

Voice of The Voiceless: A Social Exploitation in Two Leaves and A Bud by Mulk Raj Anand

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Abstract:

Mulk Raj Anand is a renowned Indian novelist of English-language novels, short tales, and critical essays. He is acclaimed for his empathetic and realistic depictions of Indians living in poverty. He examines the everyday lives of common Indians while tackling societal concerns like injustice and poverty. His writings about the colonised community in the nationalistic perspective places a strong impact on human empathy social injustice and economic exploitation. This novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* highlights on the brutal realities of colonialism. The exploitation about the Indian labours working in the tea plantation of remote Assam. This was regarded as one of his significant work. It was later adopted into a Hindi film in *Rahi* (1953) directed by K A Abbas and *The Wayfarer* in English was directed by V James Murray and his team. This paper tries to interpret the critique of social inequality, exploitation, and oppression, advocating reform and social change. It is necessary to overhaul this corrupt system, which treated the tea plantation as a huge prison where the labours were imprisoned and isolated totally away from the outside world.

Keywords: Indian novelist, Colonised Community, Social injustice, Exploitation inequality and Isolation.

Mulk Raj Anand was a celebrated Indian author and social activist. His literary career was marked by his commitment to social justice and his desire to give voice to the marginalized. His writing was influenced by his experiences growing up in a poor family and his observations of the struggles of the working class. He aimed to challenge the social and economic norms of his time and to promote a more just and equitable society. His *Two Leaves and a Bud* is a biting indictment of colonial social injustice, and economic exploitation. The story of Gangu, a poor and illiterate tea plantation worker who fights to survive in a system intended to exploit and oppress him. The novel is set in a tea plantation in the remote Assam, India, during the British colonial era. Anand reveals the harsh and merciless treatment of Indian labours by the Britishers exposing the dark side of colonial rule. The colonial system treated Indian labours as a tiny little creature in a mean way sharply criticized in the book. It also picturises the tea estate hard realities of the poor workers working condition in a tea plantation. Cooke says, “These coolies are subhuman, and do not altogether value the benefits of hygiene...” (TLAB 29).

Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud* is about the corrupt system, which treated the tea plantation as a huge prison where the labours can also be compared with Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* which highlights the trap depicting it as a phenomenon that tarnishes not only the lands and peoples; it exploits

those in the West. The essence of the novel can be seen through the following lines: "I suppose it was in our kismet. But back home it felt like a jail, and here it's slightly worse... Water comes first, followed by mire. This prison has no bars, but it is an impenetrable jail." (HOD P.128) were imprisoned labourers were isolated totally away from the outside world.

Anand's characters depict the poignant and thought-provoking novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* limelighting on the extreme issues of hunger and poverty, depicting skillful, narrative and evocative prose. The novel explores the length, breadth and the depth of the bad human condition and suffering for their survival. Anand depicts the enormous economic, social, and cultural division between the Indian labours and the British plantation owners in a striking manner, symbolizing inequality and exploitation. The economic exploitation focusses about their under paid wages, deprived healthcare, verbal and physical abuses. "There is nothing more horrible in this universe than the cruelty of man to man." (TLB P. 25). The strict social hierarchy, caste system, and racist views of the British towards Indians condemn the labours to lead a life of vulnerability, poverty, and helplessness.

Anand illuminates the intricate network of social, economic, and cultural elements that sustain oppression, suppression, inequality and injustice by illustrating the hardships of the underprivileged labours. The violent treatment of Indian labours denial of basic rights. The forced labours long hours in dangerous conditions, lack of education and strict denial of rights creating a cycle of poverty and powerlessness. "Get out! Get out!" exclaimed Croft-Cooke, turning purple with rage, and staring at the coolie. "You bloody fool, get out! Get out! You have been spreading infection all over the place! Didn't you know that you were under segregation? By whose orders did you come here?" (TLAB 114) becomes the best evidence of their systematic subjugation of the Indian labours, fostering a culture of helplessness, fear, and silence.

Gangu's misery reaches the altitude when Sajani, his wife, dies of malaria, and he is refused any financial support for her final rites, he was denied even to receive any money for her last rites. The below lines proves his inability to protect his own family "Can you give a loan of money for the cremation? I have not a pace and the body has been lying in the house for two days." (TLAB 118) The author draws attention to the harsh practices of colonial rule that undermined the dignity and morale of the workers, such as forced labours, corporal punishment, and denial of fundamental rights. In order to show how oppression is sustained and reinforced by social, economic, and cultural institutions, the novel depicts the repressive interactions between Indian overseers, British planters, and labours. In the end, this dehumanizes the workers and erases their identities. The pathetic ending of the novel where Gangu, the poor protagonist labourer sacrifices his life to save his daughter from molestation from his ruling British masters.

The hardworking labours receives pitiful wages for their efforts, while British owners acquire wealth and luxurious life, it emphasizes the sharp difference between the accused and the accuser. The book highlights the needs for workers' rights, equitable pay, and improved working conditions. *Two Leaves and A Bud* may be said to be essentially a 'dramatic' novel and certainly it culminates in a tragic clash of interests and destinies and what is fine is put out, and what is dark is triumphant." (Indian Writing in English 343) says K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

Through the novel the colonial exploitation, economic inequality, and social injustice needs proper awareness reform and social transformation as a whole in the society to eradicate poverty and illiteracy. Providing voice of the voiceless envisions the equitable society with a drastic overhaul of the social cultural economic upliftment.

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