

COLONIAL EXPLOITATION IN TWO LEAVES AND A BUD

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Abstract

My chief interest in writing this article is to focus on colonial exploitation of the protagonist in Two Leaves and a Bud. Exploitation was everywhere in India in pre-independence era. Human rights were restricted by the British government which was the chief cause of Indian people's suffering. During British rule, Indians could not raise their voice against suffering and exploitations because of their illiteracy and poverty. They were illiterate so they were not able to understand exploitation and due to poverty they had to work hard for bread. Poverty and illiteracy were causes of their suffering and exploitation. Contemporary literary writers such as Mulk Raj Anand have presented Indian people's exploitation through their writings. Most of Anand's novels present picture of suffering. In 'Untouchable', Bakha is symbol of suffering. He suffers because of his untouchable status in the society and his poverty. He is untouchable so he do not have alternative to his job of sweeping and cleaning. He is poor so he has to work at early age for earning. In 'Coolie', Munoo has to work because he is poor. In 'Two Leaves and a Bud', Gangu is victim of exploitation. Thus exploitation of the protagonist has been subject of Anand's novels. Exploitations are of different kinds as domestic exploitation, colonial exploitation, class exploitation, caste exploitation, capital exploitation, industrial exploitation etc. through different novels Anand has presented all types of exploitations. Bakha is victim of caste exploitation, Munoo is victim of colonial exploitation, and Gangu is victim of capital and colonial exploitation.

Keywords: *Colonial exploitation, Suffering, Inequality, Racial exploitation, Racial difference, Poverty, Feudal exploitation, etc.*

The *Two Leaves and a Bud* presents a picture of colonial exploitation. The title is taken from the refrain sung by the coolies working in the tea estates. Gangu lives in a small village near Amritsar. His brother has raised loan from the money lender against their ancestral land and the house. The situation compelled Gangu to work in order to repay the loan. The tea-estate agent Buta encourages him to leave his village and move to Assam for earning money. There Gangu realizes that he is paid less than he used to get by working on the fields at his village. He decides to return home but he is infected with high fever. His wife Sajani looks after him. Meanwhile she is also infected and dies. Gangu borrows money from the baniya for the funeral of his wife. Gangu is representative character. His suffering is suffering of all workers in tea-planting field. Gangu is victim of colonial exploitation. He is convinced to move from his village to Assam in other words we may say that he is compelled to work in tea planting fields. The low wages disappointed him but he cannot return to his village. The poor villagers of Assam are compelled to sell their agricultural product in low rates and buy essential commodities on high rates. The coolies and formers are exploited by the hands of

white people who consider themselves superior. The notion of inequality is the chief cause of exploitation. On Hunt's order the supervisors beat the coolies so mercilessly that they get seriously injured and one of them dies. No action is taken by the police against the exploitation on the contrary Gangu is fined. Gangu's life becomes worse due to colonial exploitation. He is unable to return loan and interest. One day his daughter is tried to seduce by Hunt. She shouts and runs into her hut. Gangu rushes to the spot and gets killed by Hunt. The novel is a picture of colonial exploitation. Gangu is symbol of coolies who are compelled to move to Assam from various part of the country and are victim of colonial exploitation. Gangu is fined for agitation and he is shot to dead for no fault. The colonial exploitation is result of racial exploitation. The white consider them superior and treat with all non-white as animals. They do not care poverty and suffering of the black coolies on the contrary they enjoy exploiting them. They do not have any sympathy for poor Indian people. The Bura Sahib is symbol of lust. Reggie Hunt tries to seduce almost every woman on the plantation. Even British judicial body is corrupt. The Judicial courts are for the white people. Rules are made to exploit Indians. Gangu is fined and no action is taken against the exploiters for they are whites. Gangu is killed by Hunt but he is declared not-guilty.'

The novel presents colonial exploitation. There are two types of characters in the novel first the exploiters and second exploited. The exploiters are rulers and exploited are ruled. The British people exploit the Indian working class. The chief reason behind the exploitation is the notion of superiority. The British people consider themselves superior and the Indians as subordinates. That is notion of racial difference is the chief cause of exploitation in this novel. In *Untouchable*, Bakha suffers due to caste difference and class difference. Bakha is poor as well as untouchable member of society. Both poverty and his untouchable status are causes of his sufferings. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* poverty and racial difference are causes of sufferings. Gangu is poor and he is Indian i.e. black. Due to his poverty, he has to work for bread. The white people consider the non-whites as inferiors. Both poverty and racial distinction are causes of his suffering. Gangu's suffering is of his class, for he is representative character in the novel as in *Untouchable*, Bakha is representative of all untouchables of India and in *Coolie* Munoo is representative of poor working class people. The poor people surrender themselves to their exploiter in order to get rid of hunger. That is poverty is the root cause of suffering. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Gangu is middle aged person and representative of all coolies of contemporary India, who move in search of job. Gangu is victim of feudal exploitation and as consequence of it he has to move to Assam from his native place. Here he becomes victim of colonial exploitation. Though he knows that he is paid less than what he earned in his native place he cannot rebel for he does not have any alternative.

In *Untouchable*, though Bakha has feeling of revolt he does not dare, for he is helpless. He has experience of life of equality at the British barrack that makes him unrest and he hates his untouchable status and poverty. He wishes to live life of equality and has zeal of learning. But like Munoo in *Coolie*, Gangu has no notion of revolt in him. Like Munoo he has accepted his life. He considers his exploitation as a reward for misdeeds of his past life. It is common tendency of Indian poor class people. They are superstitious by nature and blame to the deeds of past life. They never think of getting rid of the miseries of life and exploitation because of their faith in past life. This shows their illiteracy due to which they are not mature to accept new ideals. The exploiters deceive them for they are illiterate. In this novel Gangu knows that he is earning less in Assam than he used to earn in his village but he does not return to his native place and like his fellow coolies suffer by the hands of their masters.

The workers at the tea-estate are slaves. They do not have freedom in their life. They live in the houses which are not comfortable for living. They are paid low wages. When they are working at the tea-estate they are under supervision. There are many sardars to supervise their work. When they are at home they are under supervision of many watchmen. In other words we may say they are slaves. One of the workers tells Gangu that he is working in the tea plantation for last twelve years during which he is not allowed to see his relatives. Anand has ridiculed the tendency of the planters of the tea-estate that thought they earn profit through tea plantation, they do not care coolies even their basic needs. They are not ready to spend money on the water supply plant for the workers because for them the employees are subhuman. The

capitalist are interested only in profit and they are not concerned with miseries of the workers. On the other side the workers on the tea plantation consider to the planters as their 'Mai Baap' and expect kind attention from the planters.

The theme of Anand's novels *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* is the same. He has presented exploitation of working class through both novels. In earlier novel *Coolie* the colonial exploitation takes place in the Cotton Mill in Bombay while in *Two Leaves and a Bud* colonial exploitation takes place in tea plantation in Assam and innocent child Munoo is replaced by middle aged Gangu. These two novels prove that colonial exploitation is same everywhere in India.

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