



UGC Approved Journal

IJELLH

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

ISSN-2321-7065

Impact Factor : 5.27



Editor-in-Chief

Volume V, Issue VI June 2017

www.ijellh.com

[About Us](#) | [Editorial Board](#) | [Submission Guidelines](#) | [Call for Paper](#)

[Paper Submission](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Terms & Condition](#) | [More.....](#)

RASHMI**MULK RAJ ANAND'S *TWO LEAVES AND A BUD* : A STUDY OF SOCIAL EXPLOITATION****Abstract**

In this paper, I present *Two Leaves and a Bud* as a novel on social exploitation, full of violence and bitterness. It describes the hazardous life of Gangu, an indentured labourer, in an Assam Tea Garden owned by a British man. The theme is bitterness, violence and exploitation which makes our blood boil about the injustice done to the poor coolies. Anand's writing is full of hate and disgust. The angry young man in Anand is more apparent than the artist. The gift of Mulk Raj Anand's imagination and his gentle and humane sympathy for his subject adds a new dimension in sensitivity to contemporary literature.

Keywords: Exploitation, indentured, pessimistic, underdog, villain.

Mulk Raj Anand is a pioneer in the field of Indo-English fiction. He has succeeded in carving for himself a special niche. All his novels and short stories bear him out as a campaigner of the underdog and his writings expose his deep understanding of socioeconomic problems. No wonder, of all the Indian novelists in English, Anand is, undoubtedly a writer with a strong assurance to reveal the social evils of exploitation and inequality. Anand's concern for the troubled coolies of the Assam Tea Estates which were accomplished by the British is reflected in this novel. It describes the lethal life of Gangu, an indentured labourer in an Assam Tea Garden owned by a British man. It revealed the truth that how a British master exploits the labourers.

Gangu is influenced by Buta, the Sardar of the Macpherson Tea estate to leave his home in Hoshiarpur to come and work as laborer in a tea estate in Assam. He has a daughter Leila and a son Buddhu besides his wife, Sajani. The promise of good salary and a free gift of a piece of fertile land and huge savings are temptations which are too strong to resist for Gangu. But soon after arriving at Robertson Tea Estate, Gangu starts understanding that he has been deceived by the Sardar Buta. Narain, a coolie from Bikaner reveals that once a coolie comes there, he would neither be able to go back of his own will and not to be allowed to escape. The wages for working from morning till evening are three annas for Gangu, two annas for Sajani and Leila each and half of

the anna for Buddha. In spite of this, they are beaten and abused and their daughters and wives are sexually exploited. The merchants charge excessive prices and high interest on loans. Gangu finds that the total income the whole family is not sufficient to buy even the food items.

The coolies lanes are so dirty that hookworms breed and flourish in abundance. The danger of cholera always pervades there. But, for the capitalists, coolies are thieves, liars, and lazy. They are considered sub-human not even human beings. John De La Harve, the plantation Doctor is anxious about the unhygienic conditions there and the epidemics. He considers the coolies sub-human. Havre suggests mosquito nets and he is scorned by Croft-Cooke. Soon malaria breaks out and Gangu's wife Sajani dies of it. Gangu does not have money even to perform the last rites and goes to borrow from Croft-Cooke.

Mulk Raj Anand shows his anger against the ills of capitalism in novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*. His humanistic vision and reformist enthusiasm presents a poor man Gangu, who is the prey of age old landlord ship, higher than the upper-caste people. Anand always pours his sympathy on oppressed people and resentment on the cruel oppressors in his writings.

Anand's novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* exposes the deplorable life of tree plantation workers in the tea-estate of Assam where the coolies are brought from the outside of Assam with the attraction that they would be given a square of land for agriculture but once they are here the life becomes worse than hell. Anand wrote this novel after seeing the miserable condition of the poor labourers and presented the social condition of these people in the colonial India, also highlighted the cruelty of British rule. The aim of present paper is to expose the wretched condition of the protagonist of novel, Gangu, and his family due to the harsh treatment by capitalism.

Anand presents a outlook of the life of the poorest in the colonial India when British rule was showing some of its terrific features. This Paper presents a interaction and confrontation between Anand's profession as an artist who demands for his humanistic creed. The Paper exposes the heartbreaking disintegration of the Gangu and his family confronted with the brutal forces of capitalist exploitation.

The novel begins with the philosophic statement of Anand "Life is like a journey" and with this the tragic journey of Gangu – the protagonist, a unfortunate peasant from a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab, starts to the beautiful Assam. The realistic description of the Assam and its natural beauty is presented in very lively manner in the novel. Anand describes the beautiful picture of sunrise on the Assam teaplantation.

The morning mist had risen over the valley and
 Evaporated with the dazzling burst of sunlight.
 The air was still under the clear even sky. The
 welter of leafage was tense beneath the world's
 hollow cup. There was a concentrated lull in the
 slow heart of the day, as if India missed a heart
 beat of the day, in the march of time. 2

This way Gangu starts his journey to Assam and he is attracted by the false promises of a tout, leaves his native village, and goes with his wife Sajani and his children Leila and Buddhu to work on the Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam. Soon he realizes that the promises made to him were all false, that the world of a tea plantation is like a prison house;

The prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless
 an unbreakable jail. 3

In the journey to Assam, Gangu recalls a song which was sung by Sajani for Gangu. With this song, Anand indirectly narrates the truth of journey;

He had wished to believe that it was true that it
 was possible for a man and woman to be
 companions in life and death together; whom
 everyone had to face alone, but even in life,
 unfortunately, people usually travelled very
 much by themselves, unless they accepted
 each other.4

This philosophical statement proves literally true in case of Gangu. He has been dejected of his land in his native town.

The villain of the novel is Reggie Hunt, the Assistant Manager. The tyranny and lechery of Hunt increase unrestricted. He approaches Leila, Gangu's daughter with lust as she plucks tea leaves alone. He follows Leila to her house. She is chased by him. When Gangu comes to block his way, Reggie shoots him dead. A trial follows and Mr. Justice Mowberley and a jury consisting of seven Europeans and two Indians find Reggie not guilty of the charges of murder and release him. The irony of fate is such that Gangu, who comes to the tea plantation at Assam to begin a new life, meets his sudden death Mulk Raj Anand also discusses the plight of women in *Two*

Leaves and A Bud. Women have to leave their suckling babies in the dust, grass and road and cannot even offer their milk to their babies during working time. Those who are young and beautiful are either fooled or forcibly taken away as was done to Neogi's wife. They are rewarded ornaments like ear or nose rings and their husbands given land. Those who oppose are beaten, wounded and fired at gun-point. Reggie Hunt brutally enjoys Neogi's wife and wounds her. He destroys the family of Chameli and takes her along with him to his house. When he gets fed up with her, she is thrown out. He openly lives with three coolie women. Narain, a coolie rightly comments that nobody's mother or sister is safe in the tea plantation. Death is considered as the attainment of relief amidst the misery of workers.

Another picture of evil is Bania, the traditional Indian figure of intense wealth from whose clutches it is impossible to come out. Even the daughter of Croft-Cooke, Barbara, is aware of the dirt, sorrows of the struggling underclass, its dirt, its mire and its squalor. But she cannot raise her voice against the atrocities. She represents the section of people who are aware of the exploitation and feel for the exploited. Dr. La Harve is humiliated for showing sympathy and supporting the cause of coolies. He is terminated from service and his beloved Barbara, the daughter of CroftCooke becomes cold towards him. His romance with Barbara comes suddenly to an end. The white doctor becomes the mouthpiece of the writer, whose misfortune is directed at the superstition and stupidity, illiteracy and the ignorance, of the peasants.

Two Leaves and a Bud presents an oppressed Gangu whose wife dies of a disease and he was killed while trying to protect his daughter from being raped by a British colonial officer. Through Gangu, Anand represents the mental state of the laborers of tea-plantation who feel unprotected while working under the cold-blooded masters. Gangu wanders in the swirl of his destiny and passes through several temperaments from theism to atheism, acceptance to realization, selfishness to sacrifice and from illusion to reality. Anand exposes the cruelty of humanity or harsh suffering at different levels. Anand creates a amusing melody of moods—joy and sorrow, tranquillity and anger, hope and fear, humour and pathos, love and lust. The invincible spirit, the spiritual upsurge of man is the real hero and the plea for universal love is the real theme of his novels. At every step Anand had the right mixture of insight and detachment and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given depth to his writing.

Works cited

- Anand, Mulk Raj: "Two Leaves and A Bud", Hind Pocket Books (p) Ltd, New Delhi, 1937
- Naik, M.K. 'A History of Indian English Literature, Sahitya Akademi ,Laxmi Nagar,Delhi.
- Sulochana, M. V. "Two Leaves and a Bud Is a Novel on Social Exploitation" *Language in India*. Vol. 14:8 August 2014.Print.