



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.3.,2016 (July-Sept. )

ISSN  
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

PORTRAYAL OF THE MARGINALIZED CLASS IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVEL  
*TWO LEAVES AND A BUD*

SANJAY N. SHENDE<sup>1</sup>, Dr M.D. DESHMUKH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistance Professor in English, Shree Shivaji College Rajura.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor in English, F.E.S.College Chandrapur



SANJAY N. SHENDE

**ABSTRACT**

Anand's *Two Leaves and A Bud* (1937) is a heart rending novel of Anand that depicts the unnerving plight of the marginalized class i.e. the poor, crushed by the capitalist forces and the colonizers. The cruel exploitation and continuous ill-treatment of thousands of poor laborers at the hands of small clique of selfish and self-satisfied British planters on a large tea-estate in Assam forms the main theme of the novel. Anand is almost blind with fury at the relentless cruelty that these Englishmen and their Indian lackeys inflict on the helpless coolies on whose sweated labor rests all their luxury. The marginalized often suffer at the hands of cruel forces in the society and have no identity of theirs. In the novel, the miserable coolies represent the margin and the British colonialists and capitalist forces stand for the center. Gangu, the poor coolie and the protagonist of the novel, faces humiliation, oppression and he is continually abused and beaten. Gangu's suffering reaches the height when Sajani, his wife, dies of malaria and he doesn't get any loan in order to perform the last rites. At the end of the novel he is shot dead during his attempts of saving his daughter from being raped by a plantation manager. Anand has portrayed with absolute authenticity and compassion the pathetic lives of the poor coolies, their struggle for life, and struggle for identity. Being a humanist at heart, Anand expresses his compassion for the victims of injustice and persecution.

**Keywords:** Anand, marginalization, marginalized, exploitation, victims.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

**INTRODUCTION**

Mulk Raj Anand was one of the major Indo-Anglian novelists who received world-wide acclaim, recognition and readership for his writings. Through his profuse literary output his writings Anand emerged as voice of the voiceless and the marginalized. Characters who are marginalized by caste or class people his major novels. The untouchable sweepers, downtrodden coolies, the debt ridden farmers, pitiable laborers, victimized women play prominent role in Anand's fictional world. He has selected real people as heroes whom he knew

intimately during childhood. They are marginalized in one way or the other. He writes about, their life, problems, sufferings and their struggle for existence and identity. Anand voiced those dregs of the society who were deprived of socio-economic opportunities for their sustenance and became victims of social, cultural, economic and political exclusion. He enacts the tragic life of the oppressed through novels especially *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Road*, *The Big Heat* and *The Old Woman and the Cow*.

### **Two Leaves and a Bud: Portrayal of the Marginalized**

*Two Leaves and A Bud* is one of those major novels of Anand that brings out vividly the realistic portrayal of marginalized class i.e. the poor. The title of the novel is suggestive and appropriate as it deals with the suffering and misery of the workers on the tea-plantation of Assam, workers who have to pluck, "two leaves and a bud" day in and day out. The novel delineates the miseries and innocence of the common working class. The innocence of the naïve working class matures into experience, to which the protagonist of this novel stands for. The theme of exploitation in this novel is part of the larger colonial experience. Commenting on the thematic atmosphere that prevails in this novel, M. K.Naik observes:

"...the entire tragedy is unfolded against the background of the tea plantation which is microcosm in itself, a world in which British officials and their officials and their subordinates, on the one hand, and the indentured coolies, on the other, are ranged in two separate camps of the exploiters and the exploited." (*Mulk Raj Anand* 46)

The social scene that Anand has tried to show through the novel is neither exaggerating nor unrealistic. He has only tried to depict what the reality was in 1920s and 1930s especially in Assam. The prevailing conditions during thirties in which Anand wrote, need to be considered here. In the spring of 1932, when Anand came back to India to visit Sabarmati Ashram in order to meet Gandhi and show his draft of *Untouchable*, Gandhi advised Anand to go to people before taking writing as a career. Following the advice, Anand visited many parts of India like the Kangra valley where he had spent some years during his childhood. Later, he visited Assam tea garden also. During this visit, he must have witnessed the horrible conditions of laborers in tea estates. What he had seen was reflected in his novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Since the novel brought the barbarities of the British colonialists in treating the coolies at the plantation estates and the exploitation of the coolies, it created controversy. Amrik Singh in his recent book gives an account of events leading to this controversy. The leading organization of tea planters in Assam was politically influential. Though Anand was able to effectively rebut their criticism of his work for being anti-British, particularly with the help of official documents (the Whitley Report on Assam tea gardens and the rest), the tea planters managed to have that particular novel banned in Assam. Such a step generally makes the book even more popular and this is precisely what happened in this case too. It may have got banned in Assam but elsewhere it was on sale. By this time, Anand forged a place for himself in the literary landscape both of England and India. After 1947, when the novel was no longer banned, he republished it with a fresh introduction. (*Mulk Raj Anand: Role and Achievement* 21)

If the acuteness of the misery of coolies in plantation sites and in factories was deplorable and appeared intolerable, it was not Anand's imagination that was at work. In the words of Ravinder Kumar "the overcrowded slums in which the peasant was forced to find shelter; the long and tiring hours which he was required to work in the factories; and finally, the exploitation to which he was subjected, not only by the mill-owner, but also by the money-lender, the 'bania' and the jobber..." (*Essays in the Social History of Modern India* 62). The novel gives stark depiction to the pathetic conditions of the workers working in pitiable circumstances.

The narrative centers round the basic conflict between the exploiter and the exploited, the one collectively represented by the Indian indentured laborers, and the other by the British colonizers. The novel is constructed to expose the brutality inflicted by one class over the other. Gangu, a middle aged coolie who is the central character of the novel represents the exploited class. He is the very archetype of beleaguered humanity. Being poor, he belongs to marginalized class of the society. Gangu is victimized by this brutality of

the colonizers. Gangu and his complete family suffer due to their neediness, poverty and their marginalized status in the general community. He turns into a subject of neediness and British colonialism.

The novel opens with Gangu's realistic view of life when he muses, 'life is like a journey....a journey into the unknown' (*Two Leaves and a Bud* 1). The statement is suggestive enough as it hints at the trials and tribulations, that he and his family was about to face. He travels from his village Hoshiarpur in Punjab to remote valley of tea-plantation in Assam to earn subsistence for him and his family. His three acres land and his own hut being confiscated by Seth Badridas, the money lender, due to his inability to repay the latter's debt, has made Gangu landless. He, along with his wife Sajani, daughter Leila and son Buddhu move towards a new destination in search of work to make both ends meet. He does not know what pain, suffering, miseries and obstacles were destined for him in the new place. In this sense, his journey is to the 'unknown'. The novel is really a saga of suffering as it begins with Gangu's suffering and ends with his death. Lured by 'golden promises' and the fake picture created by Sardar Buta Singh, a cheat coolie-catcher, about the bright prospects of life, about goodness of tea estate owners, Gangu decides to go Assam. Gangu is clever enough to analyze the authenticity and truth of the things spoken by Buta. From the long story narrated by Buta in praise of British plantation owners, about their goodness, Gangu senses discomfort and feels dubious about credibility of things. His old age and bitter experiences so far in his life, especially by the landlords in his village, have enabled his perception to analyze people—good or bad; credible or incredible. But he is in desperate situation having no better choice and hence he was hoping for betterment in life. Anand writes:

And Gangu, though broken and defeated, was a shrewd enough peasant whose bitter sufferings had inclined him to measure every particle of speech even as sahuakar of his village weighed every grain of wheat. He knew somehow that he was being deceived. But he loved the land... For Gangu felt that he could do without everything else, if only he could get land. (*Two Leaves and a Bud* 7)

Being landless, Gangu has no choice but to believe Buta and his promise that estate owner gift land to laborers lure him to enter the 'green hell' of suffering. The poor are often choice less and hence they fall prey to the circumstances and thus are victimized by the evil agents of the society. Otherwise, he is neither willing nor fit to go out of his village owing to his old age. His landlessness and poverty compels him to find a new means of living in a remote Assam.

In both the novels i.e. *Untouchable* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the central characters suffer due to lower position in the hierarchy of the social system. In *Untouchable*, Bakha being at the bottom position suffer due to hierarchy of caste. He is marginalized by caste system. *Two Leaves and a Bud* shows hierarchy of class owing to social status, authority and financial position. The tea estate administrators like Croft Cooke and Reggie Hunt stand at the top of the pyramid followed by lower grade officials like Shashi Bhushan, the clerk; Hamir Singh, the peon. They are further followed by warders like Neogi and coolie recruitment agents like Buta Ram who enjoys slightly higher stature and privilege than the coolies like Gangu, Narain and others who stand at the lowest position. Every person of higher status humiliates and oppresses those who are inferior to him by exercising his power and authority. Croft Cooke scolds Babu Shashi Bhushan who abuses Buta Ram and persons like Buta and Neogi hold upper hand on coolies like Gangu. The coolies suffer because of being poor. Their poverty has kept them on the margin. The real difficulty is faced by those who are on the margin or sometimes beyond the margin like Bakha.

Gangu is not marginalized by caste like Bakha rather he is on the periphery due to his poverty. Whenever we talk about margins, it necessarily implies a center. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the capitalist colonizers—estate owners and their officials are at the centre and coolies like Gangu are on the margin. There has always been a wide gap between the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor and so is here.

Gangu comes to the 'green hell' of Assam hoping to get a nice house, financial assistance whenever required and bonus during work. The most lucrative offer of Buta that appeals Gangu was to get a piece of land as a gift by the 'English sahibs' to the coolies as promised by Buta. Since Gangu is landless, he considers it as the most valuable gift. But all his dreams and aspirations get shattered after his confrontation with the situation in the valley. The horrified conditions at the place, which he comes to know from a coolie Narain who

is his neighbor, convinces his half belief that he has been deceived. Gangu gets shocked when Narain unfolds the the story of grim reality of the place. Narain says:

“You can’t escape from here now, anyhow [...] This prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless a unbreakable jail. The chowkidars keep guard over the plantation and they bring you back if you should go. The other day the chowkidar beat Balkrishna, the boy who fled to the Santal village, because he thought he could escape to his mother in Oudh. The chowkidars go round at night with a lamp and open every door to see if we are all at home. There used to be a roll call every night before I came.”(TLAB 38)

All the coolies are kept like in captivity under surveillance of guards. They are underpaid. They are forced to live in most unhygienic conditions where every year many coolies lose their lives due to onset of epidemics. They all tolerate everything. So does Gangu. He receives very meager amount i.e. eight *annas* as income of the whole family, at the end of the week: three *annas* for him, two *annas* for his wife and daughter and three *pice* for his son. Gangu is reminded of the fact that in his village he alone used to earn eight *annas* per day by working. He realizes about the falsification of the golden promises by Buta. The inhuman conditions of plantation colliers as depicted by Mulk Raj Anand reminds us of the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* where novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, brings out the pathetic plight of negroes and their exploitation by the white men in America. Gangu’s suffering reaches the height when Sajani, his wife dies of malaria and he doesn’t get any loan in order to perform the last rites. Gangu, completely broken hearted, loses his consciousness, sense of reason. What can be more pathetic for a person who is grief-stricken but not having money to perform the last rites of his beloved wife? He reaches to all possible sources to arrange the money but he stands rejected and dejected. He is reminded of Buta’s words saying that the sahibs at the plantation are just like ‘*mai-bap*’ who lend money to coolies in critical period and that too at normal rate of interest. Hoping to get loan, he comes to Croft Cooke, the manager of tea estate, but Gangu is abused, insulted and expelled out. Cooke reacts:

‘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)

Instead of getting loan or any sort of help, he is kicked out by Croft Cooke. Being humiliated, he returns and next day he visits Buta with an earnest request: “Can you give a loan of money for the cremation? I have not a *pice* and the body has been lying in the house for two days.” (TLAB 118). Buta Ram, being a hypocrite, makes excuses and advises Gangu to go to *bania* to get loan. Finally he is compelled to visit the money lender and gets twenty rupees loan. When Gangu visits John de la Havre, the communication between the two brings out his anguish and his feeling of discrimination that the poor like him have to face because of poverty.

‘Death strikes the poor’ de la Havre said. ‘Ji Huzoor,’ said Gangu. ‘It is true. It is true. The poor have no chance. Everything works by favour here. The Sardars are rich, but the labourer people starve’. And he became silent. (TLAB 132)

What Gangu says is true and relevant in the modern context also. Even after more than fifty years of independence, the millions of people live in abject poverty. They face marginalization and every sort of exclusion. They never become a part of mainstream society. Being a die-hard humanist at heart, Anand feels their pains and suffering. In this regards Anand’s expresses his resentment through Gangu:

I have always said it and say it now again that, though the earth is bought and sold and confiscated, God never meant that to happen, for He does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and the others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men and yet many die of hunger, and most live under a heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if the earth were made for a few and for all men! (TLAB 247-248)

The portrayal of marginalized class i.e. the poor is altogether realistic in this novel. There is neither exaggeration nor disparagement in showing the life of the poor. When the story begins, Gangu is debt ridden and at the end also he is under debt. It shows the factual plight of the marginalized poor in the country. No poor in the world remains under debt willfully and so does Gangu. Since he loses his land at Hoshiarpur, his

village, owing to the interest payable to the money lender, he resolves not to take loan in future. But being crushed under poverty and having no other alternative to manage the last rites of his wife Sajani, Gangu falls prey to the circumstances and takes loan. Being always poor, he understands the undue significance given to money. He understands that in this capitalist world only money rules. When the money lender comes to coolie lines to recover the loan from Gangu, he gets baffled. He almost loses his sense and in a state of insanity, Gangu starts babbling. Anand expresses his state of mind very poignantly:

But for days he was upset. 'Money is everything', he kept on saying, 'Money is everything' as if the phrase were loaded with all the suffering he had endured. 'Money is everything', he said to Narain apropos of nothing, as they sat smoking under the tree outside their hut on an afternoon. 'Money is everything in this world' and he did not seem to know what to say further. And he repeated the phrase as if he were blindly groping for light in a dark world, struggling to emerge from the fear in which he lay imprisoned to his habitual carelessness. (TLAB 263-264)

He gets freedom from the debt only after his death. He dies during his attempt to save his daughter from being raped by Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager at the plantation.

Most of the tortures and miseries Gangu undergoes in the tea plantation are clearly due to man's insensitive desire to inflict pain on others. The owners of the tea estate have no concern whatsoever for the welfare of the workers. What is worse, they believe in flogging them into working mood, kicking them out of their attempts at any kind of organization and getting rid of them if necessary by shooting them dead. They eat and drink and play while the poor underpaid and overworked laborers starve and suffer. Ironically enough, it is not only the English characters like Croft Crooke and Reggie Hunt who are totally inhuman in their attitude to coolie like Gangu, but also the Indian sycophants, like Buta, Shashi Bhushan as well as the merchants, money-lenders and warders who render Gangu's life most miserable.

Gangu's sufferings do not end with his death because he does not get justice. Reggie, the murderer of Gangu gets acquittal by the ironically 'impartial' jury comprising seven European and two Indian members. With common consensus, the jury discharges Reggie from the allegations pronouncing as 'not guilty' (TLAB 276). Thus innocent Gangu is victimized and murderer Reggie comes out as innocent. K. R.Srinivasa Iyengar observes: "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)

The marginalized are powerless and hence they are denied justice. It happens with Gangu too. Gangu is entangled in a system where perpetrators of crime and judiciary are same. Reggie is part of this system and Gangu is an outsider. This is the reason why Reggie gets justice—justice of convenience and Gangu merely remains an unheard victim. The novel brings out the pathetic condition of the marginalized who have no identity in the eyes of the rich, the powerful and they are only doomed to suffer throughout their life. The novel brings out the enlarged gap between the wealthy and the poor, the exploiters and the victims, the rulers and the ruled. Anand has portrayed all the characters with keen observation. The novel makes the readers feel the grief, the pain the agony.

Commenting on *Two Leaves and a Bud* after many years of its publication Anand wrote in a letter to J.F.Brown, "I conceived *Two Leaves and a Bud* as a poem of suffering. I admit that it is the most bitter of my novels, but it is poetic; were it a literary reportage, it would have been hundred times bitter." (qtd. in Krishna Nandan Sinha) Apart from the exploited class i.e. the coolies, Anand has portrayed the exploiter class i.e. the colonizers in realistic manner. He is largely concerned with the socio-political function of the British colonial attitudes. He devotes much of his attention to a whole range of British characters. All the British characters in the novel are typical and true to the type except John de la Havre. Croft Cooke, the manager; Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager, Mrs. Croft Cooke, Major Macara and others are all the symbols of tyranny, cruelty and hypocrisy. The syndrome of racism has become a second nature to people like Croft Cooke and Reggie. When De La Havre comes to the club alongwith his assistant Dr. Chuni Lal, an Indian to meet Croft Cooke, he faces the conflict. Seeing Chuni Lal inside the club, Reggie gets sullen, objects to Havre for bringing the former to

the club and comments: 'niggers are not allowed in this club.'(TLAB 104) Use of racially offensive language validates his attitude of racism. It also shows that in this veritable hell, not only illiterate peasants and coolies are marginalized but well educated Indians like Dr. Chunni Lal who must enjoy equal status like Havre are marginalized. Thus, Chunni Lal faces racial marginalization—another dimension of marginalization by class.

In the eyes of British sahibs, no Indians have existence as a human being irrespective of any position or designation on which an Indian works. They are inhuman to all the sufferings of the coolies. The novel with all the violence and bitterness has the atmosphere of suspicion, and strife, the racial intolerance and antagonism, the small talk in the club, reign of prejudices and unreason.

They are true to their nature of colonizers in general, proud of being from superior race and born to rule and subjugate. Considering the Indians as slave, they justify their insulting and oppressive actions as necessary in the interest of welfare of Indians. They believe that the Britishers civilize the Indian coolies. They have every sort of amenities of luxury and entertainment, offering to one another a glass of wine whenever they meet in the club but absolutely careless about provision of hygienic water to the coolies. De la Havre's proposal for the arrangement of hygienic water system for the coolies is treated with disregard and indifference. When he talks on the issue to Croft Cook, he gets insensitive and careless justification. Cooke says, "These coolies are subhuman, and do not altogether value the benefits of hygiene..." (TLAB 29). Many coolies lose their life due to these unhygienic conditions the story repeats with Sajani, wife of Gangu as she dies of malaria. But life of any coolie is cheap for them. They do not feel any sympathy for them. Croft Cooke, his wife, Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager and others abuse coolies with various epithets. The views of one of the Englishman in the colony of Macpherson tea estate are suggestive and representative to show how they perceive the Indian coolies, when he opines:

"After all, the coolie is favored here to some extent. We respect his customs and conventions. He is housed and fed. He can keep goats and fowls. His tastes are simple, and he is probably not unhappy. His ideas are few, his vocabulary small and limited. He may be oppressed, no one, in truth could deny that, I suppose, but he doesn't feel it as we should. You must remember that." (TLAB 32)

It shows their callous attitude and insensitivity to the coolies. Despite the fact that the coolies are forced to live in the deadliest condition of hygiene, receiving low wages and abusive remarks and humiliation, the Englishmen believe that the coolies do not feel the oppression. Reggie Hunt like Thomas, the foreman in Bombay Cotton Mill in *Coolie*, embodies the nastiest aspect of capitalistic exploitation. Like him, he also treats his Indian laborers worse than animals, cursing, beating, despising and exploiting them at the same time. But Hunt is wicked than Thomas. He is known for all sorts of evils existing on the earth. He is the villain of the piece who treats the Indian coolies so brutally, and rapes their wives and daughters so wantonly, that even his own community looks down upon him. However, he excuses himself by saying that he himself has been ill-treated by everyone, around him. He is a symbol of lust brimming with energy every now and then. He considers all the coolies of the tea estate, especially their wives and daughters, his private property to be used and misused at will. At first he keeps Chambeli in his bungalow as his mistress and then discards her for the sake of Neogi's wife. When Chambeli take Neogi's wife to task for snatching Reggie from her, Gangu and the other coolies try to pacify her. But Reggie tramples over them with his horse. The injured coolies stage a demonstration, which is suppressed like a mutiny with the help of the bombers of the Royal Air Force. At last, he tries to rape Leila, Gangu's fourteen years old daughter, but she runs away to home. Reggie follows her to home and shoots Gangu who tries to save his daughter. His name 'Reggie Hunt' seems suitable because he is always on the hunt of new women for sexual pleasures. He not only exploits the coolies but also glorifies his exploitation. Blatant racism in the case of Reggie Hunt is clearly pronounced everywhere. For the first time, Anand in his novel stands openly against the British Raj. Saros Cowasjee observes:

"Until now the English did not figure in a major way in Anand's novels. No doubt they were present in *Untouchable* and *Coolie* but only as secondary characters, and the indictment of the British Raj was brought in obliquely, not by direct references to its representatives but by showing the Raj hovering over all the action that took place. But in *Two Leaves and a Bud* Anand openly criticized the English...." (*So Many Freedoms* 87)

Apart from the British characters except De la Havre, a few of the Indians like warders (Neogi), sardars (Buta), babus (Shashi Bhushan) are the exploiters too. Only De la Havre, the doctor, stands odd man out. Unlike the hard hearted and snobbish British managers of the tea estate, he is a compassionate and egalitarian person. He is one the many intellectuals who play important roles in Anand's novels. He is largely the mouthpiece of author himself who tries his level best to propound a solution for the Indian coolies but he utterly fails. He is acutely aware of the brutal exploitation of the Indian coolies at the hands of the British managers of the tea estates in Assam and tries to minimize it by all means. What differentiates De La Havre from his fellowmen is his humane attitude towards the coolies. He treats coolies as human beings whereas his fellow Britishers consider them as 'subhuman'. Because of his sympathetic attitude and concerns towards coolies, Havre is treated as a black sheep by the managers of the tea estate. He makes plans for the supply of clean drinking water and sanitary fittings to their huts in order to protect them against the epidemics of cholera and malaria. As Havre fervently wants the Indian coolies to be treated as respectable human beings, he is disheartened by the imperialistic and callous attitude of his colleagues towards them. He asks himself impatiently, "Yes why not let the natives run their own show? It is their country. And we have really no right in it." (TLAB 32) If there is any ray of hope for Gangu and other coolies, it is De La Havre. His efforts to make his superiors aware of the need to help the coolies are met with racism and callousness. At the end, he is dismissed for siding with the coolies.

Since the novel brings out the economic exploitation by British colonizers, exposing the imperial policy regarding inhuman treatment of coolies at the plantation sites, it was highly disapproved by the Britishers as well as their supporters. Though Anand received praises for the novel on global level, he had to face brutal criticism by the English writers. In a review of the novel, Goronwy Ree lauded the author for exposing with "great skill, and without insistence.....the Indian coolies, exploited, starving, cheated, dirty, diseased as the true heirs of one the world's great civilizations." (qtd in C.J.George 70). He further commented that "I have no doubt that Dr. Anand's account of the tea plantation is true". At the same time, Anand was criticized for distorting facts about the lives of the Indian coolies on the one hand and exaggerating the British characters on the other. Mr. L.J.Godwin of the Monaberie Tea Estate in Assam happened to go through the novel and expressed his resentments for the portrayal of the Britishers. Saros Cowasjee gives an account of events in this regard:

Angry letters were exchanged in *The Spectator* between Mulk Raj Anand and one Mr. L.J.Godwin of the Monaberie Tea Estate in Assam. Possibly encouraged by Ree's review, Anand wrote in *The Spectator* of 11 June 1937 that the ghastly conditions he had exposed in the novel were still prevalent. Mr. Godwin challenged Anand's conclusion in the 20 August 1937 issue of the magazine and stated that Mr. Whitley, who chaired the Royal Commission of Labour, had in fact commended the British planters for their humane treatment of the labourers in a personal conversation with him. Anand, answered back in *The Spectator* of 3 Sept. 1937, quoting from Mr. Whitley's Report itself to show how the coolies were being abused, over-worked, and kept in a state of serfdom.(*So Many Freedoms* 84)

Mr. Godwin challenged the authenticity of the novel. But his charges seem baseless as there are many more evidences which support that the conditions of the coolies in Assam were shocking. Among them are , a doctoral thesis by S. M. Akhtar entitled *Emigrant Labour of Assam Tea Gardens* submitted in 1932 to the University of London and a novel by D. P.H. Daniel titled *Red Tea*(1969) ( *So Many Freedoms*, 85-86). Above all, Anand clarifies and justifies his standpoint in the 'preface' to the second edition of *Two Leaves and a Bud* in clear terms:

What I had to say in it was deep in me from the days when I lived for a while near a plantation in Assam and visited Ceylon, and saw the inhumanity and barbarities prevalent there, with the consequent dehumanization of the colonials involved in the process. (I can never forget the painter George Keyt telling me of an evening he had spent on an estate near Kandy, where the sizzled assistant mangers played cards and wore and boozed in company with their coolie women mistressed whom they abused, physically and verbally, with the vulgarity of the old buccaneers in Africa). In the light of that and my own evidence, I would say that

the descriptions in *Two Leaves and a Bud* are comparatively under-estimates. Only the decent Englishmen at home will not easily believe that their representatives in the Empire could be guilty of such excesses as are familiar to most of the subject races! (7)

Though Anand had presented the authentic predicament of suffering masses in tea garden of Assam, he had to bear the criticism from the British side. Perhaps, owing to this scenario, it was banned in England for some time. But Anand never heeded such criticism: "I do not in the least mind Criticism, even adverse, probably because the suffering from which my novels have been written has already been rewarded by the fact that they have gone into so many language of the world in spite of their truthfulness and exposure of the many shams, hypocrisies and orthodoxies of India." (qtd. in Rawat 115)

Anand had inclination towards Marxism and influence of Marx is clearly perceptible in the early novels. He shares similar pattern of writing like other contemporary English Marxist writers especially his compassion and sympathy for the troubles and miseries of the working classes. 'He agreed with Henderson that the best novels sought to change men and society.' (Packham 5) The Marxist creed also appealed to him because it offered an explanation of, and solution to, the sufferings of his fellowmen. Moreover, the human values underlying Marxism were the most important because it aimed at understanding the fundamental principles of humanity. Gillian Packham, one of the renowned critics of Anand shares Marxist ideology in his writing:

"When Anand is considered within the English literary tradition, he must be grouped with the Marxist writers of the nineteen thirties. However, his theory and practice cannot be completely identified with theirs. His work shows the same concern with the social reality and the same anger at injustice as their does. But it also shows a spirit of optimism and a faith in the individual which can be associated more closely with the broader humanist outlook of Malraux and Silone than with English social realism." (Packham, 61)

In further period of his career, Anand retreated from his Marxist ideas and focused his humanistic philosophy. The novel enacts the clashes between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Though the protagonist of the novel does not rebel against the capitalistic forces in clear terms, Gangu shows defiance when the coolies are mercilessly beaten up by Neogi, the warder and later Reggie reaching the occasion threaten them to shoot. When the broken and moaning coolies gather, Gangu dares to say 'we can't let this pass' (TLAB 197). When the coolies are beaten up and threatened by Reggie Hunt, they come to John de la Havre who senses their pains and suffering and says: "You want a coolie raj, you people. Why do you let them beat you? Why can't you beat back—all of you together? (TLAB 200). Cowasjee groups such novels as "Anands semi-Marxist categories". These novels show tinge or undercurrent of Marxist ideas though in latent form where humanism is the main thread. P.K.Rajan identifies two distinctive trends of Anands humanism as 'his instinctive affinity for traditional peasant values and his intellectual Marxist interpretation of social life' (*Mulk Raj Anand: A Revaluation* 23). Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* belongs to one of those categories. Since Gangu being innocent and submissive, doesn't show any heroic or revolutionary qualities, De la Havre seems to have been assigned the later function of 'intellectual Marxist interpretation of social life'.

### Conclusion

To conclude, Anand depicts the life of the marginalized class i.e. the poor in a realistic manner. The portrayal of the suffering peasants and laborers through Gangu is very convincing. Gangu seems one of the most complete and memorable portraits of Indian peasants in Anand's fiction. The story of Gangu can be generalized to thousand of peasants who live their life in abject poverty, suppressed under money lenders debt and oppressed by the people sharing colonizers attitude of exercising the power for establishing hegemony over the weak. Mulk Raj Anand presents his social criticism on the evils of capitalism. *Two Leaves and a Bud* is, by and large, a success particularly in so far as it is an effective indictment of capitalism and exploitation of the marginalized.

### Works Cited

1. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Rev. Ed. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1937. Print.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, *Two Leaves and a Bud*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bombay: Kutub Popular, 1951. Print.

3. Cowasjee, Saros. *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.
4. Iyengar, K.R.S, *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Pub, 1994. Print.
5. Kumar, Ravindar. *Essays in the Social History of Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1983. Print.
6. Naik, M. K. *Mulk Raj Anand*. Arnold-Heinemann, 1973. Print.
7. Packham, Gillian. "Perspectives on Mulk Raj Anand" *Mulk Raj Anand and the Thirties Movement*, Ed. K.K.Sharma, Gaziabad :Vimal Prakashan, Print.
8. Rawat, S K. *Mulk Raj Anand: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Arise Publishers, 2013. Print.
9. Rajan, P.K. *Mulk Raj Anand: A Revaluation*. New Delhi: Arnold Associates, 1995. Print.
10. Singh, Amrik. *Mulk Raj Anand: Role and Achievement*. p.21. Web. Accessed on 26.03.2016. [www.idaneram.blogspot.com](http://www.idaneram.blogspot.com)
11. Sinha, Krishna Nandan. *Mulk Raj Anand*. New York: Twayne Publishers Inc, 1972. Print.

---

**Brief Biography of Corresponding Author**

The author has been working as an assistant professor in English in Shree Shivaji College, Rajura, Dist.Chandrapur, Maharashtra since year 2000. He has 15 years of experience of teaching at graduation and post graduation programs. He recently completed a U.G.C. sponsored minor research project on *A Comparative Study of English Language Teaching in English and Marathi Medium Schools/Colleges from Grade 8 to 12*. He is a member of board of studies for Language Board for science faculty in Gondwana University, Gadchiroli. He has published 18 research papers in various national, international journals and conference proceedings and attended 21 conferences/symposiums across the country. At present, he is pursuing doctoral research on *Portrayal of the Marginalized Castes and Classes in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand*.

---