manager of the estate for loan to meet the expenses of his wife's funeral. The medical officer of the company is, however, kind to the coolies. He manages a plot of cultivable land for Gangu. Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager, gets the poor coolies beaten when they protest against his immoral ways with the coolie women. Croft-Cooke, the manager, is just unsympathetic. The act of the aggrieved coolies marching in a procession to beg justice is taken as a revolt by the Europeans there. The safeguard of the Army is sought. The English doctor who comes to the help of the poor people is removed from service, while the 'ring-leaders' including Gangu are fined Rs 50.00 each. Later, Gangu is shot dead by Reggie Hunt when the poor father tries to save his daughter Liela from molestation at the hands of Reggie who is later found 'not guilty' by the white judge and acquitted.

Anand has incorporated the popular image of Gandhi, as identified by the Congress volunteers, into the tale for the obvious reason that people can not draw a line between Gandhi and the Congress. This altruistic over-simplification of Gandhian image, though rather a crude method of suggesting Gandhian myth, nevertheless, reveals that Gandhi has left his impress so deeply on the consciousness of the people that they cannot help associating Gandhi with the activities of Congress that became a living organisation only after Gandhi had lent his weight to it. The "Congress wallas" and "Gandhi wallas" are, therefore, synonymous:
A thousand others who had entrained at Colundo because the Gandhi wallas forced the Railway Sahibs to sell them tickets, were arrested on their way to Faridput by the Magistrate Sahib of that town, brought down from the train, kept under watch by the police and dispersed in the morning. The Congress wallas fed them at a place three miles off and arranged to entrain them at Koksa (p.212).

Anand has also endeavoured to suggest that Gandhi is a household figure and people everywhere are acquainted, at least, with the external attributes of Gandhian struggle. Home-spun Khaddar is the familiar badge of a "Gandhi Walla" and the cheap Swadeshi cotton retailed in the market has earned the distinctive 'Gandhian Mark' for it: "I only sell Swadeshi Cotton here", said the Seth, "All right, Seth", said the Tibetan. "Oh" the Seth called to an assistant," give him a length of the Gandhi mark cotton...." (p.74). Gandhian satyagrahas with their emphasis on peaceful negotiations are frequent occurrences. The popularity of Gandhi is judged from the wealth of information people have gathered about Gandhi and his close associates. The poor coolies gratefully remember that "A Padre Sahib, a friend of Mahatma Gandhi, came to their help, but he could do nothing except walk from them to the Sirkar and from the Sirkar to them with a kind face and a heavy heart" (p.213).

These rambling details of Gandhi and the movements started by him are concretised in the peaceful ways of the suffering coolies, who display a sense of solidarity and togetherness in their hour of extreme distress and destitution. Marching as non-violent volunteers to the manager of the Estate, they are the Gandhian satyagrahis, though unaware of it, themselves. They have been cut off from the rest of the country that has witnessed the Non-violent Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements...
as they are "in the Kingdom of Yama". This consciousness is
the spirit of the age - a miracle wrought by Gandhi and no
writer, much less Anand, could help weaving this phenomenon of
the poor and harassed Indians demanding justice, into the
fabric of his art. The sympathetic and humane Dr. D.L. Havre
was overwhelmed by the awakening simmering in them:

That these docile, gutless, spineless cobbies, who
never raised their voices except on the day of the
holi, who went about the plantation with masks of
crass stupidity on their faces, whose habitual
submission was never disturbed by any outrage of
man or beast, by hunger, pestilence or slow disease
that they should come shouting the tribute of their
appreciation for him (Dr. D.L. Havre) was uncanny
(p.198).

The panicky Whites have the non-violent marchers shot
down, although they merely wanted to state their case. Two
Leaves and a Bud, thus, helps one to understand something of
Gandhian revolution, particularly the non-resistance movement,
although the burden of the narrative is to pin-point the
exploitation of the poor labourers in Tea-gardens of Assam.

Unlike Untouchable where Gandhi addresses a public meeting
but Bakha, the central character, has no personal contact with the
Mahatma, Anand has dovetailed Gandhi's meeting with Lalu, a
revolutionary, into the main plot of the novel The Sword and the
Sickle (1942) which deals with an abortive peasant upsurge in and
around Rajgarh, a feudal Village in Oudh region of U.P. The
novelist has tried to observe Gandhi from the standpoint of a
revolutionary.

The end of the first World War brings Lal Singh (Lalu),
a demobilised sepoj, back to his village in Panjab but he soon
elopés with Maya, the widowed daughter of the landlord, to work
for the peasants revolution under Kanwar Rampal Singh, a rich
landlord with Bolshevik ideas. The whole drama misfires as it
could have easily been judged from the ill-organised and localised nature of the revolt. Rampal Singh feels the need of aligning himself with the like-minded revolutionaries in the country. His close associate Prof. Verma comes to discover more reason in Gandhi's non-violent means to achieve Swaraj. Anand manipulates an interview of Lalu with Gandhi when the revolutionary fervour of the former has receded considerably.

The narrative of revolutionary Socialism, significantly enough, touches upon Gandhian creed of non-violent revolution which is, of course, not the chief focus of the novelist. Anand has tried to view the revolutionaries and Gandhi with considerable detachment and he seems to spare neither the revolutionaries nor the Mahatma. This detachment, at times, leads to confusion in author's point of view, as reflected in the fantastic mingling of irony and seriousness of purpose. Anand has a dig at the so-called revolutionaries in the caricature of the Count and his protegés who entertain the illusion that peasant revolt can be organised without raising a formidable organisational infra-structure. It is true that Gandhi does not appeal to the revolutionaries but the pseudo revolutionaries represented by the Count and his train want to exploit the Godhead achieved by Gandhi as God still appeals to the poor peasants. That results in imbecile picture of Gandhi and the aimless drifting away of the revolutionaries.

Anand starts with the popular response of the people to Gandhi and his struggle for freedom. As Lalu returns to India after the first World War from a German prison camp, he learns about the Khilafat Wrongs, General Dyer's brutalities at
Amritsar and Gandhi's inspiring words. 'Down with Sarkar'! 'Relief to the Peasants'! and 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai'! are the battle cries that now ring in his ears. Following the realistic mode of concentration on details, Anand has re-created the appeal of Gandhi to all sections of society. Gandhi's name has filtered down to the grass-roots in the far-flung villages of the country. When Lalu goes to U.P., he learns that the villagers of Rajgarh "had heard of Mahatma Gandhi and the strange new movement of non-cooperation he had started". There is an enthusiastic appreciation of Gandhi's efforts towards Hindu-Muslim harmony. Fazlu, a Mohammandan, invites Lalu to dinner saying: "You know, Gandhi Mahatma has said that Hindu and Mussalman are one" (p.65).

Gandhi's influence over the Untouchables, peasants and educated classes alike is manifested at the feast given to the untouchables at Anand Bhawan in Allahabad. It is at this feast that Lalu has his meeting with the Mahatma. The episode of the feast is a contrived situation — an open and blatant contrivance. The interview has little probability. It does not seem to grow out of the story or develop the theme except that it provides the novelist with an opportunity to dilate upon the oddities of Gandhi and the growing awareness of frustration among the revolutionaries. This constitutes a hiatus between the character and plot: both are not inseparably knit together.

The interview is not designed to effect any spectacular

transformation in the revolutionary, but Gandhi's views on violence, Satyagraha, etc. are given proper placements. A minute description of the retinue of Gandhi, a little lop-eared, toothless man with a shaven head which shone like an aureole (p.202) reveals the motivations of the novelist:

First a lean bespectacled English woman in homespuns, intent on a noisy ramshackle, old typewriter which stood on a stool before her. Then an Indian female who was cutting papers with a long pair of scissors. Further, a white-bearded man who was grinding some herbs, while at the farthest end sat ——> the Mahatma himself, naked except for a strip of cloth, dictating something to a black god who sat on his right hand side (p.202).

A novel is generally read as the novelist's reaction to his material. Viewed from this angle, the interview fails to impress us with the achieved content of the novel vis-a-vis Gandhian ideology since the novelist has not been able to impose any kind of rhythm upon the world of action by means of which our appreciation of Gandhian postulates in the context of revolutionary creed of violence is enriched or renewed. As Lalu joins hands before the Mahatma, he is at once made aware that there was "something in the stern silence of the great man's attitude which demanded reverence" (p.202). Then we are provided with indiscriminate samples of some significant pronouncements of Gandhi, carefully gleaned from the large corpus of Gandhiana. Lalu is a helpless listener while Gandhi keeps on pouring out his thoughts to his scribe "from the sublime to the ridiculous, and from the puerile to the profound, without raising his voice in the least" (p.203).

Lalu is struck with Gandhi's directness when the Mahatma calls upon the peasant to cast off fear, as the real relief for them is to be free from fear. Then comes the elucidation of
soul-force and non-violence:

Strength does not come from physical force. It comes from the Will. Non-violence does not mean submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it is pitting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under the law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust Empire and lay the foundation for that Empire’s downfall or its regeneration (p.205).

Instead of leading the poor peasants against their feudal oppressors, Gandhi harps on his usual refrains—spinning and wearing khadi, untouchability, cow protection and brahmacarya or passionlessness as the state "in which sexual energy is sublimated into spiritual energy" (p.206). Lalu seeks in vain to persuade Gandhi to come to the rescue of the poor peasants, but Gandhi talks of purification through suffering as if the poor haven’t suffered enough. Lalu feels 'suffocated' by the egoistic, confessional talk of self-purification but cannot help feeling "the aroma of moral grandeur, purity and simplicity of the Mahatma" (p.207).

Lalu confesses that if the waging of a struggle to redress the grievances of the peasants is violence, he has committed violence. Gandhi corrects him saying: "Not the airing of grievances of rights but the invocation of revolution against the landlords is violence" (p.208). Cowasjee aptly concludes that "The impression that Gandhi leaves, and this may well be the impression that Anand wishes to convey, is that his (Gandhi's) mind wanders and that he is not prepared to tackle a straight problem straightforwardly". 35

Lalu fails to persuade Gandhi to go to Rajgarh to

35 Coolie - An Assessment, pp.51-2.
alleviate the sufferings of the peasants. He is, therefore, critical of Gandhi who, Lalu thinks, is not keen to find a solution to the problem of peasants but is unduly preoccupied with sufferings, Sanatani Hindu religion and cow protection. Lalu wonders how Gandhi who has been to Europe and who has imbibed so much learning can talk like that as the young revolutionary had imagined that "Gandhi was a wiser and older man, and certainly knows the methods of conducting a struggle better than anyone from the stories of his work for the Coolies in Africa"(p.208). His bitterness and disillusionment can be gauged from Lalu's cynical comments. When he endorses Count's insinuation that Gandhi loves the millowners and their 'satanic parasite': "He himself looks like the devil!" said Lalu. "With his large ears, his sunken Cheeks and his pointed chin, only he lacks the horns on the head!" (p.216).

The Sword and the Sickle, thus, offers a contrast between Gandhian ideology and the revolutionary forces but the clash of conflicting ideologies has not been treated in artistic terms. The novelist betrays confusion in his approach to the material. Anand adopts an ambivalent attitude to the two ideologies and presents Gandhi and the revolutionaries rather casually. Naik rightly believes that The Sword and the Sickle is a failure because the book fails to achieve artistic coherence. 36

It is clear by now that Gandhi and his solicitudes for the poor have fascinated Anand, although Gandhi cannot tenably

be considered a motif or originating impulse of his creative talents. The humanistic stirrings of his art have gravitated his sensibility to Gandhian movement for freedom, although he neither idealises Gandhi nor romanticises his struggle for emancipation of the poor. The Gandhi motif has been employed as a mount for his dramatic material and it is the mythical dimension to Gandhi's figure that seems to have impelled Anand to put him to literary use.

Anand treats Gandhi as a dramatic personality in *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle* and also makes a profuse use of thinly disguised excerpts from Gandhi's writings and speeches but has not displayed finesse in the incorporation of documentary material into his fictional works. The physical appearance of Gandhi finds a prominent place in the scheme of the novels, but greater emphasis has been laid on the popular image of Gandhi as a saint-figure enjoying hero-worship. Popular myths about the magical personality of this saintly politician have been inserted in the body of the novels, and the novelist reveals in giving photographic recording of reactions of people about Gandhi. Anand seems to suggest that people are acquainted with the external attributes of Gandhian struggle, but they betray lack of proper appreciation of his ideology. Gandhi has also been viewed from the angle of revolutionaries or terrorists. Anand presents congressmen as the followers of Gandhi because Gandhi symbolised the Congress in the minds of the people.

Anand gives a wealth of information about Gandhi and his ideology. His crusade against untouchability, and emphasis
on villages, poor peasants and the underdog come in for sympathetic treatment in Anand's novels. There is also enough rendering of Gandhian concepts of Satyagraha, khaddar, non-violence, brhamacharya, communal harmony etc. along with references to Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements in the novels.