



HAVOC OF WHITE HAIL ON GREEN LEAVES OF TEA: A STUDY OF BRITISHERS'S HARASSMENT OF INDIAN LABOURERS IN ANAND'S *TWO LEAVES AND A BUD*

Dr. Archana

(Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005.)

ABSTRACT

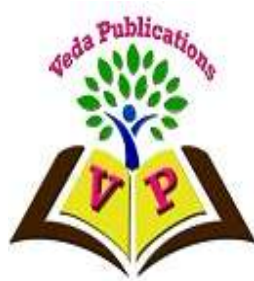
Anand is a writer with a strong commitment to present the social evils of domination and inequity. Anand's humanism is mild. He himself accepts that he hopes and he can teach even a few people of his generation that tenderness is their only asset. Mulk Raj Anand, a pioneer in the field of Indian Writing in English, has succeeded in adorning for himself a special place and he is reverentially known one of 'The Big Three'. All his writings bear him out as a champion of down-trodden and his short stories and novels expose his profound understanding of socio-economic problems. Colonizers did not recognize themselves with colonized people. They furnished their contrariety of pre-eminence from the inherent Indians. Mulk Raj Anand defined this reality in his writing, defined *is there a Contemporary Indian Civilization*, that the colonizers did not wish to apprehend our manner of expression, duties or religious observations and conducted lonely lives at their secluded mansion except while they came out to govern.

Keywords: *Colonizer, Domination, Tea-Plantation, Cruelty, Subordination.*

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Ravi Kumar comments on Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*:

Poetic in style, this novel presents the pathetic life of the coolies of Assam Tea-Estates. A fierce denunciation of man's cruelty to man, *Two Leaves and a bud* projects Anand's humanism, his rejection of his theory of Karma and God and the destructive effects of poverty and fatalism.

(Ravi Kumar 115)

His main preoccupation is the men without land condemned to hunger, poverty and permanent emigration. His farmers are burdened with debt and disease. He states that land is not of the entire nation but has been permanently usurped by the rich people. Anand wrote against it that it is the appropriate time that the poor people kicked about by the kings and spat upon by the merchants, began to hit back. This trouble of peasantry is delineated in Anand's novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* in such a way as to highlight those aspects of the class struggle of Indian society which present needless difficulties, misery and sorrow, aspects which need to be illustrated in terms of the conflict between meddling selfishness and socio-political compulsion. The presentation of the class system is interpreted in Anand's humanism and his commitment for the cause of the needy. *Two Leaves and a Bud* is most effective novel in terms of implied charge of crimes. *Two Leaves and a Bud* exhibits the struggle between the rich and the poor, the exploiters and the exploited and the ruler and the ruled. The class struggle is a universal phenomenon. Anand's interest lies in portraying the conflict and tensions generated in Indian society as a result of the advancing economic structure, spreading commerce and political alteration which essentially ask new class arrangements in the Indian society. His delineation of the play of class - awareness is distinguished by his superb insight into the departments and modern responses of life which it has evoked.

Sinha's criticism, however, does not seem very acceptable when he claims that:

Two Leaves and a bud is neither authentic reportage nor a poem in suffering. It's sensitized and to some extent truthful delineation of experience is much too peripheral and casual to be truly poetic. It is flashly and episodic in the extreme, whereas true poetic rendition implies an integrated and functional view of life. (Sinha 36)

The novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* deals with the miserable plight of the labouring community or down-trodden people. The writer with an unerring instinct provides the course of life ruled by the capital system of domination. *Two Leaves and A Bud* describes the tribulations of the labourers in a class-ridden society as a group experience in the structure of capitalistic organization. The story is about the family of a helpless farmer Gangu lured off to the society of Assam plantations, which is to gloomy for the ray of affection to penetrate. He migrates on the wrong promises of a cruel and clever labourer-catcher. Gangu realizes unlimited humiliations and ceases at the hands of his unscrupulous master. Iyengar states:

There is Croft- Cooke, the boss of the plantation, and his reasonably contented wife; there is their daughter, Barbara, who is in love with De la Havre: but what chance has their romance in the atmosphere of Tea-Estates club, when the white people meet and talk airily, foolishly or callously generating hate and abetting cruelty? The villain of the novel is Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager is sheer evil, compounded of cruelty and lust.

(Iyengar 344)

Two Leaves and a Bud begins with the cliché of Indian philosophy that life is like a journey, the poor person's life is the unhappy journey. There are no delightful places on the way and the ultimate goal of the journey is also not a heaven but a hell. They begin journey from unhappiness to unhappiness and domination to domination. It is an unconscious travel towards permanent doom. It is a travel straight into Hell. Gangu begins his journey never to come back. Gangu's pleasant residence in Hoshiarpur is seized by the Government narrating that as the brothers hold combined property, his brothers' debt must be incurred by Gangu who is surprised and thinks that how the interest on his younger brother's mortgage piled up, so that all his three acres and his cottage as well just as a free present to merchant Badri Das. Gangu has no other option but to leave the village.

Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam is a symbolic jail within jail and a web of death. Here, the gloomy action of domination of the labourers is enacted against the clear and bright background. It is a jail with no clear bars. Labourers have to struggle hard throughout the day at meagre wages. The hazards involved in the service are delineated pathetically in this novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud*. The coolies, huts are so dirty that the danger of diseases



like cholera always pervades there. But for unscrupulous boss, labourers are liars and careless. They are sub-human, not even human beings. It is not necessary for the divine capitalists to take care for the animals. The ramshackle nature of the cottages of the coolies gives a contrast to the prim elegance of Croft-Cooke's residence which is similar to Natural Historical Museum. John De la Havre, the plantation Doctor, seems to be the representative of Mulk Raj Anand. He presents anguish at the predicament of working class. The chief source of the disease was contaminated acqua. It would cost around two lakhs to supply clean and healthy water. But the capitalists do not accept to spend the money even though their advantage amounts to millions.

When the dangerous disease like cholera appears. De la Havre uses harsh words to Croft-Cooke, stating that it would be false promise not to do anything about it since he knows the water supply is infected. Cooke provides word that he will act whatever he can do. But nothing is functioned. Because he thinks the labourers sub-human and do not altogether value the profits of hygiene. When Macara states that perhaps the labourers donot take preventive medicines, Havre pours out his hate for the bad masters:

If they know for certain when an infected mosquito was going to bite them and infect them with the destructive parasite ... they could, of course, walk up to the dispensary and swallow a bitter pill ... And the medicine would circulate in their blood a little before the parasite multiplied.

(Anand 103)

Havre advises mosquito nets and he is laughed by Croft-Cooke. Gangu lost his wife Sajani. To send her on her ultimate trip, he has no penny left with him. He reaches to the rich people and masters of the coolies. There he promises to offer money to the watchman and the clerk, if he is given a loan by Croft Cooke Anand achieves a success in presenting the evil order and the corruption prevailing at all stages from higher to lower. When Croft Cooke comes to realize that Gangu's wife ceased of malaria, Gangu is hounded out. The cruel and corrupted capitalist dreads a loss for his conscious existence coheres hundreds cease due to his inhumanity. Gangu becomes hard-hearted. He is eager to encounter any humiliation. No other attack is more deteriorating than one inflicted by the fortune, demise of his spouse.

Havre's illustration of the contents of a cup of tea is real to the core. Poverty, hunger and

degradation of a million Indians are the basic theme of the novel. The sky touching forts of the capitalists are made from the hard work and perspiration of the labourers. The comforts they have made are not for them. Havre believes there are the roots of revolution against the monopoly. On the one side, the coolies are bearing the physical symptoms of pain and demise, on the other side the rich are covered up in their self-assurance and self-satisfaction, never once interrogating the ideals of glory and strength. There is the glimpse of Marxism in Anand's description. In his novel, *Untouchable* Anand attacks on social injustices and caste discrimination of the society. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, frugal dissimilarities and domination become the destinations of his criticism.

Two Leaves and a Bud is the sad tale of Gangu, a worker in the Macpherson Tea Estate, in Assam. Hari and Lakshmi in *Coolie* appear as Gangu and Sajani here; Jemmie Thomas, the foreman of the Cotton Mills at Bombay, is Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager. The evil atmosphere of the Sir George white Cotton Mills an arena of conflict and exploitation, treason and injustice, derision and devilry is shown in larger dimensions and with greater intensity in the Tea Estate in this novel. The European bosses pester and exploit the labourers. Gangu and his family suffer much: his wife becomes a prey to malaria; and he himself faces death at the point of Reggis's gun in his attempt to save his daughter, Leila, from the clutches of the lustblind Reggie Hunt.

Havre also defines how seventy five per cent of the labourers on the Assam plantations suffer from dental diseases, caratomalasia and women cease in childbirth. The cause of it is below poverty. He also quotes that twenty per cent of Anglo-Indians and rich people of India die of overeating and gluttony. This is the paradoxical scene of a capitalist society. The wages of the plantation labourers remain unaltered for seventy years, whereas the rates of rice and garments have increased. The labourers suffer from indebtedness of their masters and compel themselves to frugal slavery. Havre creates a note on the predicament of the plantation labourers in India. In this survey, he mentions to Harriet Bucher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. He also states that the conscious existence of the cotton plantation coolies of the Southern States of North America is equal to that of the plantation slaves in India. It is clear that Anand is not concerned with the fight between two races. He attempts to depict the domination of the powerful on the slaves. In Havre's opinion, the plea of the labourers all over the world is



identical. It creates no difference whether their masters are natives and foreigners. It is the methodical order that should be altered. Anand's concern for proletariat community is presented in view of Havre.

Anand's presentation of evil is merchant, the traditional Indian figure of concentrated money from whose clutches it is difficult to run away. The ignorant is cheated by Buta Sardar, Gangu and his son Buddhu is representing the class of poor labourers. He cannot live in this cage and at the same time he cannot escape from it. Even the daughter of Croft Cooke, Barbara, is conscious of the dirt of fighting underworld, its dust and its squalor. But she cannot raise her voice against the injustices. She realizes herself that it was bad to spoil your entire conscious existence worrying about the atrocities of other people's destiny, and to create ourselves miserable all the time. Barbara defines the division of members who are conscious of the domination and feel for the harassed. And at the same time they cannot revolt because they are afraid of losing personal happiness. Gangu ponders that when one labourer suffer from so many humiliations, one will happen separate from minor pieces of good destiny. One ceased, neutral resigned to the passage of time till one ends conscious existence. Gangu realizes that what he desires is neither gold nor silver but only food to survive and to come out from the cruel bondage. Gangu recollects all the incidents that happened in his life. Eventually he realizes that money is everything. Gangu is on the verge of madness. He is the prey of advantage gaining capitalistic society. He represents the helpless men surrounded in the vicious circle of scarcity.

Anand also describes the predicament of female characters in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. The female labourers leave their children in the baskets before commencing their operation. When they come back the children may be lying in the dust. Narain, another labourer, tells Gangu about the insecurity of female characters in the plantations. Reggie Hunt, the master of plantations is the symbol of cruelty of the affluent planter-community. He spoils the family of Chameli and misuses her. Leila, the daughter of Gangu, is the next target of Reggie Hunt who is the symbol of python.

The fictitious tale, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, ends on a pessimistic remark. The protest against the domination is hushed up. The budding revolutionary soul is nipped up. Even though it culminates on tragic note, the novel demands to sacrifice their lives to empower the revolution as it is merely on the basis of the sacrifices that the movement stands

firm. Anand strong passion for the frugal similarity and the consequent human upliftment of the down-trodden and his preoccupation with presenting the fatal effects of the class division are clear in this novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Anand believed literature is the instrument of humanism. His aim of expanding humanism is fulfilled in the fictitious tale *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Mulk Raj Anand has highlighted social injustices in myriad manifestations and has revealed various stratifications of human observation in his writings. He attacks on caste system, dominating class system, irrationality of knowledge, intoxicating religious bigotry and the dominating condition of women.

His experience lies in revealing the tensions generated in Indian society as a consequence of the progressing frugal structure, spreading trade and political alteration which inevitably need modern class managements in the society.

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