

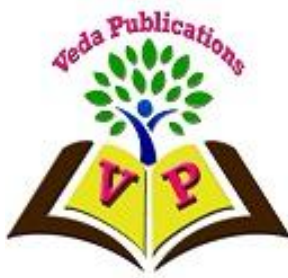
A GLIMPSE OF THE COLONIAL RULE OF INDIA IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *TWO LEAVES AND A BUD*

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ABSTRACT



Colonialism has been occupying a vital position in literature since the end of World War II. Thinkers, dramatists, novelists, poets, academicians took up the issues of colonialism, began to realize its dire consequences and exerted a strong opposition to various forms of colonialism. They made a critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourses of the third world countries under the colonies like England, Spain, France and other European powers. The writers presented their own pictures of colonialism. Frant Fanon whose works are influential in the field of post-colonial studies had examined the possibilities of anti-colonial violence in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*(1961). Similarly, Edward Said's *Orientalism*(1978) examines the relationship between the West and the East as the 'Other'. Novelists like Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, Tayeb Salih, Joseph Conrad and other writers too took up colonialism as a theme.

Keywords: *Colonialism, Discourse, Indo-Anglian Domination, Indigenous, Imperialism.*

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Like all other literary forms, Indo-Anglian fiction doesn't lag behind in expressing colonialism as a matter of discourse. Indo-Anglian writers felt the immense necessity of providing a psychiatric and psychologic analysis of the dehumanizing effects of colonization upon the individuals and the nations. Apart from dealing with the problems of Indian emigrant, identity crisis, socio-political oppression of individuals, religious controversies it also deals with partition of India, political upsurge & awakening of nationalism during the British rule in India. R.K Narayan's *Swami and Friends*(1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*(1938), Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*(1997), Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*(2006) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*(1937) deals with colonialism and its harsh realities.

Mulk Raj Anand the most prolific writer among the Indo-Anglian writers is credited with many well known novels like *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the black waters* (1940), and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942). In Anand's work we see a sense of actuality and vitality. His work centres around the lower class characters like the pariahs, the bottom dogs rather than the elect and the sophisticated and presents a realistic picture of them. He writes;

All these heroes, as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories, were dear to me, because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth. And I was repaying the debt of gratitude I owed them for much of the inspiration they had given to me to mature in to manhood, when I began to interpret their lives in my writings. They were not mere phantoms...they were the flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood, and obsessed me in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist's soul. And I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of life.[1]

Anand can be compared to Dickens in his description of the inequities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy. As

a writer of fiction Anand brings forward the issue between 'untouchables' and 'higher castes', between the 'thathiars(the hereditary coppersmiths) and the capitalists(Lall Murli Dhar and Seth Gokal Chand in *The Big Heart*) and between the Tea Estate labourers and the sahibs in *Two leaves and a bud*. In his fiction he brings out situations where government stands against the people, the people themselves cut up into divisions, the play of political and personal rivalries, the clash of ideologies, the pull of idealism and the need for sacrifice.

Two leaves and a Bud takes us to the lush green forests of Assam and its tea plantations. Anand details the panoramic picture of the tea plantations:

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 heartbeat of the day, in the march of time.[2]

Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* is about colonial India and the sufferings of the masses. On the surface the story revolves around Gangu the main protagonist. On a deeper level it is about the miserable and tormented conditions of the coolies in the tea estates of Assam under the British rule. Gangu a peasant from Punjab is lured by Sardar Buta of giving a better future is taken to Assam to work as a coolie in Macpherson Tea Estate. On arrival he gets a glimpse of the colonial domination. It is Narain, a coolie who narrates to Gangu about the life in the Tea Estate.

The British colonizer after establishment of a colony in a territory got engaged in expansion, exploitation of that colony. They developed unequal relationships between themselves and the indigenous people. Indigenous people went through political and legal domination, racial and cultural inequality in the hands of the colonizers. These aspects are clearly visible in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. The British imposes policy of imperialism. Gangu, Narain and other coolies become a victim of imperialism. The Tea Estate is a prison without walls. Narain and other coolies tells Gangu:



I suppose it was in our kismet. But at home it was like a prison and here it is slightly worse. First water, afterwards mire!

This prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless an unbreakable jail. [3]

The Sahibs (British) uses the coolies in all works whether it be household works or in the plantations or in clearing the forests for hunting. The coolies were exempted from getting their due. Gangu does his work dedicatedly, but he is not given money for his wife Sajani's funeral. Infact, Mr. Cooke orders the chaprasi to throw Gangu out at once. The coolies suffer from poverty and helplessness. They are whipped and kicked for no reason. They live their life in a squalid condition suffering from diseases like Malaria. The planters paid no attention. They used the coolies as a tool or an instrument to satisfy their needs. The coolies of the Macpherson Tea Estate are a representation of the other labourers of India under the British rule.

Reggie Hunt the Assistant Planter is the embodiment of the tyrannical rule of British colonialism. He is a person of imperialistic arrogance and a sensualist and hedonist. Mr. Cooke, Hitchcock, Macara and Ralph exercises domination and control over the coolies. It is Dr. John de la Havre the only White Sahib who understands and identifies himself with the coolies. The Sahibs treatment of the coolies are well evident in the following lines:

"Shir up, complaining fool', Reggie Hunt shouted, rushing step back or I will shoot you dead! Let de la Havre mind his business. Back you go, Swine, back you go to the lines"....' Get Back! Swine, roared Croft Cooke, roused out of his deliberateness by Reggie's impetuosity, and advancing under cover of the warders, Get back to your lines, And I can deal with de la Havre Sahib".[4]

Reggie Hunt and Croft Cooke abuses both the men and women in the Estate. Reggie's mere presence is enough to make the coolies tremble. His daily work is to supervise the plantation worker and factory operations. When he is impatient he whips the coolies and bullies them. Even the womenfolk are not safe. Neogi's wife is used as an instrument by her husband to please Reggie. There is an incident that shows how women fall prey to the Sahibs. A Polo

match was organized in the Estate. After the polo match, Ralph provokes Reggie with a perfect hooking of the ball. Reggie gets angry and disgusted by defeat. He goes to the tent and refreshes himself with warm beer. On hearing the voices of women outside he gets restless. He goes out in his motorcycle, moving past the coolie lines. He halts in front of Neogi's hut, proceeds to the door and slams it open. Neogi's wife, prepares herself for his advances. Reggie has a violent union with the woman who meekly yields to him. Neogi's wife is not the sole victim. Gangu's daughter Leila too cannot escape his lustful eyes.

With them the British administration brought 'divide and rule' policy as in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. They turned men against men. They brought racial and cultural discrimination. In this fiction, Babu Shashi Bhushan and Seth Dhanu Mal cheats their fellowmen under the White Sahib's influence for the sake of money. The colonizers orders the local warders to beat the coolies. The poor coolies remain silent bearing all kinds of tortures. If they raise their voices Reggie Hunt and the other sahibs used military air force to frighten them.

The White Sahibs viewed the coolies as inferior race. They used derogatory terms like 'nigger', 'born liars', and 'lazybones' to define the coolies. In chapter II, the domestic servant of the Cooke household, Ilahi Bux is openly accused of cheating. Mrs. Cooke bluntly calls Indians 'born liars', and 'lazybones'.

The events in the book provides us only a partial glimpse of colonialism. It is from Dr. Havre's work on oppressed classes that we gain a wider perspective. Dr. Havre's work is an account of the hard and bitter truth of the conditions of labourers, it also exposes the abject misery of the Negro slaves of American plantations and crime against humanity.

Thus, from the above discussion the harsh realities of colonial India is evident. In the end, Gangu is shot dead by Reggie Hunt. A brief trial of Reggie takes place but the judge an Englishman Mowberly pronounces the verdict that Reggie is 'not guilty.' There appears to be no end to the rule of terror in the valley with the starving coolies toiling forever. *Two Leaves and a Bud* can be compared to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In Anand's fiction there is



the clash between the coolies and the sahibs and Gangu's destruction leading to death under the English tea planters. Similarly, *Things Fall Apart* is about Okonkwo a Nigerian who falls from grace and the author narrates Okonkwo's destruction with the coming of the English Christian Missionaries.

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