

Element of Pathos in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels: An Analysis with reference to *Two Leaves and a Bud*

Dr. Deepanjali Mishra

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities (campus3)

KIIT University

Bhubaneswar- 751024

ABSTRACT

The Lord of tragedy, Sir Leo Tolstoy says: "Man lives consciously for himself but unconsciously he serves as an instrument for the accomplishment of historical and social ends."

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand is one of the reputed novelist and a master story teller. His short stories are very popular and are read with immense interest till date. This a pioneer of Indian English Literature was born in 1905 in Peshawar, the central city of North West Frontier Province. He inherited the story narration concept from his mother who also enriched young Mulk raj with the stories related to history and nationalism. Though he was sophisticated and cosmopolitan in his outlook, yet most of his novels are set in rural background. Some critics are skeptical of his novels being satirical, yet they reveal the great Indian generosity of heart, one cannot help but sympathize with the unfortunate and the helpless characters of his stories. He revealed through his writings that in addition to the foreign colonialism of Britain there existed layers of colonialism within Indian society also which interfered in the way of India's transition to a developed civil society. While exposing the overarching divide between the British and a colonized India, he reveals an Indian society creating its own layers of colonizers and colonized thereby rendering the fledgling Indian nationalism an extremely problematic concept. This paper aims to make an analysis to bring out the tragic element in his novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1998)

Keywords: pathos, poverty labour, injustice exploitation

1.0 Introduction:

Mulk Raj Anand was a founding member of Progressive Writers Association, a national level organization that wielded considerable influence during India's freedom struggle and beyond. No doubt this incredibly prolific writer's creative career spanning a period of more than seventy-five years has been inextricably intertwined with the search for a just, equitable, and forward-looking India. He has written extensively in

areas as variegated and diverse as art and sculpture, politics, Indian literature and history of ideas. His relationship with literary giants from across the globe was very cordial like E.M. Forster who wrote a foreword to his novel, "Untouchable". Mulk Raj Anand received the International Peace Prize from World Peace Council. Sahitya Akademi Award, "Padma Bhushan" and Leverhulme Fellowship are some of the awards and accolades during his long

literary career. The Library of Congress has more than one hundred and fifty publications by and on him in its collection.

2.0 Literary Works of Anand:

Anand became immensely popular with his early novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two leaves and Bud* in which he started the new trend of realism and social protest in Indian English fiction. In his novels, he portrays the doomed life of the downtrodden and the oppressed. His protagonists are sweeper, a coolie, a peasant-who all are victims of exploitation, class-hatred, race-hatred and inhuman cruelty. Over the years, Anand has become a vigorous champion of the oppressed and the down trodden. *Untouchable* is a powerful novel which can be regarded as quintessential Anand since it Projects most of the characteristic concerns and fundamental issues of life. The main theme of the novel is untouchable as a problem in Hindu society.

Most of his stories, be it *Untouchable*, or *Two Leaves and a Bud* bring out the element of pathos in the mind of the readers. This paper would focus on this element in Mulk Raj Anand's novels. *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* started a new trend of realism and social protest in the Indian English fiction where the doomed life filled with sorrows of the downtrodden. And the oppressed is portrayed who are all victims of exploitation and inhuman cruelty.

Two Leaves and a Bud deals with the downtrodden lives where Gangu, the Punjabi peasant is the main protagonist. He is an embodiment of sufferings and explanation of tortures. He hails from a small village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab. He starts of his journey to Assam, the nature gifted land with new hopes and high aspirations with his family only to find traumas and tortures waiting for him there.

3.0 An Analysis of *Two Leaves and a Bud*:

The novel begins with the philosophic statement of Anand "Life is like a journey" and with this the tragic journey of Gangu – the protagonist, a hapless peasant from a village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab, starts to the naturally beautiful Assam. The realistic description in the novel of the Assam and its natural beauty is presented in very lively manner. It gives us almost in telling details, the panoramic picture of the tea-plantations. Anand describes the sunrise on the Assam tea plantation;

In the journey to Assam, Gangu recalls a song which was sung by Sajani for Gangu. With this song, Anand indirectly narrates the truth of journey;

He had wished to believe that it was true that it was possible for a man and woman to be companions in life and death together; whom everyone had to face alone, but even in life, unfortunately, people usually travelled very much by themselves, unless they accepted each other. (2)

This philosophical statement proves literally true in case of Gangu. He has been deprived of his land in his native town; the enticing promises of Buta. The promise of a piece of land is enough to ensnare the improvised Gangu who has been deprived to his possession of the ancestral land in his native town. Here in Tea Estate, he and his family are offered a hut which has been constructed without any attention to the hygienic requirements of the occupants. Here Anand describes the social and economical conditions of labourers in Tea Plantation.

This is far away place where Britishers exploit Indian workers without mercy on them. Anand has projected heart rendering reality of such humiliation. It is true what Gangu recalled the proverb so often repeated in the North;

Never believe a barber or a Brahmins, for the one arranges marriages, and has to describe an ugly girl as a fairy, and the other draws horoscopes; and must make the evil stars appear the luckiest (8)

But soon Gangu realized his ill fate. He was exploited by every superior. Not only Gangu but all labourers in tea plantation have their own suffering saga. The exploitation of Gangu can be seen in the Estate, the amount given to his family is less than eight annas. This earning reminds him that in his village he alone used to earn eight annas a day by working on the land-lords. This makes him sad with the thought what a liar Buta has been in all his talk about high wages, about the free gift of land and so on. Within a week of their employment in the Tea Estate, Gangu becomes a victim of Malaria. It is the place where cholera has spread earlier and two hundred coolies leveled out in less than a month 'I shouldn't die' he muttered under his breath, till Leila is married, and Buddha has grown up.

The next morning he is all right but the fever which has left catches Sajani. Soon the news spreads that the cholera which has visited again. The coolies became panic-stricken. The Medical officer of the Tea Estate, John de la Havre promptly visits Gangu's hut and checks Sajani. Anand writes;

As he bent down to put the thermometer into

Sajani's mouth, her eyes glared at him, lusterless and cold. He put his hand to her head, groped for her pulse, sounded her heart.

There was no answer. "Dead", he whispered and stood dumb and listless, exploring for a ray of a light to illumine the darkness that enveloped his head. (88)

Anand had narrated the heart stricken situation of a poor worker who is far away from his land with his only family where his wife passed away and left Leila Buddha and Gangu to suffer more on the land. Gangu's sadness is augmented by the worry that he had no money to buy a red cloth and to make a bamboo hearse. He was in need of money for his wife's funeral. He then recalls what Buta had told him that the manager sahib is a sort of mai-bap, who lends money so he approached to Shashi Bhushan to talk on his behalf to the manager sahib in 'angrezi' to get the loan. Gangu says; Babuji, I promise to give you some of the money which the sahib may give me if you talk to him in 'angrezi' and get me the loan I want.....my wife died last night. And I have been ill take pity on me (112-113)

When he goes to Charles, Croft-Crooke, the manager of the estate, he is blended for spreading to contagion, and is instantly turned out of his office. In the meantime, disconnect, which is life in the plantation, is aggravated by the brutal behavior of Reggie hunt, the assistant manager. Gangu finds himself involved in the strife. He was beaten and kicked out. Croft-Cooke became angry on him;

"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 come
here? (114)

Two Leaves and a Bud presents an exploited Gangu whose wife dies of a disease and he was killed while trying to protect his daughter from being raped by a British colonial officer. Through Gangu, Anand portrays the mental state of the laborers of tea-plantation who feel jeopardized while working under the ruthless masters. Gangu roams in the whirlpool of his destiny and passes through various moods from theism to atheism, godlessness to god-fearing attitude, acceptance to realization, selfishness to sacrifice and from illusion to reality.

Gangu, lured by the false promises of a tout, started with his wife Sajani and children Leila and Buddhu to work on the Macpherson Tea Estate in Assam. He was offered a hut which has been constructed without any heed to the hygienic requirements of the occupants. Excessive heat, lack of fresh in the billets, inadequate food, scarcity of drinking water and filthy living brought pathological disorder. In addition to this manual labour, constant ragging and brutal behaviour resulted in physical, mental and emotional loss to coolies. They were compelled to work in unhygienic conditions and thus starved. The tea garden in Assam become a symbol of his slavery and this world of a tea plantation was like a prison house, Narain who was executed on a contract of three months, was confined there for last twelve years.

Gangu drifted from bad to worse and finds no peace at heart. His all hopes destroyed when Narain tells the pitiful stories of how

the planters along with police and magistrate torture the erring coolies.

Anand exposes the bitter suffering or cruelty of humanity at different levels superlatively loathes and condemns evil of all its shapes and shades and greatly succeeds in tuning our hearts to compassion and beauty. Anand creates a scintillating melody of moods—joy and sorrow, hope and fear, tranquillity and anger, love and lust, humour and pathos. The indomitable spirit, the spiritual upsurge of man is the real hero and the plea for universal love is the real theme of his novels. Whenever Anand saw people in deplorable condition, his heart wept which gave him a sensible and sympathetic outlook to see other problems and the sensitivity which made him cry for other's misery. He made his novels a medium to present his anguish that renders reality of such humiliation. It is true that Anand probes deep into the various facts and facets of human life through his galaxy of characters—it is a specific study of his social ethos which has been betrayed by the evil design of society.

4.0 The Tragedy:

Two Leaves and a Bud stand as a breathing document of the sufferings of the tea labourers. Every corner of the garden of Tea Estate--- the leaves, buds and the shade shrubs are the silent witnesses of the oppression and agony of poor Gangu, who stands as the insignia of the oppressed class. Within a week of his employment in the Tea Estate, Gangu becomes a victim of Malaria. It is the place where cholera has spread earlier and two hundred coolies levelled out in less than a month. Without giving much concern to his health, he keeps on repeating the well being of his young daughter in his mind. Dutiful Gangu's life was centred on his daughter:

“I shouldn’t die’ he muttered under his breath, till Leila is married, and Buddhu has grown up.” (Anand, 83)

The women peasants were the worst sufferers as they were the victims of vicious-base appetites of wicked men. The women in the novel were perilously exposed to any sexual assault by some lustful British people, particularly by Reggie Hunt. Reggie Hunt, the Assistant Manager of Tea Estate, treats all coolies as inferior human beings and flogs them. He is always drunk and symbolizes cruelty, untamed animality and unmitigated evil. Reggie whips those coolies who grope forward beneath a load of undergrowth on his way with an accusation. This man has no consideration for anyone’s mother, sister, wife or daughter. He lives openly with three coolie-women. The wife of Neogi is a victim to the carnal desires of Reggie who is lust incarnate. Anand tries to vivify Hunt who possessing a mistress in Tea Estate; writer writes:

She yielded to him, her body limp and contorted into a silent despair, her eyes agaze
at the wild sensual heat in his face, her heart turned inwards at the cold virginity that seemed
to freeze her at the contact with him. He made
a sudden upcharge, as if he swung her body hard, hard, harder, tearing the flash of her breasts, biting her cheeks and striking her buttocks till she was red and purple like a mangled corpse, ossified into a complete obedience by the volcanic eruption of the lust (186)

After reaching there, he finds a shabbily looking hut waiting in Assam. Gangu is tragically exploited in the hands of the British soldiers. Even the kind British doctor could do little to alleviate his sufferings. The

master, Reggie Hunt being an arrogant bully and sadist tries to rape his daughter and the story is about Gangu’s fatal attempt to protect his daughter from being raped by his master. His wife dies of a disease and he himself was killed while trying to protect his daughter Leila from being raped by Reggie the British colonel officer. The writer portrays the mental state of the labourers of the tea plantation in Assam who feel jeopardized while working under the ruthless masters. Gangu roams in the whirlpool of his destiny and passes through various moods from theism to atheism. Gangu is lured with false promises of a tour started with his wife, Sajani and children Leila and Buddhu to work in Macpherson Tea Estate. He was offered a hut which failed to meet the basic hygienic amenities of the occupants exposed to excessive heat, lack of fresh air, inadequate food, scarcity of drinking water and filthy living. These people were brought from different parts of the country with false promises and were made to work in unhygienic conditions and made them starved. The tea garden had become the symbol of slavery and the world of tea plantation was like a prison house where one can have a free entry but cannot have free exit from there.

The prison had no bars but it was nevertheless an unbearable jail. Gangu’s condition turned from bad to worse and he finds no peace at heart. All his hopes are betrayed when Narayan, a fellow labourer tells the painful stories of how the labourers were tortured not only at the hands of the planters but also by the police and the magistrates. It is a story where the entire family of Gangu is ruined in a treacherous condition. It is a story of exploitation of the haves over the have nots, This was a time when the British rule perhaps was showing its cruelest form.

4.0 Conclusion:

Thus we see that two novels *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1998) represents the psychological traumas, social injustice and exploitation of the poor and the downtrodden people depicting pathos and irony and thereby bringing in the tragic element in the novels of Dr. Mulk Raj Anand. Through the pleadings for an unquenchable and unshakable faith in the elemental goodness of man and power of love, a faith which has had all falsity and sentimentality purged of by the fires of intense suffering, what Anand wanted to achieve has been achieved. And that in itself is a unique contribution to the Indian novel in English. However one cannot help but marvel about the resistance and innocence of the human spirit. It is remarkable that the writer has made a remarkable attempt and has been successfully done it.

References:

- 1) Naik, M.K. *Mulk Raj Anand*. (1973) New Delhi: Anrold-Heinemann.
- 2) Cowasjee, Saros. (1977) *So Many Freedom: A Study of The Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*. Madras: Oxford Uni.Press.
- 3) Fisher, Merlene. (1985) *The Wisdom of the Heart: A Study of the Works of Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Sterling,
- 4) Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001.
- 4) Anand, Mulk Raj, (1998) *Two Leaves and a Bud*, New Delhi: Arnold Associates, India Pvt. Ltd.