HUMANISM REVISITED: AN OVERVIEW OF MULK RAJ ANAND'S FICTION

Mulk Raj Anand's name brings to mind an image of a man who is at heart a humanist. He is a humanist in Indo-Anglian literature if ever there was one. Humanism is regarded as Anand's very religion. Humanism means love of Man, Man with all his weaknesses, instincts and impulses. A humanist is a champion of the rights of human beings, endeavouring for the eradication of all evils that destroy human happiness and retard the progress of individuals and of mankind at large.

At the time when Anand started writing women were actively fighting for equal status all around the world and eventually won the voting rights in 1920 in America and in 1928 in England and in 1935 in British India. It was the same year when Anand wrote his first masterpiece Untouchable on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi in which Gandhi's views on untouchability have briefly been incorporated. It is through the humanism of men like Gandhi and Anand that the untouchables have not only become touchables but also, in some ways, risen above the caste Hindus. This novel has been translated in more than thirty languages and is immensely popular even today.

Anand depicted a wide variety of female characters from all classes, from Maharani to maid and from a society lady to a village belle. But his fiction is rarely
discussed in terms of gender due to the fact that he has primarily been considered a writer of social tragedy. It is also a fact that women do appear to be victims of an oppressive system in Anand’s works. Therefore, it becomes imperative to take a close look at the delineation of his female characters. This chapter is a brief attempt to examine whether his sympathies for the marginalized would enable him to transcend the traditional patriarchal mindset.


Anand’s first novel *Untouchable*¹ (1935) brought him immense eminence and prestige. It narrates realistically a day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper, the son of Lakha. Bakha is a child of twentieth century and the impact of new influences causes stirrings within him. He has a sister named Sohini who is molested by Pundit Kalinath. This novel is about a series of abuses, humiliations and indignity inflicted upon the untouchables by the people of the upper-castes. It is a forceful indictment of the evils of a perverted and decadent orthodoxy.

The following year Anand published his second novel *Coolie*² (1936). It is another great epic of misery. Its central figure Munoo, a fifteen-year old boy, is ill treated by her Uncle Dayaram and Aunt Gujri. He is sent to Babu Nathoo Ram and Bibi Uttam Kaur’s house as a domestic servant. A crisis develops there and he escapes and reaches Seth Prabha Dayal and Parbati’s house in Daulatpur. Unfortunately, Seth becomes bankrupt and Munoo moves to Mumbai where he sees the ugly side of life. In Mumbai he is helped
by Hari, Lakshmi and Rattan. A car knocks him down and the owner of the car Mrs Mainwaring takes him to Simla. He works as a coolie in Simla and dies a premature death.

The period roughly from 1914 to 1968 was marked by extensive industrialization. Private (home) and public (industrial work) spheres became more sharply defined, and age, sex, and class more prominent divisions in the economy. Women's entry into and continuous participation in the paid labour force came to be affected by a variety of forces that acted to push women out of, and pull women into the paid work force at different times. Women became a 'reserve army of labour'. Two Leaves and a Bud\(^3\) (1937) appeared on the era when women entered the labour force in large numbers. This novel deals with the problems and miseries of the labourers of the tea garden working in Assam. Anand presents a pathetic picture of the condition of labourers who are exploited, tortured and humiliated by the managers and the assistant managers. The story revolves around a labourer Gangu, who has come to Assam with his wife Sajani, daughter Leila and son Buddhu. The injustice of the British Raj, the exploitation of the colonialists and misery and suffering of Indian masses are all exposed. Anand states that he feels a sense of urgency to write this novel because he has witnessed inhumanity and barbarism prevalent in tea-state during his stay in Assam and Ceylon. This novel is the outcome of his hatred towards colonialists.

Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts\(^4\) (1938) exposes the frustration and indignation of an M.A pass man, Nur, who fails in his career and life. He remembers his past as a charred heap of broken ambitions and frustration. He is burdened with an arranged marriage to a simple-looking wife, Iqbal, and then with a daughter. There is
nothing for him to look forward to, except death. For months he suffers from physical as well as mental agony and eventually dies.

In the fifties and the early sixties of the twentieth century, the content-loaded, society-oriented literature in all its forms had become almost stagnant and was clamouring for a change. Slowly and steadily it started changing for newer themes which were not only society conscious but also were oriented towards the exposition of the inner consciousness. Writers tried to explore inner realities of the protagonist and the psyche of the human mind. They started writing about the personal problems of the human being with the problems of society. Anand also depicts inner as well as social conflicts of his protagonists in his later novels *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), *The Road* (1961) and *Death of a Hero* (1963).

*The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960) is influenced by Russian poet, Nicholai Nekrasov’s epic poem *The Peasant Woman*. However, the story is derived from Indian epic *The Ramayana* in which Sita is banished by her husband Lord Rama when common people had begun to doubt her purity. The woman in this novel is given the name of Gauri who symbolizes Sita. She suffers at the hands of her mother, Lakshmi, mother-in-law Kesari and her husband Panchi. She is even sold by her mother and the very title of the novel is taken from this event. A city doctor Colonel Mahindra rescues Gauri. She returns to the village but her chastity is doubted and she is asked to prove her chastity by her husband. She rises up in revolt against her oppression and goes to the city to have an independent existence.

*The Road* (1961) is a story about a young outcaste Bhikhu who is an active rebel and campaigner. Bhikhu is a dynamic youngman who enlists the co-operation of his
fellows in building a road to connect their village with the town. However, the road here has a symbolic signification also: it is essentially the way of salvation. Female characters Mala, Rukmani, Sapti and Bhagwanti are seen in the traditional ideal Indian form. This novel shows the inner as well as the social conflict between those wanting to build the road and those opposing it.

*Death of a Hero* (1963) deals with the problems of the inhabitants of Kashmir. The protagonist of this novel is a Kashmiri by the name of Maqbool Sherwani. He is a patriot-cum-poet who is in search of his identity. His mother and his sister Noor help him in pursuing his ambition. After many vicissitudes and tribulations, he is shot at by his enemies and killed.

Anand basically deals with the lower-class people and the down-trodden. Therefore, his female characters are mostly from the lower class. In contrast to the lower-class Indian women he presents the upper-class English women in most of his early novels. His novels introduce the three distinct spaces for female participation: the family, the society and the colonizer. In his later novels, he stresses the importance of gender and sexuality for identity formation and, racism is mainly represented as colonial leftover.

Filial sentimentality is an Indian tradition and Anand also follows this tradition with firm belief. He glorifies and idealizes mother-figure in his novels *Untouchable, Coolie* and *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*. Bakha, the protagonist of the novel *Untouchable* remembers how his mother, “used to give him a brass tankard full of a boiling hot mixture of water, tea leaves and milk from the steaming earthen saucepan” (p.16). When his mother dies he has no one to ask for this luxury:
[h]e often thought of his mother, the small, dark figure, swathed simply in a tunic, a pair of baggy trousers and an apron, crouching as she went about cooking and cleaning the home, a bit too old-fashioned for his then already growing modern tastes, Indian to the core and sometimes uncomfortably so (as she did not like his affecting European clothes), but so loving, so good, and withal generous, giving, always giving, mother, giver of life, Mahalakshmi (p.16).

Nur, in Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, after losing his mother sees her in his dreams and cries for her even after many years of her death. “Oh, mother, oh, mother, where are you now” (p.13)? He recalls his mother’s love for him:

[In the name of the merciful and the compassionate God, she used to say, and gather him into her arms if he woke up in the night, gather him with the surging agony of warmth, answered only by his cries, and still patient when his father heaped all the curses, all the abuse, all the complaints of the mortal wrongs he had suffered to be awakened by the row (p.13).]

He imagines his mother standing with tears in her eyes imploring angel Gabriel to help her son. At the time of his death he recalls his mother and dies.

Leila in Two Leaves and a Bud laments the death of her mother Sajani. She cries for days as each little thing she does in the house, which her mother had done before,
reminds her of the fact that her mother is no more. Motherhood has been hailed as the final fulfilment of woman. A mother does exclusive duty for the children throughout the life single-mindedly and without any excuse. She gets the fruit of her lifelong work when children remember their mother after her death. In Coolie, Lakshmi, Hari’s wife, carries her eight-year-old daughter on her lap so as not to disturb her sleep. “I will pick them up, don’t disturb their sleep,” said Lakshmi, leaning to protect them against her husband” (p.193). Even Mrs Mainwaring in Coolie, who is rather a villainous character, shows her motherly instinct towards Munoo:

Mrs Mainwaring was very concerned. She was a mother, and felt towards this boy as she had felt towards Ralph when he had been ill. She had him removed upstairs and put him into bed where ‘baby’ slept, in spite of Munoo’s protestations that he was only a servant and could not sleep upstairs. And she called a doctor, no less a person than Major Merchant, the Health Officer of Simla, who stayed near Annandale (p.299).

Being childless, Parbati, wife of Prabha Dayal in Coolie, becomes docile and meek as if she had lost her existence. She works at home uncomplainingly and satisfies everyone’s needs with utter responsibility. Indian cultural ideology reinforces the social construction of womanhood that defines a woman by her childbearing and child-rearing role. The image of the ‘loving mother’ is so powerful that women are unable to deconstruct that image.
Anand tries to say that if a woman is not a mother she becomes wicked and loses her goodness, affection and human characteristics. The novel *Coolie* starts with the shouting of Munoo's aunt Gujri, who is childless. She calls Munoo 'evil star', 'ominous orphan' and wants him to go to the city and earn money. Gujri always abuses Munoo and beats him more than he beats his cattle. She is a childless woman and Munoo reminds her of being a barren. Out of frustration she thrashes and abuses Munoo, an orphan boy of fifteen. Munoo's father dies leaving his mother penniless to support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms. His mother brings him and his uncle up by grinding grains and also dies a premature death.

At the same time children without mother are worse than animals. Having lost their mothers, Anand's heroes are maltreated and abused by their mentors- Bakha by his father, Munoo by his Uncle and Aunt Gujri and Nur by his father. For Sohini and Leila, death of their mother means not only losing comforts in life but also losing freedom of all kinds because after the departure of their mother they carry the household drudgery with utter responsibility.

In the absence of a mother, grandmother is always there to take care of grandchildren. It is her prime duty to work as a slave for her progeny till death. In *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* Nur's grandmother is seventy years old and she takes good care of her sick grandson Nur. "His grandmother had no sense of time and did not start cooking his meal until she had said her prayers and swept the rooms of the house from the top storey to the ground floor" (p.15). She also tells him stories and prays for him. She works as a connecting wire between Nur and his father by convincing Nur that his father is temperamental and repents every-time he misbehaves with him. Luce
Irigaray remarks in this context: "[t]he maternal function underpins the social order of desire, but it is always kept in a dimension of need. Where desire is concerned, especially in its religious dimension, the role of maternal-feminine power is often nullified in the satisfying of individual and collective needs."\(^8\)

Anand tries to convey that motherhood is not always a boon it can also be a bane. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, coolie women want to flee from motherhood because they have no time to attend to their babies:

> for she had not the time to look after the children and often wished she had known some way of preventing them from coming to the world. Some of them, of course, died a natural death. But now, though she hoped her husband would not come to her one of these nights and give her another, she was somewhat concerned about her progeny, because they would soon learn plucking and be a useful help to the family... A whole gang of suckling humanity lay there under the torrid sun upon the mother earth (p.176).

Children are not always a boon for poor women. For them, children are born to die or plague their mothers. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* women sometimes find their children lying face downwards in a drain, sometimes dead. When they try to feed their babies their payment is reduced to half. Children are not always a source of happiness for poor women.

Poverty makes even mother inhuman. Anand shows that even mother can be a victimizer. Laxmi, mother of Gauri, in the novel *The Old Woman and the Cow* is known
to be a terror. When pregnant Gauri comes home, she does not welcome her and sells her
to Sheth Jai Ram Das, a banker of Hoshiarpur, in lieu of cash and wiping out the
mortgage on their two houses as well as the cow, Chandari. The title of the novel *The Old
Woman and the Cow* is itself taken from this event of the novel. It is a story of a mother
who sells her daughter to save her cow. Dr Mahindra, one of the characters in this novel
reminds Laxmi of her sin by saying: "[y]ou should not have sold your daughter for
money...if you were prepared to sell Gauri rather than the cow, I understand that you did
it for the cursed money you needed against the scarcity...So there is nothing irreparable
in your action. Only you love money more than your daughter" (p.244). She finally
accepts: "I am not ashamed of having gone to bed with men, but I am ashamed that I had
to sell my daughter" (p.226). Anand tries to spread the message that even an animal like a
cow is better than a girl child in this diseased society.

In the novel *The Road* the mother seems entrusted and empowered by society to
translate the rules of patriarchy into action. Bhagwanti rebukes her daughter Rukmani for
failing to keep her head apron from falling in front of the untouchable boys. She strictly
forbids her to keep distance from the untouchables. Rukmani performs all the household
duties while her brother Sajnu loafs around and when comes home gets special attention
from all. Bhagwanti always talks about Rukmani’s marriage and makes her realize about
her futile existence: "[c]ome to your senses!’ the mother shouted. ‘You are only a mite in
this house, but you are causing trouble to your father and brother” (p.36). She reminds
her: “A girl is only a guest in the house” (p.94).

Laxmi, an untouchable, mother of Bhikhu, in the novel *The Road* is another
example of a mother who internalizes patriarchal values with religious intensity. She is
not allowed to enter the temple. When her son Bhikhu tries to fight for his right she
forbids him and tells him to love everyone even when he is not loved by all, only then
through good deeds they would rise from their low caste and be born into a higher one.
She teaches her son the lesson of love and wants to take anger out of him: "[h]ave I not
suffered all my life?...First your drunken father and then widowhood. And is my love
growing less?...God's love is welling up in my heart" (p.2). She is docile and asks
forgiveness from her son's friends and promises them that she will not mount the temple
stairs.

The mother internalizes the values conferred upon her; she finds it 'natural' and
'obvious' not to enter into any conflict with those values, as plain common sense.
Mehtab, Beghum of Nawab Jilani, in the novel *Death of a Hero*, preaches Maqbool about
the realities of life and gives clarification of her blind support for her husband and son:

[i]ife is cruel', the begum began philosophically. 'As a woman I have
known this truth. We have to accept, because, in the eyes of Allah, we
deserve the punishment. The only way, son, in which this cruelty can
be offset is by obedience to destiny. What is written in one's fate will
be....I was born a woman. So it was no use my protesting against fate.
I had to accept, but acceptance brought contentment. I must admit that,
when I came, as a young woman, to the house of Sardar Jilani, I was
afraid. I decided to obey him. I couldn't do certain things, and yet
everything was really in my hands. He ruled me, but I ruled the
household...Now these new rulers demand obedience. But perhaps, if
we accept their rule, we will be free to do what we like in our own households (p.57).

She further hides their cowardice in the garb of responsibility and says: "[but you will understand that my husband and I, and our son, have bigger responsibilities than most people]" (p.57). She helps Maqbool to reach his home because somehow, she is aware of the fact that Maqbool is on the right track but being a mother, being a wife of a landlord and also in order to preserve her comfort and property she takes the side of her husband and son. She has to favour her son and husband because it is the only option available to her.

Maqbool’s mother takes special pride in Maqbool while his father is against the manner in which Maqbool is trying to establish his identity. His mother stops his father from rebuking him and observes that her son, "has reduced himself to a skeleton rushing about. He neglects to eat or drink—and he has become impatient. I would like to feed him on good food for at least a month when all this is over" (p.65). She is proud of being a mother of a son who sacrifices his life for the sake of ‘mother-land’.

Anand’s women do not challenge patriarchal values and their position in society. They are born to serve people as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. They never bother to think about themselves. After the death of Bakha’s mother, the whole responsibility of the household falls on the little shoulder of his sister Sohini. She performs her duty with great love and care. "She had felt like a mother as she issued from home to fetch water, a mother going out to fetch food and drink for her loved ones at home" (p.27). Even after being humiliated at the well by Gulabo, a washerwoman, she thinks of nothing but her brother waiting for her at home thirsty after the morning’s toil aching for a cup of tea.
Sohini is a girl who is portrayed as weak, shy, timid and insecure. She is a character who does not have much to say or perceive but is rather perceived and judged by others:

Sohini was a bit frightened at first and grew pale, but she kept intensely still and, avoiding the shock, subsided into a listless apathy. As she looked away, and cast her eyes up to the blue heavens overhead, she felt a sort of dreariness which, though she accepted it resignedly, brought a hurtfulness with it. Sad and wistful, she heaved a soft sigh and felt something in her heart asking for mercy (p.29).

Leila, daughter of Gangu and Sajani, is a typical Indian girl with all the salient traits of goodness. She is of sacrificial nature:

[t]he timid, shy bird that had fluttered so eagerly in her heart at the mere sight of all those desirable things went cold and numb from the realization of her father’s suffering. She recalled the expression on his face as he had stood in the doorway of their hut and asked her mother how much money they had. And she knew they could ill afford to spend any money on things which after all were not necessary. Had not they come so far away from their village because they were poor (p.67).

She serves her sick father and mother day and night. Leila and Sajani keep awake the whole night serving Gangu. The next day Leila serves her mother frantically while her brother Buddhu shows no concern over anything that happens around him. After the
death of Sajani the burden of household duty falls on the fragile shoulder of Leila. "She was shy like the dawn on some hill of mystery. And she had so much to do since her mother died; plucking and cooking and sweeping and dusting and fetching water." (p.136). Gangu thinks:

[t]here is something of the water about a woman. Flowing, always flowing, one way or another, and restless like the waves, sometimes overwhelmingly moody, fickle and capricious as a river in storm, sometimes bright and smiling, sometimes soft and sad, but always tender and kind. But may she live long, my little Leila. She is a blessing. She is Sajani's gift to me, to tend me in my old age (p.136-137).

Leila is an epitome of an ideal Indian woman. When Sajani dies Gangu says: "[t]he owner of my house died"(104). Sajani is not the owner but a slave of the house and after her death Leila takes the charge of this post. A male child is essential for the continuation of the lineage; the female child is seen as a burden who takes away money and other assets into another family in the form of dowry. Gangu wishes, "that Buddhu were older and could be his comrade, his right-hand man, who could share the burden of responsibility which lay so heavily on his aged shoulders" (p.102). Whatever Leila does hold no importance; she can not be her father's right hand. It is rightly stated by Shoma A. Chatterji that men always forget that, "[d]evelopment has actually taken place at the expense of women." 9
Nur's wife Iqbal is also a woman who has nothing to say. While treading the lines of mythical ideal Indian woman, she serves her husband who is weak, unemployed and a failure in material as well as spiritual aspects. She treats him as if he is her God and always craves for her husband's attention for she believes one day her husband would shower sympathy and love on her. Virginia Woolf justly remarks in this regard: "[w]omen have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man twice its natural size."

Bibiji in Coolie is so much preoccupied with the duty of taking care of children and the household drudgery that she does not have time for herself. She reflects: "I thought there was going to be some rest for me when this servant came. Instead I have to slave exactly as before. What is the use of an ignorant boy like this in the house? He is more of a trouble than a help" (p.30). Munoo is brought as a servant in order to help her in performing household work but she thinks that he will be another nuisance to look after. She murmurs, "God! When will I get some rest? I slog; slog all day! I can't even get time to dress. Or to sit down with the neighbours for a chat. Or go to the shops. Last night I went to bed at two o'clock, washing and cleaning up" (p.32). Gujri also performs her celestial household duties. Parbati does household duties with great patience and happiness. Lakshmi, even after working in the factory for long hours, comes home and does the same for her family.

On the very first page of the novel Two Leaves and a Bud Anand gives an impression that Gangu's wife Sajani is indifferent to Gangu's misery and leaves everything to Gangu considering herself unrelated to the problems. Gangu complains about his wife:
[s]he seemed distant, absorbing in something far away from him. What was she thinking? He wondered. Why was she not connected with him? How could she forget the deep intimacy that had subsisted between them since their youth? How could she leave him alone to face the responsibility of thinking out what life held in store for them in the new home? Why couldn’t she talk to him and give him faith, strengthen his hope rather than merely depend on him (p.1).

Women are considered dependents because others depend on their dependency. It is neither biology nor domestic obligation alone that gives rise to the dependency of these poor women; it is the lack of education and health care - the major cause of their suffering. Sajani, is an uneducated woman and does not even know how to count up to hundred. Gangu expects from his illiterate wife to be sensible, touchy and share the responsibilities of all kinds. But Sajani can not even understand the meaning of such heavily loaded terminologies like ‘faith’and ‘strengthen of hope’. She is a woman who is a burden for Gangu and he has to bear her because she is his wedded wife. Although she also works as a labourer at the tea-farm, she is dependent totally on Gangu- emotionally, physically and financially. Her dependency is heightened not by her ignorance and disinterestedness towards the problems of the household but towards herself and thus she becomes a foolish and ignorant character. Gangu also confirms it, “[b]eing more gullible like most women, she had been completely taken in by his promises” (p.7). Sajani lives in conditions of near bondage, squalor and exploitation, both at the work place and at home. Her misery deepens with her husband’s neglecting attitude.
When a woman gets married she becomes a possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband’s family. She is not given ample space to think and care about herself. “Gauri is like a cow, very gentle and very good” (p.6). She is a devoted and obedient wife. She has all the qualities of good wife. Even when she is turned out of the house she does not say anything against her husband and tries to understand the cause of his anger. She simply hides her husband’s evildoing in such a way: “Mother, “they” lost their temper because “they” was pressed from every side” (p.111). When her mother says that he is not the only husband, she becomes poignant and angry at her mother’s statement and reminds her mother that she is a married woman:

[how could he have sent her away after all that? She could understand the beatings, the rages and the sulks, but not this rejection. Specially as she was with child by him and needed, not this throwing aside but love words and endearments with which to bear the responsibility in her stomach...She felt, belatedly, that she should have turned on him and hit him with both her hands, and all her strength, to make him realize the cry of the innocent thing in her womb which he was frightened to hear (p.116).

However, she does not live entirely according to the acceptable patterns of female behaviour and this places her outside the traditional symbolics of gender in her group. She is a sensible girl. It is in her instinct that she has guts to refuse certain taboos and tradition. Gauri is a woman who does not follow the tradition of not going to the
kitchen during periods. After the fight with Kesari, Panchi's aunt, she tells Panchi to move into a separate house. She sulks in the dark chamber when Panchi beats her and does not eat until he comes and consoles her to eat. She also calls her husband by his name. She is bold and can be defensive. When required, she reacts as per her conscience rather than waiting for her husband to react. She abuses Kesari Chachi when she tries to convince her husband that Gauri is inauspicious and a woman of loose-character. Having listened to this conversation she loses her temper and holds Kesari Chachi by the bun of her hair and drags her out saying:

"Get out of my house, witch! Get Out! You oppressed me enough when I came as a bride. Until you and your husband turn us out. Now don't come interfering in our lives. If you have no husband, go to someone else, but do not lay hands on my husband!... Go, get out!...Evil woman! You want two husbands! Your own for beating you and mine for loving you. Acha, I won't give my husband! So go (p.96-97).

A woman's voice is too loud or too soft, too aggressive or too passive, she is too good or too bad. A woman lives in a bifurcated world of 'good' and 'bad' that is the root cause of all infliction on woman. Bad mouthed or loud-tongued woman is a salient feature of Anand's novels. Anand creates stereotypical women of wicked qualities and dominating personalities. Bibiji and Gujri do not perform their household duties uncomplainingly, untiringly and quietly but noisily and for that reason they become villains. They use abusive language as a means to assert their place in the home as well as
in the family. Women who are wicked-tongued are the most insecure women in society. They release their frustration and assert themselves by this means. Gujri is barren and always feels threatened and often been shamed by people for her barrenness. This gives a reason to Gujri to hate Munoo and she releases her frustration by abusing him. Parvati is also a barren woman. Ganpat, her husband's business partner, mocks at her but she finds consolation in helping others and by being meek and docile, rather than irritable and abusive.

Anand gives an impression that Nathoo Ram, a bank manager, is hen-pecked husband. Bibi Uttam Kaur, his wife, is the true representation of such real life shrewish woman who maltreats her servants as well as members of the family and screams all the time and seldom allows her tongue to have some rest. Her appearance helps to create a peculiar image for her; her first appearance in the novel is tinged with caricature:

[s]he had a dark face, mobile and without any set form, except that which the tired smile on the corners of her thin lips gave it, and a sharp nose over which her brown eyes concentrated in a squint, and her forehead inclined with wrinkles. Her stern, flat-chested body was swathed in a muslin sari. He had seen none of the hill women drape it in that way, except Jai Singh's mother, the wife of the landlord, who had originally come from town and who, the village women said, was not a woman but a collection of blandishments (p.22-23).
Bibi Uttam Kaur is a portrait of a shrewd and cunning woman whose sharp abusive tongue and frequent desire to slap her dependents is indicative of her callousness. But in reality Bibiji is strictly subject to men in the disposition of her life and talent. Bibiji is not an autonomous human being with lots of freedom. She is a slave of circumstances. She tells Munoo that his place is in the kitchen but ironically her permanent place is in the kitchen. She is the permanent slave while Munoo is a slave for her for some days. She is also vaguely aware of this fact. "Here is the cream and the butter," called Bibiji. ‘Give it to them, so that they may eat and fatten while I slave" (p.37). She screams, shouts, yells, abuses and even sometimes slaps her daughters and servants for not helping her in the household work but no body comes to her help. Her husband never helps her in performing household duties and her brother-in-law also never cares for her worry. They sit and order things. She speaks in a language that is incomprehensible to others. She seems to be mad and inaudible but she is the real victim of the patriarchal pattern of the society. Wollstonecraft rightly remarks in such context: "[w]omen are, in fact, so much degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence, that I do not mean to add paradox when I assert, that this artificial weakness produces a propensity to tyrannize, and gives birth to cunning, the natural opponent of strength."

On the other hand, virtuous emotions like compassion, tenderness and pity abound in all the female characters of Anand. When Munoo is hit by Verma Bibiji takes him to her brother-in-law, a doctor, for treatment. Again when Babu Nathooram beats Munoo for biting his daughter Sheila’s cheek he is rescued by none other than Bibiji. Gujri often takes Munoo in her arms and kisses him and makes him sleep while embracing him. Parbati nurses Munoo tenderly when he has fever: "[s]he would sit by his bed by pressing
it with her hands with a constant, soft, firm movement. She would press his body which was swollen and weighted with the heat in his blood" (p.113). She also nurses her husband Seth Prabha Dayal. Lakshmi presses her husband's legs reverently. Sajani and Leila serve Gangu with great affection when he falls ill. Sohini takes very good care of her father and two brothers. Bhikhu's mother teaches lessons of love to her son even after being insulted by his friends. Gauri loves her husband and cares for him despite being thrown out of the house by him.

Nevertheless, Anand's women are not free from frivolity. In *Untouchable* Anand portrays a scene of women fighting near the well, which shows that women do not have enviable relations with one-another. Gulabo, Sohini, Waziro and many other women sitting near the well fight, abuse and create innumerable scenes that confirm their petty nature. They fight for nothing. Their conversation has no meaning. They only know how to pass comments and teach others to behave properly. “A flutter of excitement seized the little group; exclamations, shouts and cries of ‘Hai, Hai’, and strange looks of disgust, indignation and disapproval were exchanged” (p.29). They even involve in physical fight. Gulabo raises her hand to hit Sohini but Waziro stops her from doing this. Again, when Pundit comes and wants to give water to them, they become agitated at the question of who comes first.

Gulabo is a fair-complexioned, middle-aged woman. She feels superior to every other outcaste, firstly because she claims a high place in the hierarchy of the castes among the low castes, secondly because a well-known Hindu gentleman in the town who had been her lover in her youth is still kind to her in her middle age. Sohini is a threat to her position although she is of her daughter's age. She is a potential rival for her though
she does not confess it. She greets Sohini with mockery and light-hearted abuse. She is a wicked-tongued woman and always finds fine ways to show her false superiority. She blames Sohini of being immodest. “This sweeper-girl goes about without an apron over her head all day in town and in the cantonment” (p.28).

Bibiji is a real hypocrite. When Munoo relieves at the doorstep of the kitchen she thinks: “[w]hat will the sahibs think who pass by our doors every morning and afternoon! The Babuji has his prestige to keep up with the sahibs” (p.28). Further when Babu Nathoo Ram, her husband, asks her why she does not tell Munoo where the lavatory is, she replies: “[ah], do you think I should let him use our lavatory” (p.29). She curses Munoo by saying that he is a stupid village folk although she is herself from rural family. When Prem Chand, her brother-in-law, reminds her about her own background she replies: “[Oh] please don’t tease,’ said Bibiji. ‘We must keep up our prestige. We must keep up appearances, at least before a stranger in the house” (p.30). Bibiji is very particular about the cleanliness, creates lots of fuss about such things. But she boils eggs in the same water in which she prepares tea. Munoo is confused to see this and thinks that even in the village this is considered bad. Her false superiority never allows her children to play with Munoo. Although the men of the family hold all the powers and she is a mere subordinate to them, she is also most aware of the use of the false power she is equipped with.

Anand shows no inhibitions at all about his descriptions of the female form and its sex appeal. Anand fetishizes female body parts and follows Freud who theorized gaze as a phallic activity. He reduces his female characters to mere sexual objects. All the men swoon over Sohini and crave strongly to have her in their arms. Either it is Pundit Kali
Nath or Lakshman or her own brother Bakha. Anand does not even spare a brother to visualize his sister as an object of desire. For Anand, it seems, as it is presented in his novels, women are nothing but a territory to explore. Bakha observes his sister Sohini not as a brother but as a man. He observes her minutely:

[s]he had a sylph-like form, not thin but full-bodied within the limits of the graceful frame, well-rounded on the hips, with an arched narrow waist from which descended the folds of her salwars, and above which were her full, round, globular breasts, jerking slightly for the lack of bodice, under her transparent muslin shirt. Bakha observed her as she walked along swaying. She was beautiful. He was proud of her with a pride not altogether that of a brother for a sister (p.26).

Bakha harbours an incestuous desire for his sister and broods again:

[s]o frail she looked and so beautiful. Bakha was conscious of the charm of his sister. Her slim, pale brown figure, soft and warm and glowing, shot through with a luster that set off her ornaments, the rings in her ears, the bangles on her arms, to a ravishing effect, was so silent and subtly modest and full of a strange tenderness and light. He could not think of her being brutalized by anyone, even by her husband married to her according to the rites of religion. He looked at
her and somehow a picture of her future life seemed to come before him. She had a husband- a man who had her, possessed her. He loathed the ghost of her would-be husband that he conjured up. He could see the stranger holding her full breasts and she responding with a modest acquiescence. He hated the thought of that man touching her. He felt he would be losing something. He dared not think what he would be losing (p.72-73).

In an Indian tradition sister-brother relationship is considered to be one of the most sacred relationships. A sister looks up to her brother while a brother in turn is supposed to protect his sister’s honour. But Anand seems to convey that language of the body or the body appeal makes a more concrete relationship than conventional family values.

Another sensuous description of Sohini’s body by Anand is depicted through Pundit Kalinath’s eyes as, “the fresh, young form whose full breasts with their dark beads of nipples stood out so conspicuously under her muslin shirt, whose innocent look of wonder seemed to stir the only soft chord in his person, hardened by the congenital weakness of his body” (p.33). Pundit fights against the waves of amorousness that begins to flow in his blood and watches her going: “[s]he shyly nodded and went her way, her left hand on her waist, her right on the pitcher and a balance in her steps like the rhythm of a song” (p.34). Lachman, a Brahmin water-carrier, a young man about twenty-six, is obsessed about her: “[h]e too had noticed her before and felt a stirring in his blood, the warm impulse of love, the strange desire of the soul to reach out to something beyond, at
first in fear, then in hope and then with all the concentrated fury of mental and physical obsession” (p.35).

For woman, body plays a significant role in defining her relation with others. Her body is not a body but a territory - a territory which man always wants to conquer. Anand shows women’s body as a root cause of evil in the society and at the same time he cleverly adds to the interest of the novel with such sensuous descriptions. Bakha fantasizes about his friend Ram Charan’s sister:

He had pictured her quite naked as he had seen his mother quite often when he was a child, and his sister, and other little children. An impulse had arisen like a sudden tremor to his brain, and darkened his thoughts. He had felt that as if he could forcibly gather the girl in his embrace and ravish her. Then he had put his hand across his eyes and shuddered in horror at the thought. He had cursed himself for such a vision. His reputation as a docile, good, respectable boy seemed at stake (p.98-99).

Anand emphasizes again and again in most of his novels that a woman can only be an instrument of sexual pleasure no matter what her age, caste, and class and how she is related to others. Relationship between a man and a woman can only be described by the attraction and attachment. He seems to be the perfect follower of Freud’s theory of ‘anatomy is destiny’13. Munoo is only a fifteen years old boy but wherever he goes and meets other women he only feels strange attraction towards them, which is rather erotic. He does not see the age or the gravity of the relationships. All he can see is that the
person is from opposite sex—whether it is Sheila, Parvati, Lakshami or Mrs Mainwaring. Sheila is only seven-year old girl but whenever Munoo looks at her he thinks: "[h]e had been told in his childhood to regard woman as a mother or sister. He called the apparition of Sheila in his mind ‘sister’. But as it recurred again and again and made him want to play with her he forgot to label it ‘sister’. Only he bent his head with shame every time he saw her, either really or in imagination"(p.68). Parvati tends Munoo like his mother when he falls ill but in Munoo’s wild imagination something else runs: "[s]he would lie down by him and take him into her arms while he was tossing from side to side, restless and weak, and he would fall sound asleep, drugged into a stupor by the warmth that radiated from her comfortable body, intoxicated by the tenderness that was in the smell of her body"(p.113). Again:

And this was another unforgettable memory which remained ever fresh in him. A memory different from the recollection of his mother’s embrace, yet like it, but with an extra element of reaching out to the unknown. A memory which stretched from the innocent joy of a child’s love, learning from one woman the need to know another, a memory of love traveling from faith and trust and care, along the curves of desire, into the wild freedom of a love which is natural, which acknowledges the urges of the heart, which seeks fulfilment, like the animals, and which mocks at the subterfuges of religion and the limitations of morality (p.113-114).

When Lakshmi comes near Munoo he again forgets everything:
...Lakshmi was bending over him with a trembling, wild light in her eyes, and a warm flush on her cheeks. He shook his head and bent it low so as to escape the contact which his instincts wanted. She raised his chin with a gentle, gentle brush of her hand and, with all the pathos, all the tenderness of her mother's intuitive understanding of his need, kissed his fore-head, murmuring in the faintest of his whispers, like an incantation! 'We belong to suffering! We belong to suffering! My love!' And she lay down by his side and took him in her arms, pressing him to her bosom with her silent warmth which made him ache with the hurt of her physical nearness, which tortured him, harassed him, making him writhe with all the pent-up fury of his adolescent passion, till in the magic hours of dawn it found an escape in death, in the temporary death of his body in hers (p. 246-247).

Lakshmi does this because she is grateful to Munoo who once saved her child's life, on the other hand Munoo feels attracted towards Lakshmi because she is young and beautiful. Nur does not love his wife Iqbal, but when it comes to the question of having a physical relationship he is helpless. He hardly possesses any positive feelings for his wife still he goes to bed with her:

Nur looked at her, she seemed so helpless and shy that he felt sick to think he had ever hated her, she seemed so touching in her stupidity that he wished he could hold her in his arms now and make a contact which he had refused to establish between himself and her ever since
they had been married, except in the moments of lust when she had docilely opened her legs to him, and he had bathed her in the perfume of his soul, filled the vessel of her personality, and created the illusion that he was loved by his wife, his other self (p.48).

Again in *Two Leaves and a Bud* Anand uses his women characters only to make the novel spicy by their anatomy. He gives everything related to women a sexual dimension. While tending her sick father at one point of time Leila feels that “she did not feel his pain in herself and half-embarrassed that she should be in such close contact with her father’s body” (p.75).

Barbara, daughter of Charles and Margaret, a secondary school passed girl, plays mischief with her mother in the presence of the guests. In a general assessment it would be called impertinence but Anand has described her playfulness in these terms: “Barbara, excited into childishness and mischief, because she felt aware of the presence of the men around her and was naturally impelled to make a butt of the only other woman, even though the woman was her mother” (p.20). Anand shows the relationship between the two women is fragile. When it comes to the question of a man, a woman goes up to any extent to get his favour.

Sheila remembers her childhood friend Jaswant with whom she is forbidden by her mother to play. She recalls: “[s]he had wished he were her brother, her real brother, though, when they played hide-and-seek, he always waited for the opportunity to catch hold of her and squeeze her till her bones cracked. And he was such a tease, always disarranging her apron, taking her unawares and closing her eyes and asking her to guess
who it was” (p.62-3). Dr John de la Havre feels the impact of Barbara on him, “the intoxication of his senses by the reckless mischief in her eyes, and the sensuous curves of her swelling breasts, the curves of her whole form, from the arched lips to the shapely legs” (p.96).

Further, in *The Old Woman and the Cow* Anand objectifies woman’s body by implying that it is forever seductive, tempting, and irresistible to men. The way everyone is after Sohini in *Untouchable*, everyone in this novel is after Gauri. Her husband has strong physical craving for her: “[h]e noticed more often the curves of Gauri’s body, the hard compact breasts, the thin waist, the heavy hips and shapely legs and the bloom of youth which glowed on her face. He felt the longing to go to her and catch her” (p.75). Her Uncle Amru tells about his lustful desire for her: “I must tell you that the bigger crime I have committed is not this; to sell you to Seth Jai Ram Das, but to sacrifice you...I have been fond of you ever since you became a mature girl. I know that you will be mauled by others when I wanted to hug you to myself....I am twice cursed, though my pride did not allow me to say so” (p.136). Pandit Bhola Nath tries to seduce her. Seth also intends for the same and sanctifies rape with holy verses showing deep devotion in religion. Seth tries to coax her with valuable presents such as Benarsi saree, jewellery and also reminds her that she should be grateful to him because he pays money to her mother. He restrains himself but when he thinks that, “this girl was young and her breasts were bursting out of her tunic” (p.152). His desire becomes uncontrolable and he thrust his body upon Gauri and gets kicked by her. Sex here raises the spectre of salacious voyeurism.
Major Ratan Chand Batra, a doctor, shows special interest in her and tries to seduce her. Nurse Young blames Gauri for Dr Batra’s lechery. She asks Gauri to leave the hospital: “[t]he sinful soul of Batra is heading straight for hell. And that hell is you! Tomorrow, I am sure, his wife will leave for her mother’s home, and he will be around. My advice to you is to go away from here and return to your mother’s home” (p.169-70). Batra’s wife Savitri leaves the house and goes to her mother’s home. Gauri’s sexuality is held responsible for the collapse of Batra’s personal life although she does not flirt with him. On the contrary, she tries hard to save herself from Batra’s advancement. But Gauri’s ‘beautiful and sin-provoking body’ is held responsible for the whole mess. Batra says unashamedly justifying his act: “I am telling you I am not a saint!...I am probably a very bad man as you know. But I can’t bear prying eyes around me! And she makes me more vile than I am. I felt quite nicely towards this girl, but by her censorious glances she made me beastly towards her. There is nothing criminal in wanting a young girl, Doctor” (p.183).

Dr Mahindra, a senior doctor of the hospital, understands Dr Batra and justifies his act as it is a normal instinct: “Dr Batra is comparatively a young man and I do not think he is very happy with his wife. You are a woman and you know that, at a certain age, sex is the be-all and end-all of life. And if it is unfulfilled, it makes people vulgar” (p.187). Dr Mahindra condones Dr Batra as if his attempt to seduce Gauri is forgivable act on the part of the man and also gives reason that Dr Batra is not satisfied with his wife so it becomes natural for him to cherish such feelings for her. Dr Mahindra also has hidden sexual desire for Gauri though he does not avowedly accept this. He “envied her husband and could comprehend the passion which Major Batra had suddenly formed for
her. Who wouldn't want to loot the tender bloom of innocence of this young hillwoman”(p.191)? Here Anand shows how sexuality becomes threatening to the social order.

Anand, on the one hand projects woman as symbol of sex and emphasizes the sanctity of chastity and virginity by woman on the other. Virginity is so much stressed in the society, as Gilbert and Gubar say that, it becomes recognition for a woman. Sohini is molested by Pundit Kali Nath. Although Sohini checks pundit’s advancement she feels terribly frightened. Bakha, who is a victim of society and who faces humiliation throughout the novel, suddenly becomes protector of his sister’s honour. He feels an urge to kill Pundit. He keeps on asking Sohini to tell him what exactly the Pundit has done to her although he is well aware of the fact that he also cherishes such feelings for his sister. “He was being tormented with the anxiety to know what had really happened…. ‘Tell me Sohini,’ he said, turning fiercely at his sister, ‘how far did he go” (p.71)? On being asked several times by her brother Sohini tells in his ear that pundit had held her by her breasts. Bakha reacts fiercely and shouts that he will kill Pundit but Sohini drags him away and tells him to go. Bakha is so much worried about his sister’s honour that he starts thinking as to why she is born as a girl to bring disgrace to his family, and why she is not ugly. He wonders why Sohini does not allow him to beat Pundit Kali Nath as he wanted to sacrifice his life for his sister. While Sohini feels “ashamed and crestfallen, with a stain upon her honour she thought it was to have been the object of a scene” (p.74). Sohini is not only an object of that particular scene but throughout the novel she is used as a sexual object.
Gauri’s husband Panchi twice throws her out of the house, both the times on the suspicion regarding her chastity. Chastity is the most important characteristic for an Indian woman. Men consider woman as an object of desire but expect her to be shy. They derive transgressive pleasure by gazing female body parts but such pleasure is denied to the woman. In the whole process, a woman is projected as someone who possesses magical power. But this supposed magical power never helps her in uplifting her status. On the contrary, it gives a feeling that woman is powerful so she must be conditioned and controlled.

Therefore, Mina Loy in *Feminist Manifesto* writes:

The fictitious value of woman as identified with her physical purity is too easy a standby. It renders her lethargic in the acquisition of intrinsic merits of character by which she could obtain a concrete value. Therefore, the first self-enforced law for the female sex, as protection against the manmade bogey of virtue (which is the principal instrument of her subjugation) is the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity throughout the female population at puberty.\(^{15}\)

Gauri perfectly fits into this framework of male paradigm. She is resigned to the fate after being sold to Seth Jai Ram Das but she is not ready to surrender her honor to Seth. She also resists strongly the advances made by Dr Batra and eventually succeeds. For that reason Batra says that her desire to save her honor is stronger than his desire to
seduce her. She drives everyone outwits and it seems in due course she is quite a powerful woman who can make anybody dance to her tunes.

Bhagwanti teaches Rukmani: “A woman has a precious gift to give, and it might be preserved for the man to whom she is given, in religion. Not like the virtue of the city women, which is cast away on the river of evil that runs in the bazaars (p.16)! Why should the women’s honor represent the honor of the group as a whole? Perhaps it is because of the fact as Scheneider argues, women are, “contested resources much like pastures and water.”

Violence is an instrument of power in family relationships. Women especially are subject to verbal, psychological and physical abuse rendering them timid and unsure of themselves. Man’s domination appears to have been used to keep the woman feeling powerless, fearful, and always on the edge. The control over women’s lives takes diverse forms. Nur’s wife Iqbal is a simple looking housewife. Nur never likes his wife and sends her back to her mother’s home with the baby and only realizes his sin when he is about to die. Nur recalls:

... he had cruelly and deliberately detached himself from her, because she was restrained by the conventions, because she wasn’t a fashionable woman who could put on saree and walk out with him so that he could proudly show her off to the world as his wife, and he was full of remorse....she had followed him about tenderly, pathetically, fetching him cool drinks, and fanning him, pressing his head, rubbing his feet, soothing him...she had yielded to him the perplexing knowledge of her pregnancy. And even then she had followed him
about, like a devoted dog, worshipping him with her eyes, while he, in
the panic of the fear of fatherhood that hung like an extra load on his
already heavy-laden head, had frowned on her, refused to talk to her,
and ignored her utterly, only charging her now and then with a
deliberate, violent, hard thrusts of a diabolical passion, as if he wanted
to revenge himself against her, leaving her high and dry in the writhing
of dissatisfaction, without a word or a gesture of consolation (p.48-9).

Iqbal is so traumatized by Nur’s neglect that she never realizes what she wants;
why she is dying to have her husband’s favour. Even when Nur is ill she does not dare go
near him. Nur only realizes his crime on the deathbed. He thinks: “[i]t was my perverse
pride that denied Iqbal’s feelings….and sent her away to her father’s house…even the
playful smile on the face of Rashida, whom my sperm had made, did not move me”
(p.55).

The novel The Old Woman and the Cow opens with a scene of marriage of Panchi
who while on his way to marry Gauri thinks: “[f]or there was the prospect of the prize of
a girl—a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day, who would
adorn his house and help him with the work on the land” (p.5). The beginning of the
novel itself shows the pathetic plight of the Indian woman living in a world of change.
Panchi claims that only after his marriage all his troubles have begun:

“Your love, oh my Hire, has dragged me

Through the mirk of the world!...” (p.28)
Panchi beats Gauri thinking it is his birthright. He calls her 'childling' and 'betrayer of my salt'. He steals mangoes for her and when he is caught he blames Gauri that it is because of her he is humiliated. He is an irresponsible man and like a traditional Indian man easily blames his wife for every mess caused by him. He suspects Gauri of having a relationship with Rajguru, one of his friends, and turns her out of the house. When people start pointing fingers at Gauri's character once again for working as a nurse in a city hospital, Panchi tries to be strong and patient but succumbs to the people's sarcasm, loses his temper and beats her. The most brutalizing aspect of familial ideologies in close-knit communities is that such ideologies can obscure the forms of violence women are subjected to.

Lambardar Dhooli Singh’s wife, Sapti, is another victim of male violence. Dhooli Singh favours the untouchables and that means his being lost to his faith. Therefore, Sapti prays for him and in order to make him realize about his sin she leaves home and takes shelter in a temple. But this helps Sapti in no way. On the contrary, she is punished for her act of leaving the house. "Then, from the darkness of her soul, there arose an anguished cry, the mourning sound for the lost clothes, the lost religion, the lost husband, the lost son, and the lost daughter"(p.62). Sapti fails in her attempt to mend the ways of her husband. She takes the support of religion in justifying her act but even the religious implication does not hold importance before the firm decision of her husband.

Rape symbolizes power of man over woman. Rape of the poor women signifies the rape of the entire community, the entire class and the entire gender that the woman belongs to. Reggie Hunt, an assistant planter, is an epitome of the patriarchal and the
colonial brutality. Reggie Hunt tries to establish his identity by showing his power to the coolie women because he is from a broken family where his father has his own sweetheart and the mother has her own lover. Throughout the novel he is after coolie women and rapes them openly and shamelessly thinking that it is his right. He has no consideration for anyone's mother or sister. He openly lives forcibly with three coolie women. The coolie women shuffle like hens at the arrival of the much dreaded man, Reggie Hunt. They become fearful and try to hide themselves from him while he feels elated at their plight. Anand gives an elegant and a vivid description of Reggie Hunt:

Ordinarily he was full of the pride of the white man engaged in pioneering. The white heat of the strange bodily passion would well up in him as he rode about, a strange, inexplicable glow of pure physical health, in his biceps, in his triceps, in his rump, in his thighs and in his gaitered shines. He would feel strong and then he wanted to be noticed and admired. He was involved in an ecstasy of sheer power (p.41).

He is compared with Napoleon, a tyrant, but he is also glorified being a man. The symbolic significance of Reggie's surname itself reveals his true character. 'Hunt' means to catch or kill wild animals or birds for food, sport or to make money. As his name suggests he hunts innocent, helpless and hapless coolie women. Narayan, a fellow coolie says to Gangu, "Nobody's mother or sister is safe in this place" (p.39). Hunt yells at the coolie women for cheating and says: "[a]nd not only here, too, the deceitful bitches. They try the same game in bed, leaving you high and dry at the critical moment" (p.53). Once a coolie refuses to procure his wife to him and for that he faces dire consequences. He is
sent to jail and his wife is taken away by Reggie Hunt. He keeps her for months and gives her jewellery and land and then throws her out to have another woman.

Hunt also justifies his act by thinking: “[h]ow many of them didn’t have coolie women? Hitchcock and Ralph did exactly what he had done, only they are bloody hypocrites and went about their business in an underhand, slimy way. And old Mac and Croft-Cooke had done the same before their marriage, in their younger days” (p.249). He wants to restore his dignity by marrying a decent girl. He thinks that, “perhaps the best thing would be for him to go home and get married and then comeback and be thoroughly respectable. That would rehabilitate his position, he said to himself” (p.249). Hunt’s crime is understood by Anand — a crime perpetrated by a colonizer against the colonized rather than a crime perpetrated by a human being against another human being. Anand implies that it is not the rape of women which is so distressful but it is rape of an Indian by a foreigner and it is also rape of poor by rich. It is not only distressful but also shameful on part of those men who are incapable of saving their women. Sehjo Singh, a sociologist, aptly postulates, “[i]n a rape, the aggressor is a man, the rapist. The aggrieved party is also a man, the father or the husband, and the woman is only the damaged property.”

Anand draws another dimension of the predicament of Indian coolie working for tea-planters in Assam, which is financial depravity. Poverty makes woman morally vulnerable. Women are exploited, tortured and raped by the managers but it is a disgusting irony that women and men instead of hating perpetrators hate fellow victims. Narayan, a coolie is cynical not about Hunt’s act but about the prosperity of Ranbir’s wife who is raped and given gifts in the form of land, money and jewellery. Neogi and his wife are also taunted by the fellow coolies because she is now Reggie Hunt’s latest
"[y]es, some there be who give their wives away to the sahibs for money and then preen themselves on their power before us,' said Chambeli brazenly, aloud so that Neogi and everyone might hear that" (p.176). She further says cynically, "But does the illegal son of a shameless mother think that I don’t know how much money and land he got by selling his wife? And she, the slutish whore to a thousand lovers, stands there quiet as a thief, that bitch who has become loaded with jewellery overnight when she hadn’t a ring on her fingers for years" (p.177-78). Chambeli is so jealous of Neogi’s wife that she fails to recognize the agony of her and so she pounces upon her and involves in a physical fight. The fight between the two women results in the death of one coolie and leaves several injured. Neogi’s wife, a victim of rape, becomes complicit in promoting male desires. Dirty jokes, comments and anecdotes become integral side effects of this rape. Kathleen Barry in her book *Female Sexual Slavery* has justly pointed out the implicit female guilt in all sexual contacts outside marriage, never mind whether it is through coercion or through self-will.¹⁸

Being an Indian woman in colonial era meant enslavement and physically laceration against resistance. Indian female body became the site of a series of visible markings, mutilations, distortions and violations during the period of slavery. Abuse, rape and other societal inscriptions marked them physically. These markings become signifiers for captivity at many levels: first by the husband, second by the society, and third by the colonizer. Neogi’s wife epitomizes of these multiple bodily markings:

[s]he yielded to him, her body limp and contorted into a silent despair, her eyes agaze at the wild sensual heat in his face, her heart turned inwards at the cold virginity that seemed to freeze her at the contact
with him. He made a sudden upcharge, as if he were dealing a death-blow to himself and to her and he swung her body hard, hard, harder, tearing the flesh of her breasts, biting her cheeks and striking her buttocks till she was red and purple like a mangled corpse, ossified into a complete obedience by the volcanic eruption of his lust.

The gracious curve of her fair Himalayan face was the shame of roses as it lay encased in the tangles of her hair at the angle at which she had first known love after her marriage. Only the marks of Reggie Hunt's mutilations derided the bliss (p.173-74).

Barbara Foley rightly states that, "[t]he so called artistic representation of naked bodily pain...contains, however remote, the potentiality of wringing pleasure out of it." A logical connection has been established between sexuality and male violence, which acts as a resonant social critique of women's gender oppression in Indian society of the thirties. Sexuality thus, constructs the counter-erotics, a politics in-and-of the flesh, legitimizing pleasure, as well as pain, as an ethical effect of and response to such writing.

Language plays an important role in the formation of characters. Anand peppers his fiction with abusive language which has sexual connotations and is offensive to women. It shows how society treats women in spite of considering woman the 'honour' of the family and society. But the most interesting thing is that women themselves often use abusive language. Women are seen to speak from within the patriarchal discourse. Abuses like 'lover of your mother', 'illegally begotten', 'rape
sister', 'bitch', 'prostitute', 'wanton' and 'slut' are used to describe women. Edwin Ardener's observations are pertinent to quote in this context:

Both muted and dominant groups generate beliefs of ordering ideas of social reality at the unconscious level, but dominant groups control the forms or structures in which consciousness can be articulated. Thus muted group must mediate their beliefs through the allowable forms of dominant structures. Another way of putting this would be to say that all language is the language of the dominant order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it. 21

Abusive epithet generally relates to power relations. When a man abuses he is considered to be strong, powerful and dominating but when a woman abuses it gives an impression that she is a figure of evil. Gujri abuses Munoo by calling him ‘Ohe Munooa’, ‘Ominous orphan’, ‘evil star’. In contrast to Gujri we have a town woman Bibi Uttam Kaur. Having been tired after a long journey when Munoo tries to have some rest Bibi curses him saying: “[e]ater of your masters! Strange servant you are that you fall asleep before the sun sets! What is the use of a boy like you in the house if you are going to do that every day. Wake up! Wake up! Brute! Wake up and serve the Babuji his dinner. Or at least eat your food before you sleep, if sleep and die you must” (p.25). She not only abuses and slaps Munoo but also abuses her children and slaps them. The way these women treat Munoo, as well as others in the family, shows that Anand means them to be portraits of villainous characters whose sharp abusive tongue and frequent desire to slap their dependents is indicative of their callousness. In Untouchable Ram Charan abuses
his mother Gulabo by calling her bitch, for he has been hardened into an impudent, obstinate young rascal by the persistency of his mother’s abuse. When a son abuses his mother it is not the son but his mother is held responsible for his misbehaviour but when a father abuses his children, it is his right. Bakha, Rakha and Sohini suffer from their father’s abuse but they never complain. Lakha, Sohini’s father says, “I thought you were dead or something, daughter of a pig” (p.36)! The Father enjoys a position that Sherry. B. Ortner explains as, “fathers are accorded tremendous power and authority over the subordinates within their households, the women and the junior males; and finally fathers are highly fetishized within the symbolic order, as ancestors, gods, or God.” After the death of his first wife Nur’s father marries again to a girl who is few years older to his son. He thrashes his son for every small reason. Nur fails to understand the reason behind his father’s changed attitude towards him: “[h]is father had remained simple, cruel and stubbornly upright like God, both wanted and unwanted... Was it because of his mother’s death that this difference had arisen between them” (p.63)?

The British presence has always been perceived as a threat to the Indian culture. Indians fear the disappearance of ‘India’ from the face of the earth by becoming merged with the more powerful imperial presence which infiltrated all spheres of socio-cultural ambience. Anand being aware of this problem, reflects the agony of the Indian society through his Indian as well as Western female characters in his novels in the first three novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*.

At the time when these novels were published the social and political scene of India was turbulent. In the name of competing with the Westerners the Indians were also imitating them. Indian intellectuals feared that the exposure to the West might also
corrupt Indian women and make them admire and imitate their English counterparts. Partha Chatterjee opines that, "[t]he new politics of nationalism 'glorified India's past and tended to defend everything traditional;' all attempts to change customs and lifestyles began to be seen as the aping of Western manners and thereby regarded with suspicion."

In contrast to the sober and loving Indian woman Sohini, Anand presents a Western character Mary Hutchinson in the novel Untouchable. Mary Hutchinson, Colonel Hutchinson's wife, is rather an irreligious woman. She is a "round faced, big-bellied, dark-haired, undersized, middle-aged woman, a cigarette in a long cigarette-holder in her mouth, a gaily-coloured band on her Eton-cropped hair, pince-nez glasses on her rather small eyes, a low-necked printed cotton frock, that matched her painted and powdered face and reached barely down to her knees" (p.147). She was a barmaid in Cambridge. She discovers that her husband is too somber for her gay card-playing, drinking and love-making tastes. She has borne with him great many years, on the strength of whisky. Her shriek, hoarse and hysterical voice makes the colonel nervous: "[h]e was afraid of her. He was confused. He did not know whether to go into the mud-house on the right, which was his bungalow, or to take Bakha in there, or to take him to the church. He stood hesitating" (p.146). She is nowhere different from an Indian woman in terms of her rustic nature. She, in fact, is worse than the Indian woman because Indian women are not the source of terror for people around them.

Another contrast between Indian and Western female characters is seen in the novel Coolie where Anand presents the character of Mrs Mainwaring to Indian women - Bibiji, Gujri, Parvati and Lakshmi. Anand exposes layer-by-layer sham and hypocrisy of
the Westerners. Mrs Mainwaring feels ashamed of having a Moslem washerwoman as her grandmother. She never for once feels ashamed of having a promiscuous mother. Her mother left her and her father when she was one year old because she was expecting a child by someone else. She is a convent-educated woman who has inferiority complex about her origin. She harbours an ambition to become a ‘pukka white’ and desires to go to Europe to fulfil this ambition of her. She marries a German, Heinrich Ulmer, a photographer, because it is an easy way to legitimize her ‘pukkahood’. She saves Munoo for the fear that if someone sees her they will stone her to death and at the same time she also needs a servant. Anand seems to convey that if there is goodness in her character it is because she has Indian origin. “Her warmth, her ardour, her intense capacity for desire, must have been due to the blood of her pagan Indian grandmother in her” (p.287).

Anand believes Indian women are subjected to their men’s desire while Western women have their own desire to love men. Raja Rao in *The Serpent and the Rope* has expressed similar thought when one of his female characters Saroja tells her brother Rama that the Western women know how to love men. Anand has created a promiscuous Western female character Mrs Mainwaring. She is a woman for whom a man is an object of desire; an object to explore just as for an Indian man a woman is a territory to explore. For her Munoo is a utility object:

> [h]e was to her a young boy with lithe, supple body, with a small, delicate face, and with a pair of sensitive eyes.... For a boy of fifteen was just what she wanted. And however old Munoo felt inside him, she neither cared to know nor had the capacity to know. He was just the boy for her, just the right servant (p.285).
Mrs Mainwaring thinks:

She would love to have asked him to come and talk to her. But he was a mere servant. How could she think of such a thing? And yet she felt she was like Michael Arlen's Iris Storm, a much misunderstood woman. 'Why didn’t the world understand,' she said, 'how a woman gives herself in love, in hate, in pity, in tenderness, in playfulness, and in a hundred different moods? What right had people to judge one? Why can’t I give myself to this boy?' she asked. The regular curves of his young body, its quick sudden flashes of movement stirred the chords of her being in a strangely disturbing manner (p.293-94).

Raking this thought in her mind she calls Munoo and clips his nails and says:

Beautiful boy! Lovely boy! You only want a wife now!' Munoo smiled with the quivering ripples of affection that the contact of her hands had produced in him. He felt dizzy with the intoxicating warmth that her coquettish movements had aroused in him. He hung his head down to avoid the embarrassment which he felt, and yet unable to control the fire in his blood, he fell at her feet in an orgy of tears and kisses. She pushed him away suddenly, shouting: 'What impertinence! What cheek! Go to your work! Go and get your work done. Get the breakfast ready (p.295).
In previous episodes Munoo feels an irresistible urge for women whether it is Sheila or Parbati or Lakshmi but here Mrs Mainwaring is after men. She marries Captain Aga Raza Ali Shah by divorcing her first husband but does not stop her flirtatious attitude and is beaten and kicked out by the Captain. She divorces him and marries Guy Mainwaring, a young man much younger to her, by telling a lie that she is going to be his child’s mother. She also deceives him by having a relationship with the Health Officer, Mr Merchant. She yearns to have Munoo in her arms. In spite of this strong impulse Mrs Mainwaring resists this temptation for Munoo only to save her dignity for being involved with a mere servant. Her false superiority complex comes in the way of her pleasure.

In spite of all her amour-propre Mrs Mainwaring is reduced to an object of desire for the rich people, both English and Indian. “She exerted her female charms on Education Minister of the Zalimpar State and got a job teaching in a children’s school. To keep her job she had to please other men. Being a pretty woman and “one of the few emancipated women in the world where the female sex is veiled off from the sight of the male, she was the object of admiration of rich courtiers, high officials, eminent judges, both English and Indian”(p.287-88). Anand sarcastically defines the concept of emancipation of woman in this paragraph and tries to say that being a public property is all what it is meant to be a ‘free’ and ‘emancipated’ woman. This way, Anand establishes Indian women’s superiority over Western women because even villainous characters like Gujri and Bibiji are much better than Mrs Mainwaring.

Nevertheless, Mrs Mainwaring is also punished for her free attitude and for her promiscuity. She pays the price for imitating man. Having been refused to the admission
of the Union Jack Club for her notoriety she faces sheer ignominy of shame. She has also been herded aside with the Indian crowd.

In the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* in contrast to an Indian woman Sajani, Anand presents a Western woman Margaret or Mrs Charles Croft-Cooke, wife of the manager of tea-state. Like Gangu, Charles Croft-Cooke also thinks of Margaret as an irresponsible and ignorant woman. He does not care for what she says and gives mechanical reply to everything she asks. There is no trace of sensitiveness between them. She is so ignorant that she never realizes her husband’s indifference towards her and her brother-in-law reveals this to her. She passes her time between home and club and an occasional visit to Calcutta. She has profound longing for a son. She hardly exercises any power except criticizing servants and coolies. Anand also affirms the fact that being a woman always seems to define in relation to serving the male whether it is Indian or Western.

Anand presents the character of Barbara in contrast to Leila. Barbara hates people of the club for putting on airs, talking pompously. She thinks she can laugh at them because she is open and frank and admires Havre, a doctor and her boyfriend, for being real, straightforward, blunt and honest who pursues truth relentlessly. She finds in him: “[w]hat a passionate fire he had! And how he spent and consumed himself! It was that spark of fire that had kindled her. He had woman’s sensitiveness, fierce and gentle; a tiger’s tenderness. That, she thought, was probably why she loved him” (p.113). She has been a virgin and she has given herself to him without the least little self-consciousness. She feels they are the perfect couple and nothing can separate them. She hates him for his righteous indignation and his references to her parents but also she loves him and worships him and always longs for his body. On being asked by Havre to kiss, Barbara
replies: "[o]f course, darling,' she cried, 'what did I come here for if not to be kissed" (p.121)? When Havre is in trouble Barbara leaves him unashamedly and says that she can not tolerate his zeal for social work anymore, which she once used to admire and felt proud of. All her desire to lead a luxurious life will come to an end if she marries Havre. Whereas, "she wanted a respectable marriage with a certain amount of income, and all the rest of the world could go to hell" (p.214). Barbara says to de la Havre, "How can I give up all my relations, all my friends?...But you wanted to,' he said, 'and you...'. .I can’t live up to you," she said. ‘I can’t be so intense all the time” (p.228). Havre could only say, “I was innocent and honest” (p.228). Anand seems to convey that woman’s vision is myopic. Women are fine as long as they are supplied with money and material comfort. He also posits that the coolie women involve in physical relationships because they are forced to do so and in turn they get some money while Barbara is a girl who commits adultery just to satisfy her fancy and snaps the relationship when there is no hope to get money and comfort from the man. There is a deep chasm between the character of Leila and Barbara. Leila tries to save her honour at the expense of her life whereas Barbara offers it to get material happiness.

Anand ridicules the idea of following Western manners. He himself posits in the Introduction of Two Leaves and a Bud: “As I got into the book, I was biased in favour of my Indian characters and tended to caricature the Englishmen and English women who play such a vital part in this bloom.”24 Finally, he confirms superiority of Indian ways of life by showing the shams and hypocrisies of the Westerners. One of the coolies observes:
Any Angrezi woman whose husband earns twelve hundred rupees a month will not leave cards at the house of a woman whose husband earns five hundred. And the woman whose husband earns five hundred looks down upon the woman whose husband earns three hundred. The rich don’t really want to mix with each other. The women perspire in their furs and their underclothes get wet. And the men are uncomfortable in their tight trousers as they flirt with other men’s wives (p.314).

Further:

...it has now become mere play and the love is not thought of, except that it warms up the cold natures of these people and they can go kissing and tittering in the corners and prepared to get married and to go to bed together. You don’t need to dance about to go to bed with woman, you roughs. You are superior to all these colonels and generals and maharajahs. But still you go on driving the rickshaw (p.314).

Youth is the season for love in both sexes, but in those days of thoughtless enjoyment men are able to control their thoughts and build their career while women let their thoughts go scot-free, craving for husbands and spoil their career and life fantasizing not about their future but their future husbands. Rukmani, a seventeen-year-old girl, likes Bhikhu but does not have the courage to tell this to anyone because he is from low caste.
She wants to deck herself up so that her beauty could charm him. She dreams, "the fleeting impression of someone forcing himself upon her in the night disturbed her, and she vowed in her heart never to wed at all" (p.15). She is having difficulty in getting married because her father has not sufficient dowry to give. It is decided that her brother should marry first although he is younger to her and the dowry he gets will be given to her. Instead of thinking how to improve her financial status she finds escape in dreaming. "And then she tried to beckon the features of Bhikhu before her silent steady gaze. Instinctively, her eyes closed and she felt a mysterious smile come over her lips. She was soft and heady as she advanced in a trance, like a peahen" (p.15-16). She cries after the loss of her bridegroom and blames her father and brother for everything. "She was choking with rage, against father and brother for bringing about the catastrophe, and thus forcing out "they" to his father. More than these two men, the image of "they", as "they" would caress her some day, had held her emotions secretly in thrall for months. Nothing had been sweeter in life than the prospect that, soon, soon, a man would take away from this house...She felt alone and helpless, bereft, a widow, even before she had been married" (p.74).

In a similar vein, Mala dreams of Sajnu:

"[s]he had been asking in this dream for water, even as she had asked for it as a child when she was thirsty. Mother was nowhere within sight. Only "they" was standing with open arms to embrace her. And she had stretched out her hands for the water. But "they" did not give the water and only asked for a kiss. And she nearly died of thirst,
even as she leaned on one side with her hand, cupped under the mouth to receive the water, while "they" came and tore her dupatta from her head. With an instinctive sense of shame, long after the dream was over, she again drew the curtain over her face and moved her head as though to say: No, no, no" (p.92)!

On these two female characters Rukmani and Mala, Florence Nightingale's words aptly suits: "Women dream till they have no longer the strength to dream; those dreams against which they so struggle, so honestly, vigorously, and conscientiously, and so in vain, yet which are their life, without which they could not have lived; those dreams go at last. All their plans and visions seem vanished, and they know not where; gone, and they cannot recall them."25

Anand states that the novel *The Road* shows the development of the attitude of the characters and awareness for their dignity and self-pride is found among lower caste. But in dealing with the problems of the lower caste people the issues related to women are lost somewhere. Women remain the same as they were. Anand certainly exposes the shams of the society but his female characters being vulnerable selves lack the strength of any ideological stance. Rukmani and Mala live in Alice's wonderland whereas Bhikhu tries hard to assert himself by ridiculing the age-old tradition of untouchability. He wants to be at par with the upper caste people and tries to establish himself as a reputed human being. He even leaves the village at the end to improve his condition.

A sense of identity means that one's life is meaningful, that, as fragile as one may be, one can still have an impact on one's limited surroundings. In *Death of a Hero*
Maqbool dies a death of martyr in order to establish his own identity but female characters are mere onlookers of the event happening at that time. They may have different ideology- the ideology that is based on the perceptions of their husbands' or brothers; they are nothing but spectators waiting for things to be done either by Almighty or by men. Upper-class women try to save their money and honour, middle-class women try to urge their men to go out for a fight and save their identity through active participation in nationalist movement and lower-class women wait for things to happen and are ready to accept this as their destiny.

Noor, Maqbool's sister, is a good example of the 'new woman' emerging out of the social reform. Noor is educated and understands the feelings and dilemmas of men in a better way. Maqbool writes a letter to his sister Noor:

[y]ou are the only person to whom I could have written these words.
Because you are a young girl with dreams of your own and will soon understand what I am saying....And when you are married and have a child, I want you to remember this and let your offspring bear my name. I think your husband will permit this, because I am sure you will choose an enlightened man to be your companion in life....And your child will grow up and work for our lovely land, and through him or her, my spirit will be working for the new life in our country (p.93).

Maqbool asks Noor to get married and have children so that her children could fulfill his longings and aspirations. He never asks Noor to fulfil his aspirations. Noor is
the perfect example of new woman who is educated and could understand the feelings and longings of educated men better.

Meena Surjeet Singh observes about Gauri:

On this dismal firmament of Indian womanhood shines Gauri, the brightest star on Anand’s canvas, wit incipient temerity culminating in a flash of brilliance which explodes the Sita myth into a thousand fragments and redeems thereby, the female species through Gauri’s symbolic emancipation on the road to Hoshiarpur. The leitmotif of *The Old woman and the Cow*, developed against the background of the claustrophobic social culture, is movement and each conclusive phase of movement corresponds with a progression in Gauri’s journey to emancipation.26

However, Gauri is also not free from the shackles of society but is like any other woman who can not do without the help of a man. She is able to desert her husband only because she has the support of Dr Mahindra and without this alternative she might have decided to stay back with her husband regardless of the degree of humiliation inflicted on her. The character of Gauri is much on the pattern of Henrick Ibsen’s Nora in the play *The Doll’s House* but with a difference. In *The Doll’s House* Nora walks out of her husband’s house to an indefinite destination but Gauri leaves her husband’s house to go to a definite destination where another man is waiting for her and is ready to accept her though it is depicted in a very subtle manner. Gauri goes back to Dr Mahindra because: “[s]he knew Dr Mahindra would be there, and this reassured her.
She would go to him and live under the shadow of his protection and work as a nurse until her child came” (p.284). Dr Mahindra is a widower, trustworthy and at the same time he possesses some feelings for Gauri which is evident in the statement: “[I]take her away, or I might marry her myself,’ he said as he puffed hard at his cigarette, and laughed.....while Gauri, who had got used to the frankness and the audacity of his manner, only demurely drew the dupatta on to her forehead” (p.245). In the entire novel there is not a single instance where we can find Dr Mahindra talking frankly and freely with other characters. He becomes familiar and close only to Gauri.

It is also worth noting that Gauri dares to take such a bold step because she is from a family where she has no father and her mother is a liberal who ridicules this idea of one husband and one life. Therefore, she has no one to give account for her act. She has spent many nights out of the house due to which she is again harassed by her husband. He suspects her of having physical involvement with other men and this gives her enough reason to leave home. She heads towards a destination where the nuisance of the society can no longer perplex her. Gauri disappears from the village for another destination maintaining the myth that if women fail to prove their chastity they have to move out of the place willingly or unwillingly. Shoma A. Chatterji rightly states that, “women are conditioned to value their virginity before marriage and their chastity after, as though their very life depended on it!”

Her act of leaving house can not be considered bold and radical. Gauri shifts her God from one man to another. By all means, she and her child will be safer in Dr Mahindra’s hospital. Her shifting of space from village to city unambiguously shows
the locus of power relationships between a man and a woman. She goes to serve another man and in the whole process makes him her God.

In his most revolutionary novels *The Old Woman and the Cow*, *The Road* and *Death of a Hero* Anand revisits and reiterates the same old paradigms for living in Indian society. He conveys the same banal thought that a woman who breaks the norms is forced out of the society be it a man or a woman. Gauri leaves her ancestral village and her husband’s village in search of better life. Bhikhu, fed up of caste system, leaves his village hoping for a respected life. Maqbool dies the death of a martyr. So, all the three protagonists of the novels, who possess revolutionary thought, are sent out of the village.

From all these varied female types and their experiences in the seven novels by Anand discussed here, the picture that emerges is a dismal one. He, in spite of being an author who is known to be a man with a mission, hardly interrogates why women are condemned to submission. Anand felt the grief of the social victims to the very marrow of his bone reflecting his humanist concerns. However, his ‘humanism’ is deeply anchored in patriarchal ideology.
Notes


5 -----, *The Old Woman and the Cow.* Bombay: Kutub Popular, 1960.


15 Ibid., 1365.


18 Ibid., 72.


