

The Protrusion of ‘Natural Elements and Marginalised Human Life’ as Echoed in Mulkraj Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *The Old Woman and the Cow*

R. Abirami

Ph. D Research Scholar in English, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, India

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand is a notable and rising personality in the world of English Literature. He is very good in giving the scenes & situations, and who always gives a prior importance to the marginalised human life and he is considered as the real hero of the society. He had given the real picture of natural and real human life of the voiceless peoples who were working under the British administration. In both the novels we can see the life and situations of the underclass people along with their natural surroundings. Anand in his novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* gives the notes and features about the suppressed people in a dark environment which is mentioned as “Green Hell”. Gangu Singh, a poor peasant struggles a lot for his survival in the beauty filled greenish Macpherson Tea Estate. Mulk Raj Anand draws a very great picture about the natural environment in his third novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937). Gauri is the only female protagonist of Anand’s all novels, she plays a great role in the novel *The Old Woman and the Cow*. This novel shows the marginalised and suppressed life of Gauri in a small village of Chota Piplan which is filled with admiring environment. This paper is an attempt to shower Anand’s usage of natural environment and sceneries through the marginalised human life from his own characters.

KEYWORDS: Nature, Beauty, Environment, Human life, Marginalised, Green Hell, Village, Estate, People.

Mulk Raj Anand has written more than a dozen novels and at the same time his stories are realistic at the core. Commenting on Anand’s qualities as a novelist, K.R.S. Iyenger writes: “As a writer of fiction, Anand’s notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actuality. He is a veritable Dickens for describing the inequities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy”. Anand deserves this a lot Indian critic, Pramod Kumar Singh rightly comments, “Anand has deep concern for the low caste people of India and his novels throw light on the existing sorrows and sufferings of the downtrodden. His novels reflect close pictures of the traditional Hindu society with special focus on the miserable condition of the have-nots (Singh 23).

Nature consists of many astonishing elements, which also gives us many memorable things. Through nature we can feel something new. If we mingle with nature one can get a beautiful and fresh thoughts. In both the novels Anand shows the characters moving with nature. Macpherson Tea Estate of the Glasgow Tea Company in Assam which provides the physical setting for *Two Leaves and a Bud*. It is positioned in a valley of North Assam, stretching far and wide, crawling with mosquitoes and fireflies, geckoes, bloodsuckers and all the other malignant creatures which present a strong challenge to the existence of humanity. The south is endemic area from which cholera spreads regularly every year and kills many coolies. Gangu Singh is an underclass coolie man whose life is lost in his native village and decides

to begin his new life in the tea estate. The estate is totally filled with greenish trees, crops etc.

In the beginning of the novel Gangu starts his new atmosphere by comparing life with journey. For every individuals in the world, life journey has many ups and downs. Gangu also faces both positivity and negativity in his natural atmosphere. Gangu felt very sad about his survival. Now he could see the engine of the narrow-gauge railway puffing and panting as it skirted the edge of an incline through the jungle. Gangu's journey in the train along with his family were going to the Macpherson Tea Estate, Assam.

“Life is like a journey”, thought Gangu as he sat by Buta, the Sardar of the

Macpherson Tea Estate, in the toy train that was going up to Assam.”
(Anand, p.1)

Gangu's mind is stuffed with many powerful dreams by hearing the words said by Buta, who is an Indian subordinate. Yet he half believed it as one believes a fairy tale, because he fools him by telling many false offers. The underclass peoples were fooled by the white peoples. They always face a marginalised human life in all the circumstances throughout their survival. Sajani has no idea about the value of money, though she couldn't even count up to a hundred. But she feels that the place to which she was going must be a real paradise.

He started to look the hills and the valleys which the cog-wheeled train had scaled. In between their journey Gangu observes many miraculous changes. The vast panorama of the lowlands with their view of quaint husbandry and glimpses of villages embedded in mango-groves seemed to have been left behind long ago, also the easy slopes with their grassy valleys full of palm-groves and rice fields. The railway now travelled on the edge of a high bluff overlooking the deep breaks of a forest filled with mist like soft down, from which hilltops emerged like islets in a river.

At the moment, the railway encircled the edge of a hill and came out to face the sun which was scattering the clouds. The slow pace of the train seemed to quicken at the wonderful lap across the suspension bridge which connected two rocks over a ferocious stream. And for a moment, Gangu looked with beating heart down a cliffsome thousand foot below. But the carriage diverged round a curve and disclosed a few miles of dense, coarse grass deeply entangled in the bushes but smiling with its wild rhododendrons. At several points, the curves of the line were so sharp that Gangu could see both the engine in front and the passengers seated in the last carriage behind. But, these kind of natural life in the estate didn't give any kind of positive benefits towards Gangu.

There was a grim race through a series of long tunnels, dark as sudden calamity, and chockfull of a foul smoke. But through the zigzag course of the rail there now appeared frequent intervals of cultivated slopes between masses of grand forest-vivid green terraces of rice-fields, amid cascades of lovely creepers hanging in festoons from tree to tree and from crag to crag. Gangu felt he would like to jump out to the edge of these elysian fields and settle down there for ever. Gangu looked out with others and saw that the hills had begun to drop towards a vast plateau, neatly interspersed with rows of plants.

Gangu looked across the steaming low valley at simmering heat of the sun, and then withdrew his eyes to look inwards. There was again a vague alarm in his soul, the ache of an unapprehended doom. Gangu along with his family members had reached the station. The motor-lorry which Buta had promised was not at the station, but the family was quite willing to walk and stretch its legs after the imposed inactivity of three days in the train. Gangu was very much impressed by the surroundings, but he felt very depressed about his own condition of life. He was not clear in both from his mind and heart.

“For a mile or two the walk through the undulating country was pleasant enough.

They passed through the fertile valley and a series of rice-fields where a solitary mud-enamoured buffalo was harnessed to a steel plough such as Gangu had never seen in his life” (Anand, p. 11)

From time to time, Gangu looked to see how far his wife and children had been left behind. But, they were following close upon him absorbed in their advance towards the promised paradise of plenty without complaining about the occasional thorns that pierced them, and the hunger that pulsed in their bellies. Gangu suffers a lot throughout his life journey and their family didn't even get proper food and a tidy place to survive. He became the victim of marginalised human life, and he has no way to move his life in the estate which he considers as 'Green Hell'.

The Old Woman and the Cow is the only novel of Anand to have a woman as its major and prior character. This is the only novel to present women's problems and sufferings. Gauri the heroine, in which she suffers a lot, both by her family and through her husband family. The novel moves around the small village called Piplan Kalan. This village is surrounded with many agricultural areas and natural scenes. The marginalised poor peasant Gauri didn't feel happy from this natural environment, she suffers a lot in all the circumstances. The novel opens with the marriage ceremony of Gauri with Panchi. They both were decided to start a new life in the village of Chota Piplan. Gauri's mind is filled with many dreams about her marriage life, but the surroundings made her to change something inside her.

“Panchi could not even see what had frightened the pony so.

As his hold on the reins had been leisurely, throughout the three miles

journey from village of Chota Piplan to Piplan Kalan...”
(Anand, p. 1)

After the marriage, Panchi begins to do his duties in the agricultural fields. In the field he was trying to manage the lean bullocks Sona and Chandhi. He tried to dig the iron point of his plough deeper into the hard, sun dried earth which has been softened on the surface by a few showers over-night. But even as he shouted the bullocks were not ready to go faster, because they had only a meal of dried hay without any grain or rye cakes for days. At next step he lifted his stick to beat them. As the bullocks showed no appreciable alacrity in spite of the uplifted stick he despairingly goaded them both by poking the bullocks in their haunches to the tune of more epithets. This was the regular situation of Panchi in contact with his agricultural

lands. The bullocks were not ready to obey Panchi. But this was the only way to run his new family, because he has no other source of income.

On the other side the condition of Gauri in her mother-in-law house was terrible. She was not allowed to lead a peaceful life in the good atmosphere of Chota Piplan Kalan by her mother-in-law Kesaro. She always finds faults in Gauri's attitude, behaviour and also suspects Gauri. M.K. Naik illustrates about Gauri, that "It is however, in Gauri that we find the ancient Indian tradition at its best. She represents some of the finest Clements in Indian womanhood" (Naik, p. 91). Kesaro is a traditional woman and she always follows the traditional practices. Gauri is not allowed to the kitchen and also not permitted to contaminate anything during her periods. Kesaro illtreats Gauri in many aspects. Gauri entered the village with many hopes and desire and she believed the village a lot, but there she felt a lack of guidance.

"In whole tradition of our religion, a woman has been considered untouchable during her periods" (Anand, p. 39)

This shows the natural atmospheric condition in which the marginalised people suffers a lot. The natural elements in both the novels adds a new tone to it, however the condition is very clearly evident through the characters Gangu Singh and Gauri. Thus, here from both the novels we can feel and see the projection of both natural elements and the marginalised human life. To sum up, everyone should give equal importance to both the nature and the human beings particularly the marginalised underclass society. Treat and love everyone equally.

"Nature is the knack of God,

Human life is the boon from God"

References

1. Anand, Mulk Raj.1960, The Old Woman and the Cow, Kutub Popular, Bombay,Print.
2. Anand, Mulk Raj.1937, Two Leaves and a Bud, New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann,.Print.
3. Iyenger, K.R. Srinivasa.1973, Indian Writing in English, Asian Publishing House, Bombay,Print.
4. Naik, M.K.1982, A History of Indian English Literature, Sahitya Akademi,New Delhi.
5. Singh, Pramod Kumar.2001, Major Indo-English Novelists and Novels. Jaipur: Sublime Publications,. Print.