Mulk Raj Anand highlights the desperate struggle of poor women for existence in a commercial world. Hunger and poverty was the result of economic exploitation caused by traders, money lenders, landlords, house owners, colonizers and industrialists. War for freedom struggle affected the economic condition of the society. Due to failure of monsoon, agriculturists could not get the expected profit. Then, people started to borrow money and mortgage lands. To meet the family expenses women were exposed to the society to earn money as men. But women faced peculiar problems in addition to the problems of men. Within the family women were exploited by her family members. Impact of economic exploitation on women is explored in this chapter.

Women’s individuality and her power (sakthi) are not recognized many times due to her economic dependence. There are so many reasons for the economic dependence. In a patriarchal society, after marriage, women had to live in husband’s house. Her needs must be fulfilled by the in-laws. At home, her unpaid labour was considered as her duty. Though women managed the family expenses, women did not have the freedom of spending money for herself or for her parents and siblings. At the time of marriage she was considered as a commodity and before marriage she was considered as a ‘guest’ in her family. The dual burden of women - in the house and in the workplace - was not recognized by the family and society. “They are not able
to fight these forces because they are uneducated, fearful and poor” (Sudharshan Sharma 68).

Mulk Raj Anand analysed the hunger and poverty of the low class people. *Untouchable* is one such novel which analyses economic exploitation of the untouchables, Sohini and her brother Bakha, by the high caste Hindus. Untouchable did not have enough money to dig well. *The Road* is another novel depicting the problem of untouchable. *Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Old Woman and the Cow* are the novels that depict the impact of the interest on the peasants. In the novel *Old Woman and the Cow* Gauri became the victim of the economic exploitation by her family members. She is the only character who struggled a lot and achieved success through her economic independence. It depicts the importance of economic independence of women. *The Big Heart* depicts the impact of industrialization on women. Traditional coppersmiths are rendered jobless. Ram Saran and Binde Saran brothers were ready to sell their daughter Kausalya in marriage.

Autobiographical novels *Seven Summers, Morning Face* and *Confession of a Lover* depict the life of Krishan. Krishan’s aunt, Devaki, a widow was forced to spend her money on her adopted son’s marriage. Krishan’s mother and aunt were economically exploited by their mother-in-law. Though they earned money, they were economically dependant.

Economic isolation of the village was changed. It affected the life of agriculturists, peasants, weavers, coppersmiths, sweepers in the villages. As a result, the class system started, as the rich and the poor. The source of income in the villages was less. So the villagers were the victims of hunger and poverty. They considered agriculture not only as a business but also considered as their duty.
Lokanathan while analyzing the economic development of farmers says, “Agriculture in our country is not always in a good shape. The standard of living of people in the countryside, mainly the marginal farmers and the landless agricultural labourers is much lower than those living in towns and cities” (28-29). As agriculture failed, our national income was decreased.

Tiruvalluvar, the great universal poet, pays tribute to the farmers. “They alone live who live by agriculture; all others lead a cringing, dependant life” (Pope 214). Through the help of agriculturalist only, the people get food. On the contrary, the agriculturists depended on others for food due to hunger and poverty. Traders “earn money by buying wheat which the peasants grow and by selling it as flour to the Angrezi Sarkar, or by buying cotton and making cloth and selling it at a profit” (Coolie 7). British economic system affected the life of Indians.

They completely destroyed the isolationist and self-sufficing character of the village; they brought money to the villages and substituted it for barter; they contributed to the growth of new urban centres by opening up opportunities for trade and evolving credit instruments; they also contributed to the large establishment of large scale industries, destruction of handicrafts, concentration of clerks in certain areas thus, contributing to the growth of slums, etc. (Jayabalan 110)

The rich exploited the poor by foul methods. The poor could not protest against the rich in the fear of loosing the meager source of income. Though they knew they were being exploited they did not protest against their economic exploitation. So in fear of economic insecurity they continued their status. As Saros Cowasjee says, it is clear that “The struggle for national freedom, too, is essentially a struggle for economic freedom, a fight against British economic exploitation of India. Nowhere do Anand’s heroes call on
the people to get together just for the sake of self-respect, dignity, or the sheer right to govern themselves” (Saros Cowasjee 131). Without money it is too difficult to lead a life with self respect and dignity.

Anand, in every novel, explains how his characters, common men and women, were persecuted by the economic inequalities. In the commercial world, nobody can exist without money. The value of money is revealed in the preface of the novel *Morning Face*: “...Money itself, as a vast impersonal mechanism of Power, inexorably governs life like an Unknown Fate, as the unknown Gods or the Unknown evil in men, commanded life in the past, pursuing its seemingly mysterious ends, indifferent to the feelings of men and women” (MF v). So money is essential to lead happy and contented life.

Hunger is the natural event in all living creatures. It forces them to work to sustain in the world. G.S Balarama Gupta analyses different types of hungers in the novel of Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hungers!* Hunger for food, hunger for power and hunger for freedom are the important three hungers. “Apart from these major hungers, there are minor ones too: the hunger for health, for fame, for sex, and for security” (Gupta 210). Anand depicts the hunger for food in many of his novels.

The poor people worked hard to get food and they did not bother about their shelter and cleanliness as it was impossible. They accepted their life as it was their fate. But, they wanted to come out of the economic clutches. “A tribal woman’s hard work and contribution to the family’s income has not always helped to raise her status in the society” (Thakur 13). As both men and women were uneducated and poor they could not earn more money. Their life ends in their struggle to get food and the basic needs. So it was impossible for them to give dowry. But, in the middle class society those who had land have to get money and give to the girl at the time of marriage.
The women of his novels like Sohini in *Untouchable*, Munoo’s mother and Prabh Dayal’s wife Parbati in *Coolie*, Rukmani and Laxmi in *The Road*, Leila, Sajani and Shama in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Kausalya in *The Big Heart*, Krishan’s mother, aunts and Devaki in the autobiographical novels *Seven Summers*, *Morning Face* and *Confession of a Lover* Gauri and Gauri’s mother, Laxmi in *Old Woman and the Cow* are victims of economic exploitation.

Anand portrays the hunger and poverty of the untouchables in the novels *Untouchable* and *The Road*. Due to untouchability, the untouchables suffered socially and economically. The economic condition has led them to depend on the higher caste Hindus. To dig well money is essential. The colony of the outcastes was an uncongenial place to live in due to absence of drainage system. They had no well of their own because it cost at least a thousand rupees to dig a well in such a hilly town as Bulashah. Their economic condition forced them to join their hands with servile humility. For water they crowded round the well and congested the space below its high brick platform, morning, noon and night. They, the untouchable womenfolk, spent a lot of time in a day to draw water. They led a struggling life in getting the basic amenities like food, water and shelter. Sohini, an untouchable, collected food (left over) from the houses as wages for cleaning.

In *The Road*, the untouchables worked in the land of landlords to get grain. But as the government supported them, they began to earn money, for their work. However, they earned money by making baskets and by selling goats milk. Their huts were burnt as they lived in other’s places which were not belonged to them. The poverty had affected the family of Munoo in *Coolie*. While his father had died “a slow death of bitterness and disappointment” (*Coolie* 3), his mother was left bereft of money with two dependents a young brother-in-law and “a child in arms” (*Coolie* 3).
Poverty and the innate desire to exist in the society forced the peasants to borrow money from the moneylenders. They could not repay the loan they borrowed due to the failure of monsoon and exploitation of traders and merchants. They sold everything including their women to keep their land intact. The condition of small land owners and their womenfolk is pathetic in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Liela’s family, Munoo’s family and Gauri’s family had land but could not earn sufficiently. All these three families once had land and it was seized by the cunning moneylenders. Hence the farmers, who produced with pride, suffered a lot to get food.

The impact of hunger and poverty in the society is revealed through Munoo, an orphan in the novel Coolie. “He wondered whether all those poor people would die like his parents and leave a gap in his belly as the death of his father and mother had done” (Coolie 55). Similarly, on seeing Munoo Seth Prabh Dayal “recalled the images of his own father and mother, who had died at Hamirpur during his absence in the city of Daulatpur: his earnings as a coolie had not been to procure them all rice twice a day” (Coolie 64). When he was young he was unable to feed and take care of his parents. Through his hard work he started a pickle factory with the help of partner and he was deceived by the partner. He, however, arranged for a loan from Sir Todar Mal, the public prosecutor. Prabh Dayal compromised with Sir Todar Mal. He gave him "a note of exchange promising to pay five hundred rupees a month hence, receiving cash at a rate of 45 per cent” (Coolie 95). Later on he was unable to pay the debt. “And the fear of not being able to pay the debts at once had so upset him that he had succumbed to a fever” (Coolie 106). For most people, life both in villages and towns is long misery. “Hunger and degradation and starvation hem them in all sides, leaving hardly escape rout” (Singh 62). Munoo and Prabh dayal migrated from their village due to poverty.
Merchants who lent them locked up the factory and recovered their money by selling the stock. “Prabha darted in to get a few of his trinkets to offer in lieu of rent to the landlord” (Coolie 110). His wife Parbati was sad to see her husband in miserable condition. Though she worked along with him she could not support him economically. Her inability to support her husband made her only weep. She “stood weeping” (Coolie 111). Nobody was there except Munoo to console her. She sobbed more bitterly than ever. “‘Oh, I do not know where to go, child,’ she cried. ‘I don’t know what to do.’ “ (Coolie 113) Nobody was there to support her economically.

In Anand’s novel, Two Leaves and a Bud Sajani caught malarial fever and became a victim to it. Diseases due to lack of nutrition, lack of health attention, lack of protection against heat and cold, overwork and scanty medical care on falling ill are the results of economic exploitation. For good health, wealth is a must. Anand suggests in his novel Coolie, “that health was nourished by the food which money brought” (Coolie 36).

Shama, in Two Leaves and a Bud had to lose two of her elder children in the famine. Narain and his wife Shama had nearly died of that famine. He informed Gangu about the dangers of mire and waters of the infected wells causing frequent outbreaks of malaria and cholera epidemics. They revealed their past miserable life to the new comers, Gangu’s family. Narain said “As I say one gets food here at least, and one might have died of famine in the state of Bikaner. I saw three of my brothers died before my eyes, and two sons. I and Shama had nothing to eat for a month, except leaves, and this Baloo nearly died because there was no milk in Shama’s breast” (TLB 39).

When Liela’s parents were ill she sought the help of Narain. Though he was kind, he did not help her. Due to his fear for cholera he was not ready to help but ready to leave that place to save his family. “‘My father
and mother are ill, uncle,’ she said. ‘Cholera! And, without even looking at his neighbours, he ran towards his own hut, shouting: ‘Cholera, Cholera! The mother of Baloo, take the children out as soon as you can. Cholera! Cholera has spread!’” (TLB 85) As they were forced to live in unhygienic condition people became the victims of epidemics.

Due to famine they (Shama’s & Sajani’s family) migrated to the Assam Plantation. Here they got food; but their desire to return to their native village and visit their relations remained as the unfulfilled dreams. “Our contract was only for three years, but we couldn’t go back at the end of that time. …It is twelve years since we saw our relations, and I don’t know whether they are dead or alive” (TLB 37). The labourers in the tea plantation were exploited by the false promises of Buta Ram. Buta Ram, a barber in the village raised to the status of Sardar. He earned money by recruiting the poor Indians. Sajani was exploited by Buta Ram and her daughter Leila was the victim of the economic exploitation.

Impact of migration on a girl was more that is revealed from the following lines. “Why had her father come so far away? For she might still have been in the same village as, though her mother had forbidden her from going out to play with boys and she had but rarely seen him” (TLB 67). Sajani had forbidden her daughter to play with the boys in their native village. She lost her childhood happiness after migration.

Knowing the economical condition of the family Leila, a young girl did not spend money in buying ornaments like bangles, necklace and nose ring. She did not spend money on extravagancy too. She realized her father’s suffering. She did not reveal her disappointment and did not show her feelings. She decided that she must not inflict any more burdens on him. Due to poverty she controlled her petty desires even in her childhood.
In the novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Buta Ram exploited Sajani’s family by giving false promises. They believed in Buta’s words. His promise of the piece of land and earning lakh of rupees saving money and jewellery in the tea plantation are false promises. They realized it very later. They came just to live but their dream was scattered in the tea plantation. “For though she had no idea of the value of money, though she could not even count up to a hundred, the sound of ‘lakhs’ made her feel that the place to which she was going must be a veritable paradise” (TLB 6). But in reality it was a hell where she lost her life. She had the desire for saving money. So she believed the words of Buta Ram. “If thrifty, they are soon able to buy jewellery. And after a time they can save enough money to go back to their homes to purchase land” (TLB 6). But she could neither save money to buy jewellery for her daughter nor for her death ceremony.

It is the natural desire to save money, jewellery and to earn a piece of land for cultivation. “Being more gullible like most women, she had been completely taken in by his promises” (TLB 8). She could not understand the wicked nature of Buta Ram; hence she was taken in by his false promises. Buta said, “They will give you everything, everything” (TLB 7). Later on, she got nothing. Sajani lost her life.

Buta Ram said, “If any one needs money for something special such as the purchase of a cow, for marriage or for the propitiation of the ancestors’ ceremony, the sahibs advance it free of interest, and recover it only gradually” (TLB 4). Further he assured that the Manager knew and cared for all the people and kept them happy and contended and gave advice and assistance in “thousand-and-one family affairs” (TLB 4). Buta Ram glorified the generosity of the Manager and the Assistant Manager. But the real condition was worse. He promised that he could seek help from the planters for all the family affairs. But in reality she could not get money or save
money even for her funeral. While she was living she struggled a lot just for existence. Her struggle for money continued even after her death. She could not find peace even in her death.

Traders and merchants exploit them. Gangu retorted, “I want to pay the cheapest rates that I can, because I am poor.” (TLB 76). But the Seth Dhanu Mal wanted to charge the highest prices. Further he was not interested in his bargaining.

Economic exploitation of the farmers is revealed by Jayabalan in his book. “It may be noted that under the traditional money lending system the farmers could acquire loans from the village sahukar (trader-cum-moneylender) on the basis of his personal credit worthiness” (Jayabalan 116). Gangu took resolution not to borrow money from a sahukar. They ruined their life and exiled them.

The brother of the Sahukar, who kept the shop at the end of the lines, had offered when Gangu first came here, to give him a loan of money at the usual interest, should he want it. But Gangu had returned a categorical ‘no’, for he was firm in the resolve he had made on leaving his village that he would never again borrow money from a Sahukar: they had been the cause of his ruin and every moment of his exile reminded him of the curse of borrowing. (TLB 109)

After the death of Sajani her husband did not have money for her cremation. “Get out! You have been spreading infection allover the place! Didn’t you know that you were under segregation? By whose orders did you come here?” (TLB 114) Buta instead of giving money forced him to go to the bania in the bazaar to borrow money on interest by mortgaging his wife’s
trinkets. So Gangu said, “I will have to pay higher interest and break my oath and go to the Bania” (TLB 118).

John De La Havre in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the mouthpiece of Anand aims to reform the society. As a genuine caretaker of the health of the community of coolies, he is committed to certain programmes of action to prevent epidemics caused by innumerable fireflies. His findings on the reason for the frequent incidence of cholera among the coolie localities and his plea for the setting up of septic tanks are yet to receive the attention of the Board. All that he can do at the moment is to put on a helpless smile at the miserable coolies. As “death strikes the poor,” (TLB 132) Sajani and Gangu became the victims of epidemics.

Tragedy strikes the family as Gangu’s fever catches Sajani. She collapses as she busies herself with her work in the early hours of the morning. The malarial epidemic strikes the weak woman hard and even before the doctor arrives to examine her, she is dead. Since women nurse the sick and dispose all excreta they are exposed to infectious disease. The entire family desperately cries out that cholera has broken out. Sajani, the victim of the epidemics could not receive honour even after her death as she had no money for her funeral.

A coolie woman in Assam Tea plantation hid her child with tea leaves in the basket in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. “One of them had put to her baby into it. Almost choked him with leaves. When I found out and asked her why she did it, she said she had nowhere to put him while she was plucking” (TLB 57). There was no facility of crèche to keep their children while they were working. Usually women took the children with them when they were working. So in the work place women were criticized. “‘Dock her pay altogether!’ said Reggie sharply. And cut three annas off the pay of each one of the frauds. Dirty cheats, the whole bag of them. “And not only here, too,
the deceitful bitches. They try the same game in bed, leaving you high and dry at the critical moment” (TLB 57). Not only they cut the wages but also criticized their character. “The coolie women bent to their plucking with fear in their hearts and queer confusion in their heads” (TLB 50). The coolie women understood their predicament but they could not avoid it. They lived always in fear.

Motherhood was one of the important roles of women. The labourers worked to support the family. To bring up their children they were ready to take dual burden – household responsibilities and labourers in the plantation – happily. The employers were very crucial by cutting wages for hiding children in the work place. Motherliness was disrespected. Coolie women’s motherliness was insulted and blamed as bitches. They were insulted for taking care of the children.

In Two Leaves and a Bud, Leila and her brother were working with their parents. Child labour was itself crucial. The more acute was that they cut the wages of the children if the work was not satisfactory to them. Sajani told her husband, “You know they cut the child’s wages for two days, because the mistri at the weighing machine said the leaf was not properly picked” (TLB 64). As they lived in plantation they could not leave their children alone while they were working. So the children also were engaged in plucking tea leaves; they were paid low wages and sometimes denied to pay the wages. Child labour was considered a free service.

Disparity in wages was also revealed through Sajani. Gangu earned three annas while Sajani earned two annas. While Gangu was in the village he alone could earn eight annas a day, but in the tea plantation he earned only three annas. Sajani and Liela’s earning was two annas a day which was lower than Gangu.
Due to poverty child labour existed in the society. Children were sold for rice. The position of a girl is acute. Ananta in the *The Big Heart* (BH) says, “I have seen children sold for handful of rice by parents too weak to walk” (BH 29). Through the speech of Ananta and Janki, Anand depicted the impoverished condition of Indians under British rule. Shortage of food, shortage of metals affected the life of Indians. Due to shortage of food people were rotting on the roadside.

In Amristar, larger purses have brought up big hoards and the grain has run out of the market. And the thathiars are in a worse predicament than the others. Not only have they no money to buy the little food they could get, but the Kesaras have not been giving them piece work to make utensils. The factory which Gokul Chand and Murlidhar have opened has taken in the men they want to make gadgets for the army, leaving the rest of us on the doorstep. (BH 39)

Industrialisation affected many families, like Kausalya which is depicted in the novel *The Big Heart*. Anand depicts the poverty of people through Ananta. There were youngsters and female beggars in the subway crowded round Ananta, crying and wailing. He threw four loaves of fried bread in the air for the youngsters to catch. “And when they all raced towards it, he gave a bit of halwa to each of the women. Then he handled the basket to Rhoda and Rama and told them to go away” (BH 54). Rhoda and Rama are children of Ralia. Ralia was Ananta’s friend. Ralia and Gauri, husband and wife, often quarreled as they had no money in the house. Gauri shouted: “Look, folks, the darkness has come. No food in the home. The rent owing. And he wants to murder me for telling him! The lazy scoundrel! Why doesn’t he go and do a day’s work? Drunkard!” (BH 43) Money affected the conjugal life of the partners. They often quarreled with each other.
For all the beggars, young or old, were scrambling over a stinking rubbish-heap on which the four puris had fallen. They fought with each other with loud curses and abuse, sweating and straining and tearing each other’s rags. Ananta rushed to the heap and dragged the beggar boys forcibly. At that time a voice arose “‘Oh, forgive my son and do not beat him.’ One mother cried from the mouth of the subway. ‘Baba, forgive, he is only wanting it for his little sister who is here. Oh…!’ And she beat her head and breasts crazily” (BH 54). There were many poor families suffering for food. Ananta found that starvation had bent their spines “like circus clowns, only without the gift that excites laughter” (BH 65).

Anand depicted the impact of poverty in Kausalya’s family in the novel *The Big Heart*. Ram Saran and Binde Saran were brothers. They were ready to give their daughter in marriage. They all have been affected by the shortage of metals. There was a scarcity of foodstuffs, famine of cash and scarcity of metals everywhere. “The life of a coppersmith is like a water-bubble nowadays” (BH 75). Here the girl’s parents are ready to sell their daughter for marriage in return of money that is not even enough for her to buy trousseau. Ram Saran said, “We are villagers. Our need is so bad that we have come to selling our daughters” (BH 76).

It is her father, Binde Saran, who laments, “There are thousand miseries in one daughter!” (BH 77). The main reason for the misery is poverty. Binde Saran “hung his head down and flushed red with shame and bitterness for obviously he had a sense of dignity in his melting eyes” (BH 76). Ram Saran said, “Times will never be better now for us who made up his mind to sell his brother’s daughter and wanted to give no promises for the return of money, What is more, I am thinking of my two sons!” (BH 77-78) They thought about the future of the sons.
Traditional coppersmiths were ousted from the piecework of market and they were not employed in the factories. This transition in the cottage industries affected the life of Kausalya. So Anand comments the attitude of the parents thus: “they should be offering the hand of the girl to Nikka only in their hour of need, for what money they could get and not because they considered his son the best and most handsome boy in town. And yet he was concerned, because he could not now refuse the offer” (BH 76). They decided to give their daughter Kausalya in marriage to Nikka. The girl or her mother could not express their idea.

This kind of exploitation in the family is depicted in the novel, The Big Heart. Nikka’s family had more money to buy a slave for their son. They knew that “if Nikka didn’t get the girl, the weakling would probably never get another offer. But neither side could go on bidding for a girl as if she were a slave on the market” (BH 78). Further, “The men of property were deaf to the cry of the victims of poverty” (BH 200). Import from outside the country affected the life of Indian women. Indian handicrafts were destroyed.

For two thousand years our ancestors had been maturing with the magic of their hands beautiful utensils which were part of the dowry of every bride, made cloth from Vilayat which ruined our weavers, came the machine and the readymade aluminum pots and pans, and our wages fell. And rather than melt our own metal in our foundries we began to buy sheets from abroad. The women-­folk mourned that the brass cooking vessels we made were not fit to be given in the dowry of their daughters, as they were in the days of their grandmothers. (BH 198)

Coppersmith had to reduce the wages because there was no demand for those utensils then. Moreover, people had not had the money to buy utensils. The traditional coppersmith could neither earn wage by piecework
nor by being employed in the factory. So Ananta urged to form the union to ensure their right to a proper wage and to displace their exploiters. Through Ananta, Anand insists in the novel: “We shall not lose our hearts in the love of gold or the worship of money, as did the others. We shall keep faith” (BH 203). People must have big heart with empathy. There must be sympathy in the attitude.

All these above novels except the *The Big Heart* depict the life of poor people, like coolies and sweepers. In the low class society as both men and women were in poverty there was no domination in the family. In the low middle class society women were exploited by their family members. After marriage woman did not have freedom in spending money whether it was earned by themselves, or by her husband or her hereditary property. Husband and mother-in-law have the control over them in spending money. In the autobiographical novels, *Seven Summers, Morning Face* and *Confession of a Lover*, Krishan is the protagonist. Through Krishan, Anand shows how women became the victims of economic exploitation in his family.

In the novel *Seven Summers*, Krishan’s mother and aunt did embroidery work. But their mother-in-law kept the wages to manage the family. So Krishan says,

Hard, cruel taskmistress, my grandmother would get her and Partap’s wife to work phulkaris for various cloth sellers and keep the wages for this piece-work to herself though she had thousands of rupees stored away in brass pitchers and hundreds of gold ashrafis hoarded in the corners of her room, and though she collected the rent on half a dozen houses (SS 70).

Krishan’s mother was criticized by her sister for not giving money to her relatives. Her sister Amrit Kaur, who was in need of money quarrels
with her often. “Father loved you so much, he had no time or money left for any of us… And as you were the eldest, he gave most of the jewellery in your dowry. What is the harm if some money comes back to the family now in place of those ornaments?” (SS 201) Krishan’s mother, as economically dependent, could not support her parents and brothers. But, her sister criticized her, “Denying even a loan to your own brothers! Persuading your husband not to give more than a paltry two, three hundred!” (SS 207) So, there was a mental agony for her. Demanding money from a son-in-law was considered as a shame. As women were economically dependent, they were unable to help their family at all times.

Krishan’s mother was giving money but it was not appreciated by her family as they were in need of much more money. “Hai, ni, look at these ungrateful ones! And I who have given always my husband’s hard-earned money and never asked for a pice back. How can you accuse me of not giving?” (SS 207-208) Though she helped her family they were ungrateful to her, because their necessities were not fulfilled by that money. As Krishan’s father was working in British Sarkar, they could save money. But, the life of their brotherhood was tragedy as they could not earn enough money. Further, Anand depicted the pathetic condition of Indian soldiers. “The Indian soldiers have joined English army not because they have any love for the Government or the war but because they cannot tolerate the pangs of hunger and poverty” (Dwivedi 30). Anand depicted the economic exploitation of women in her family.

Devaki, Krishan’s aunt, wife of Partap in the novel, Confession of a Lover, is a young childless widow left without anybody to protect her. Her family members are there but they fight themselves to possess her jewellery. She is forced to spend her money on the marriage of her adopted son Ganesh and also on further education of Krishan.
Devaki is suspected of having murdered and uncle Partap in order to inherit his wealth, and yet despite this moral condemnation of her, the family is avaricious to retain at least some of Partap’s money and jewellery. They intend that a portion of it shall come back into the family when Ganesh is officially betrothed and thus eligible to receive gifts from his adopted mother. (Niven 29)

The relatives of the widow under the pretence of love and affection have forced her to spend her money on her family members. The society along with the family advised her to spend her money on her husband’s family. In her impoverished condition, she was turned to be a milk maid. But after excommunication he could not continue her dairy business. At last, she committed suicide.

She had no freedom to spend her husband’s money. She wanted to donate some money to dig well at Kanowan. So Krishan comments:

As Devaki was still in Jhelum with us, which though seemingly casual, were really part of father and mother’s deliberate plan to make her spend her money on us children than on anything else. For she had innocently told my parents that it might be a good idea to devote some part of the cash, with “the owner of her house” had left, to some permanent charity in his name which may ease the passage of his soul to heaven. (MF 309)

But Krishan’s father “was trying to get back some of the property, jewellery and money from her before she spends it all on the well in Kanowan!” (MF 349) The family wanted to exploit her money. Her noble aim to dig a well was not understood by others. Hence, Devaki says in the novel *Confession of a Lover* (COL): “And when it was a question of spending
money it was I who was the mother-in-law” (COL 93). Their only motive was to extract from her.

Krishan’s mother was uninterested in her husband’s attitude towards Devaki. So she commented on her husband. “If you were not greedy, you would let Devaki spend all her money if she likes on the well at Kanowan and we would celebrate Ganesh’s marriage on our own……I can bring out the little I have saved and – strictly, there is no need to go chasing after her every Saturday and Sunday” (MF 346). She was monitored by the family members. “Krishan can go to Kanowan to his beloved Devaki—and see much money she is squandering away on the well” (MF 355). Krishan’s father sent Krishan to know plans of Devaki. She did not have the freedom to spend her husband’s money after the death of her husband. When she was young her mother-in-law dominated the family. She herself kept the money of Devaki by the embroidery work.

Even, after independence, Anand depicts the impact of poverty and mortgage in the novel, *Old Woman and the Cow*. Due to their miserable life the poor could not repay the loan to the moneylenders. They have to sell their lands, cattle, house, jewels and even their women not to repay the loan just to give the interest. Most of the peasants led and lead a pathetic life. Unlike the other women characters she protested against the evil forces and succeeded at last. Gauri in the novel, *Old Woman and the Cow* suffered at the hands of mother, uncle, husband and mother-in-law. Poverty affected the conjugal life of Panchi and Gauri. Due to his poverty he could not buy seed. He sent her to her mother’s house. Pregnancy was considered as burden by her husband, uncle and even by her mother.

Exploitation of monsoon plays a vital role in life of peasants. As usual in India, rains failed and the prolonged drought extinguished all hope of the harassed peasants. Their misery provoked them to cruelty. As Gauri
thinks, Panchi would not have probably sent her away if he had not been pressed down by his miseries and misfortunes. “There had been no rain. And the wheat harvest is languishing, while the new ploughing cannot start in the drought” (OWC 11). Panchi had already spent the money at the time of marriage beyond his income. So, he could not manage the family. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Anand criticized the tradition to spend the money at the time of marriage. “Marriage among Hindus is no simple matter. The parents of the bride and the bridegroom often bring themselves to ruin over it. They waste their substance, they waste their time. Months are taken up over the preparations – in making clothes and ornaments in preparing budgets for dinners” (Gandhi 8).

In our country, a marriage is a function causing a lot of difficulties and wastages to all people concerned. But those who conduct marriage function and those who are getting married do not appear to notice the practical difficulties because they think that social life necessitates wasteful expenses and many difficulties and therefore they must necessarily face those inconveniences and hardships.

Wedding feast, jewels, expensive clothes, procession, pandal, dance, music – money is spent on all these to satisfy the vanity of the organizers. Whatever may be the amount of money spent on the wedding and however pompous each of the items may be, the mirth and jollity associated with these are over in two or three days. In a week’s time the prestige and honour connected with these are forgotten. (Raju 17-18)

Due to poverty Gauri’s family could not “entertain the bridal party for more than one night” (OWC 11). It is very difficult for Gauri’s family to give feast. Instead of spending money on the conduct of marriage it would be
better to invest for future, so that, they could live happily. They could save for future.

After marriage due to failure in agriculture he could not take care of the family. Hence he started to hate everybody. There arose in him a vague bitterness about the human beings – particularly against his uncle Mola Ram and wife Gauri “through quarrels, through the debts, and the interest on the debts, for money borrowed for the wedding, and the drought that had followed the marriage” (OWC 28).

Laxmi, Gauri’s mother was in poverty. She was economically dependent on her cousin Amru. As there has been no rain, they could not buy the hey stock at any price. Amru’s harvest of wheat was ruined. Their crops, fields, stocks of hay, have all gone. The damage to the fields was terrible. She, unable to feed her pregnant daughter, decided “to give Gauri in lieu of cash wiping out of mortgage on their two houses as well as the cow” (OWC 130). Already, Panchi’s land was mortgaged to Lalla Birbal, contractor to pay for the marriage. So Gauri said to her, “So Panchi sent me here because times were bad and there was hardly any food in our barn to eat,’ said Gauri to defend herself ‘I am with child. That is why “they” have sent me home,’” (OWC 111). Poverty separated her from her husband.

On her return to her mother she was considered as a burden by her uncle, Amru. “‘There is more trouble for you! One more mouth!..’ said Amru” (OWC 111). Though she loved her daughter she could not show her real concern for her due to her poverty. “‘Why did you not come back home earlier, when he beat you at the instigation of his aunt Kesaro’ Laxmi persisted. ‘We are poor, but we could have managed, somehow!...And he is not the only husband,’” (OWC 112). Laxmi’s cow, Chandari was in mortgage. It was the only source of income. Amru asked Laxmi, “What will you do without Chandari?..If Jwala asks for his principal back, can you pay
him off what you took him in the mortgage of the cow? When you can’t pay
the interest!...And this girl—now that she has come back, I ask you—can you
afford to feed her? ” (OWC 120). Her mother could not afford to feed her.

Gauri understood the situation and said she should work in people’s
house. “‘I will take myself away, uncle, if this whole quarrel is about me,’
said Gauri” (OWC 120). Gauri’s mother, Gauri’s husband and her uncle had
exploited her. Though they were in poverty they should have to consider her
as a human being. On the other hand she was considered by everybody as a
burden. A woman must have economic independence and she must have a
shelter. As Gauri had nothing she suffered a lot.

To convince her daughter Laxmi told her predicament in her past
life. She had suffered since the death of her father and life with him was no
happier. He just sat smoking his hookah all day, while she had gone and
helped in people’s houses, to earn enough to keep her family going. Her
father mortgaged the bigha of land and they lost it. They could not pay the
interest on the mortgage. “And all the cows I have kept were purchased from
money I earned with my own hands. … Because Amru helped me, your father
became jealous. The gossipmongers of the village did not help with their
malicious talk –that Amru was keeping me” (OWC 123). Laxmi’s husband,
Gauri’s father spent money in the evil practices like smoking. He did not earn
money. She worked in people’s houses for their existence. He had mortgaged
land and he did not redeem that land for not paying the interest.

She had accepted the evil design of Amru to give Gauri away to
Seth Jwala Prasad’s elder brother Seth Jai Ram Das, banker of Hoshiarpur in
“lieu of cash and wiping out the mortgage on their two houses” (OWC 130).
To prevent the barter she fought with her mother and her uncle with her full
vigour. The following speeches of Gauri to her mother reveals her
predicament: “‘What are you doing if you are not “murdering” me!’ Gauri
shrieked, almost tearing her throat so that the whole world may hear” (OWC 131). For Gauri selling women is worse than murdering. But to her mother it was not so. She could not murder her daughter by not giving food in her poverty.

Gauri shrieked, begged and requested whatever she could do to prevent the barter. “You will repent afterwards when you have to face your God! So don’t do it! Mother, you who are my mother! I am begging you” (OWC 131). Moving with tears she embraced her daughter. Laxmi, went to her and after embracing her, dislocated herself and fell at Amru’s feet, saying: “Spare her, spare her. If she doesn’t want to go, leave her. I beg you, with my white hair, I touch your feet” (OWC 131). As she was old she lost her confidence. She could not earn. Hence she begged Amru to leave her daughter.

However, all attempts of Gauri to protect herself during her poverty failed. “Everyone had deserted her, even the Goddess was nowhere near. And she had been cast away, here, alone” (OWC 135). Gauri could not tolerate her mother’s attitude. She asked herself when she was in the Seth’s house after the sale. “But how could my mother sell me?” Gauri interrupted. “Why didn’t she choke me at birth, if she had to murder me now when I was grown up” (OWC 136). She lamented for her predicament. Mother who has to support was helpless.

Seth might have been bought her as a slave but he was wooing her. Seth had money to buy her as slave. “The attitudinal clash between the high and the low, the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the underprivileged would always support the exploitation of the poor, the wretched subalterns” (Agarwal 22-23). He has the power to buy a human being with his money. While she was suffering from fever, he said, “I want you to get well soon, Bibi…Then you can put on the Benarasi sari I have
brought for you and, the jewellery-our family jewellery!... Old gold, unobtainable nowadays!.. The trinkets have been in the safe downstairs ever since my poor wife died” (OWC 144). Seth thought that he could achieve Gauri by offering money and jewellery. But she was not greedy to get all those gifts by the rich man.

She did not have the desire to lead the luxurious life having been poor. Seth claimed that he has the right to possess her as he paid the handsome price. With his power of money he exploited Gauri. She was admitted to the hospital for fever with the help of Dr. Colonel Mahindra. Another doctor, Batra threatened Seth Jai Ram Das “Sethji I hear that this girl has been bought by you for cash from her guardians. I shall have to report this matter to the police” (OWC 158). In the hospital, doctor asked her choice of place to go after the treatment was over. Gauri answered that she did not want to go there and she wanted to go home where her husband was. After getting her idea he decided to give her job and to support her economically. He said “I shall give her work here to do. She will help the nurse Young, till we can contact her husband and she can be restored to him” (OWC 162). Anyhow, the possibility of her return to Seth Jai Ram Das was evaporated. With the help of doctor she escaped from the place of Seth.

Panchi, her husband also exploited his wife. Unable to feed her, he sent her to her parents. Then he blamed everybody. Panchi came to see his wife in her parent’s house. He could not find her. Knowing the truth about Gauri, Panchi was angry. “I will go and wring the neck of that old witch!” (OWC 206) Panchi fought with Laxmi though he had beaten his wife. On his return he said, “I asked her to go back to you, till better times. Now, where is she?” (OWC 201).

Amru had heard that Panchi had mortgaged the jewels of Gauri and spent it for buying seeds in drinking. “Panchi could have given us some
cash. The jewellery really belonged to you. It was the only genuine piece in the whole dowry. And we have a right to it” (OWC 110). Everyone claimed the right to possess, but not to protect.

Laxmi also suffered due to her poverty all through her life. But her predicament to sell her daughter was pathetic. She confessed that she had committed a mistake. Practically, she “could not keep Gauri at home on nothing and –She curses herself against ‘I don’t know what happened to me!... I wish I could die and expire here!,’” (OWC 215). Adam Singh, friend of Panchi’s father and the neighbour of Gauri realized that “what she was saying was mostly true, but he had no pity for her for falling in with Amru’s design in selling her daughter” (OWC 221). Parents selling their daughter was more cruel than anything else. Though Laxmi disliked it, she had to choose the cow in lieu of her daughter. Laxmi revealed her predicament as a mother. She could do nothing. “What remedy had the poor against poverty? ventured Laxmi” (OWC 239). The only remedy is money. She could not find the solution to her poverty.

Gauri had been trained as a nurse in a hospital. Her decision to go to hospital for the delivery infuriated the village midwife Rakhi. Gauri told her experience in the hospital Rafique Chacha, Panchi’s friend. Hoor Banu, wife of Rafique Chacha, like the doctor, insisted always how “evil is borrowing, squabbling, squandering and gambling and drinking” (OWC 259). Through the character of doctor Mahindra, Mulk Raj Anand wanted to reform the society. He analysed the poverty of the villagers. The impoverished people became the victims of evil practices like drinking, gambling, borrowing, squabbling and squandering.

Through the life of Gauri, Anand shows the miserable life of ordinary women. She was left abandoned by all her family members when she was in need of other’s help. Gauri is the only character who faced so many
difficulties and came out from her miseries by herself. In this novel, he strongly insists the need of education and economic independence for women.

Earning, spending and saving – money all these three things are essential in one’s life. These three must be balanced. In these three saving is impossible for the poor. To improve the economic condition of the villagers, Anand suggests to improve the supply of water and medical facilities. “Mother India is big enough—and if there are Karma Yogis like Mahindra in it, and young ones like you, our land will have sunshine. The seasons will be changed by man. There will be water from wells, with electric pumps and no drought. And medicines will renew the earth!” (OWC 251-52). The water resource will improve the agriculture. So their economic condition may change.

Gauri’s economic independence gave her confidence in her miseries. She seemed alert and dignified, her movements full of strength. Further she says, “‘There is no need to weep,’ she said challengingly” (OWC 271). After her return to Panchi her pregnancy was suspected by her husband. Though she was pure she could not prove her chastity. She said boldly, “I shall go and work in Daktar Mahindra’s haspatal and have my child there. And I will not come back again!” (OWC 283). Now she started to understand the role of mother. She must give birth in good circumstances. So she decided that she would go to the hospital and live under the shadow of his protection and work as a nurse until her child came.

Mulk Raj Anand satirises evil desire of men in exploiting money by squeezing the poor by imposing interest on them though it is inevitable. In the article, “The Story of my Experiments with a White Lie”, Anand analyses the evil nature of man in exploiting the innocents. “Man’s fate today is no longer in the hands of the gods, but is often in conflict with the evil in other men” (Anand 4). Through his novels, Anand wants to insist that ‘interest is illegal’
So, he vehemently attacks this kind of evil practice in his novels before independence, at the time of independence and after independence. “There is no talk of money one must have a big heart!” (BH 203) People should not dominate anybody. They must go on working, struggling and helping.

To conclude women must have the rights of property. In all these novels the land belonged to men are mortgaged as women had no property rights. Thakur while analysing the status of tribal women says, “possessing a piece of land not only provides economic security to women but also psychological security as engagement in productive activity leads to the development and recognition of woman’s individuality” (Thakur 10). Now women have the property rights.

To eradicate poverty in the villages, the government of India has introduced many schemes. Through Self Help Groups women get loans from banks. So they could not become the victim of money lenders. Labourers only find about four months of work in agriculture throughout the year. Due to monsoon failure there remains economic insecurity. So, it is difficult for them to get work on farms nearby and have to travel farther to find employment. “Faced with a shortage of farm work and no recourse to alternatives, labourers in Tamil Nadu are demanding that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) be extended to more than 100 days a year.” (Narayan Lakshman) Further, they would like to be offered 300 days of work a year, if possible.

Education and economic independence gave them strength to protest the social taboos which dragged them economically backward for a long time. Through the character of Gauri Anand conveys his idea on women’s education. “Education will make us masters of destiny – nor religion” (OWC 258). An article from The Hindu on June 29, 2008 shows the
development of economic condition of women in India. Women in semi urban areas, though still face many hurdles, have taken up professions previously reserved for men. In this article the author shows many incidents which demand the economic freedom.

In Aurangabad a group of women have taken on the challenging but difficult job of burying or cremating the bodies of accident victims. The women are a part of a self help group. “Traditionally, most such group engaged in traditional tasks – “womanly” tasks, one might say – such as making papads, embroidery, making paper products etc. to earn money.” While women with education have crashed through many barriers and broken stereotypes in this country, choices for work are limited for poor women. Another incident mentioned in the article reveals the right of women in getting employment.

Six women filed a case in Bombay High Court challenging the decision denying them the job of assistant motor vehicles inspectors. “Of the total 207 posts, 62 were reserved for women. But there was a catch. The women had to be at least 157 cm tall. The reason for this, according to the department, was because the women would have to test trucks and big vehicles and would not be able to do so if they were shorter than this prescribed height. The women, on their part, argued that such a precondition was unfair, that they had met all the other criteria and that they ought to be given the job”.

In Bangalore city women deliver the post. It makes eminent sense and gives another avenue for regular employment for women. In Mumbai, women are driving taxis and auto rickshaws. “Also, even as women work in paid, underpaid or unpaid work, their choices are restricted, particularly if they are poor and uneducated. Even in the United States, a recent survey established that out of 500 occupations, one third of the women were concentrated in just in occupations that included teaching, nursing and book keeping.”
Now women are “pioneering a real change in attitudes by doing what their mothers would never have dreamed of doing what their fathers were convinced they could not do”. Social taboos which restricted the freedom of women are analysed in the following chapter Social Exploitation.