

Social Evils and Its Impacts on Class Conflicts in Mulk Raj Anand's Major Novels: A Marxist Study

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the impacts of socio-political evils and class conflicts portrayed in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Three novels by Anand—*Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* have been selected for this work which has a connection with the Marxist approaches. These novels highlight the dehumanizing contradictions within the colonized Indian society. Through his writings, Anand reveals capitalism in addition to foreign colonialism, where exist layers of colonialism and bourgeoisie within the Indian community. This system develops intra-communal clashes to enhance the gap between the haves and the haves-not. Similarly, the caste system and the previous economic system, i.e., feudalism combined with capitalism, create a harsh reality for the oppressed community. Thus, this paper considers capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, feudalism, and casteism as socio-political evils that legitimize a process to dominate the society. It creates a contradictory social relation which is blissful for the colonizers but a curse to the working class. The consequences of these appliances bring class conflict, exploitation, poverty, hunger, cruelty, and many others into practice. Anand sets his protagonists—Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu – in front of the demeaning, hostile world which depends mainly on the bounty of the moneyed class. This paper makes a critical study to unveil the consequences of exploiting the evils and class struggle through the lens of Marxist criticism. On the other hand, it can be said that the paper emphasizes Anand's attention in portraying intra-social clashes in colonial India based on economic exploitation and its consequences.

Keywords: Social Evils, Class Conflicts, Exploitation, Domination

Introduction

The impact of sociopolitical problems and class disputes that are shown in Mulk Raj Anand's novels is the primary topic of this study. The dehumanizing inconsistencies that exist within the society of colonized Indians are brought to light by Anand's *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Anand uncovers other forms of colonialism, including foreign colonialism, as well as layers of colonialism where bourgeoisie and proletariat exist within the Indian community. By fostering conflicts within the community, this system serves to widen the divide between those who have and those who do not have. In a similar manner, the oppressed population is subjected to a harsh reality that is constructed by the caste system and the preceding economic system, which was a combination of feudalism and capitalism. Therefore, the following sociopolitical sins are considered in this paper: capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, feudalism, and casteism. These evils legitimize a process that is directed at

dominating society. This results in the formation of a social relation that is contradictory, which is a blessing for the colonizers but a scourge for the working class. These gadgets have the potential to bring about a variety of negative outcomes, including but not limited to class struggle, exploitation, poverty, hunger, cruelty, and many others. Anand places his heroes, Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu, in the midst of a hostile and degrading world that is mostly dependent on the patronage of the wealthy class. The purpose of this work is to conduct an analysis that is critical in nature in order to reveal the repercussions of exploiting the evils and class conflict through the use of Marxist criticism. A Marxist study suggests that the purpose of this paper is to shed light on the tyranny of the dominant class and the instrumental ways in which it exerts its dominance. Along the same lines as the protagonists in Anand's novels, the Marxist research hypothesis that the economic condition is the primary factor in determining human lives. The characters that are presented are involved in a struggle that will last their entire lives to earn a living through forced labour that does not pay them appropriately. The social, religious, and cultural concerns of these people are heavily influenced by the economic exploitation they experience. In addition, they have not taken into account human beings but have instead utilised them as a means of labour. The economic woes, as well as the social and political tribulations of the impoverished class, are brought to the forefront in Anand's works. Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu, the three main characters in the novels, are all subjected to the same kind of exploitation by the upper class, both in terms of their economic and social situations. People from the working class, such as Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu, are victims of the divided world that Anand exposes. Anand also reveals that humanity is split. Throughout these novels, Anand sheds light on the adversarial social relationship that exists between the bourgeoisie, who are wealthy and powerful, and the working class, who are exploited for their own benefit. The actual power is held by this elite class, which also provides the legitimacy for its position. On the other hand, the submissive class is willing to comply with the dominance and enables themselves to be dominated. This disruptive social interaction, which has been explained with Marxist rhetoric, serves as the foundation for the framework of this present study.

Statement of the Problem:

According to Marxist study, this paper tries to expose the dominant class tyranny and its instrumental ways of domination. The Marxist research suggests that economic condition determines human lives, as do the protagonists in Anand's novels. The depicted characters are engaged in a life-long struggle to earn a living with coercive labor without appropriate wages. This economic exploitation influences their social, religious, and cultural affairs at large. Moreover, they have not considered human beings but used them as a tool to work. Anand's novels emphasize these economic crises and social and political miseries of the poor class. Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu – the leading figures of the novels – are similarly exploited by the upper class both in the economic and social spheres. Anand exposes the divided world with divided humanity under which working-class people like Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu are victimized. In these novels, Anand lights on the antagonistic social relationship in which the well-privileged bourgeoisie exploits the working class for their interest. This elite class holds the actual power and legitimates its position. The subordinate class, however, accepts the domination and allows them to be dominated. This paper is structured on this disruptive social relationship which has been explained with the Marxist discourse.

Objectives of the Research:

The general objective of this study is to explore the ground on which socio-political evils and class struggles exist and exercise in society. In a more specific way, this research is going to work under two principal objectives:

1. to explore the social and political evils in Anand's novels in the contemporary era,
2. to identify the reasons for class struggle and its impacts on the lives of the have-nots under colonialism.

The Rationale of the Study

It is found that there is no such research work exists anywhere either at home or abroad, exactly as the proposed title stands. This research helps to understand the social, political, and economic condition of the subcontinent under British rule. Along with the background, the research focuses on the socio-political principles based on economic diversity. The research works on the contemporary social and economic exploitation and class struggle that are responsible for sustaining evil practices in social structure. This study focuses on the connection between socio-political evils and class conflict with the Marxist approach as it looks to make a link between actual, material conditions (political economy) and cultural forms (socio-political evils). So, this study is an effective research work covering all sorts of socio-political-economic crises and their impacts. In addition to that, this study is a rich source for doing further research.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this study is induced by how the two major objectives could be achieved. Both the objectives are the one to explore the social and political evils of Anand's novels in the contemporary era and the other to identify the reasons for class struggle and its impacts on the lives of the have-nots in British India become an integral part of the study. This study aims at finding out the social imbalance and economic oppression under the realm of colonialism and capitalism through Marxist approaches. Class struggle and exploitation are the crises occurred in the base and superstructure of society that becomes biased and oppressive toward particular groups of people. The study closely focuses on the nature and the effects of class struggle and socio-political along with cultural changes as depicted in Anand's novels. In doing so, the paper has taken *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) of Anand as the primary sources of data. These novels are the most discussed ones among the other novels by the author. The key concern of these novels is to reveal class discrimination and the portrayal of the lives of the victimized under the socio-political mechanism of colonial India. This study looks to expose the reasons behind class exploitation through the lens of Marxist criticism. The present study is a qualitative one. A detailed analysis of the texts (content analysis method) in this research paper is the process of reaching a conclusion.

Necessary support from secondary sources has been accepted. Different techniques of the historical method have been applied. Chronological order is maintained in the analysis of the development of an idea in the mind of the person discussed. The paper takes help from tertiary sources like encyclopedias or newspapers and magazine articles also to clarify general problems regarding information about Anand and his writings. Books in criticism, journal articles, and published dissertations on these novels cover most part of the secondary sources.

Theoretical Framework

In Marxist theory, exploitation is a crisis in a society where people are being exploited and manipulated for the benefit of others. Here exploitation occurs when a person's labor or work offers without adequate rewards including all kinds of abuses; physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and psychological. *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* are legendary stories where the characters of the lower class are abused and exploited intolerably. The aim of this study is to unveil colonial suppression, social evils penetration, and class struggle established in Anand's novels. *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* present protagonists like Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu who suffer from social and economic exploitation. The class conflict makes them feel inferior, subordinate, and dependable on their superiors. The research queries try to find out how the class struggle forces reshape the socio-political practice skeptical for the unprivileged.

According to Marx, society is formed on the basis of the base and the superstructure where the base represents the economic ground and the superstructure represents the ideologies and social practices. The bourgeoisie, the dominant class, is the power owner of the base and the superstructure at the time. They are the owners of the capital and they enjoy social privileges. Anand, with the experiences of the protagonists, takes us to the lower levels of society where people like Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu are struggling against the existing dominant class. The depicted societies expose that colonial-capitalist domination intensifies the mechanism of forced labor, economic captivity, and exploitation of the upper class all the way long over the lives of the subordinate. Thus this prevailing system enhances the clashes between the two groups of people –the rich and the poor. According to Marx, class struggle is a historical process that exists in every type of society, but the struggle between the rich and poor is most prominent in the capitalist system. In the capitalist economic system, the capitalists are dominant and create the bourgeoisie class who is the owner of the means of production and initiators of the exploitive process in order to attain and sustain their own benefit and interest. On the other hand, the poor class is the working class or the proletariat, the dominated, who are being exploited under this process for subsistence. The main target of the capitalists is to utilize maximum labor power and minimum wage for the laborers with long-hour of working schedules. This framework helps to make the bourgeois' position strong, but it creates a reversed condition for the weaker. Silence and passivity of the protagonists are the reflections of the whole working class who allow the existing domination. Thus the control of the upper class becomes natural to people and makes the proletariat unaware of their collective interest "Once the hegemony of private property is well established and inscribed into the legal order, the organizational bureaucracy (public and private), the subject and subaltern people (the led) can be slowly rewarded for their acquiescence by being granted citizenship" (Wells, 181). Thus Marxist concepts are applied here to reason the social antagonistic relationship and its consequences depicted in Anand's novels.

Critical Analysis

The research illustrates the class conflicts and socio-political evils that emerged from the colonial-capitalist society portrayed in Anand's three novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Here the study emphasizes Anand's attention to portraying intra-social clashes in India based on economic exploitation. Further, this investigation, as a Marxist discourse, looks forward to exploring the causes and effects of the social and political wicked practices and policies disrupting communal peace and order in colonial India. With the emergence of capitalism in India under British rule, the social lives

in this region changed rapidly and drastically. Society starts to value materialistic recognition which is determined by occupation, wages, govt. job, capital, the standard of living, etc. From an agricultural-based society, India has turned towards capitalism where the society encounters fundamental changes in its economy. As a Marxist study finds out, “England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, another regenerating – the annihilation of the old Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundations of western society in Asia” (Kumar 498).

The economic transformation does not bring positive effects on some groups of people who are on the marginalized level of income, rather it enhances the gap between the rich and poor or, in another sense, between the exploiters and exploited. The three novels, thus, work on the socio-political mechanisms that have remarkable effects on Indian social lives in general;

His (Anand) first three novels, namely, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) form a natural trilogy for all three have a victimized, oppressed and outcaste proletarian protagonist whose lot represents the fate of India enslaved by the British and the lot of the hapless workers indentured to the capitalist system. In these novels, Anand, is determined to demolish the rose-tinted edifice of India that prevail and offered a realistic picture of the country as she actually is, seen in Marxist terms ‘a cockpit of the class-struggle and a sordid one at that’. (Mitra 56-57)

Anand pictures such a period when the entire India is subjugated under three foreign forces namely; Imperial power, colonization, and capitalism. The end of Mughal Realm in 1757 helps the British to control the economic and administrative powers in India. At a time, it brings an enormous change in the lives of the colonized people. The practice of the new alien political bodies and their laws, the colonial mission with the educational and religious reformation, and, most importantly, the capitalist mode of production roughly re-structures social issues in the colonial territory.

Like the other parts of the world where capitalism is in full rhythm, this subcontinent meets a new group of the powerful elite class who are also tremendously affected by colonial education, on the other hand, the majority of the common people live in poverty due to exploitive nature of the capitalist system. Under British power, the conflicts between colonizer and colonized, in many ways, are sharply visible and stand in a binary position. Moreover, the novel’s concern is not only confined to defining the colonizer-colonized relationship, rather this is the study to explore the effects of the newly advanced political and economic system in colonial India. This system creates a minority native elite and a discriminated world constituting two classes – rich and poor. As the community is greatly affected and divided by the evil forces of contemporary times, the downtrodden people are mainly exploited and victimized. Anand shows, under British rule and the newly introduced economic system, Indian society faces drastic inward changes.

He (Anand) addressed the biased and prejudicial concept of dividing society into castes and social classes as well as highlighted the detrimental consequences these divisions had on society as a whole and the individuals among society specifically. The theme of eliminating the caste system and the capitalistic social class divisions was Anand’s chief priority in his crusade for the betterment of humanity and humanitarian progress. (Wheeler 13)

Besides, the caste system –religious domination, becomes an instrumental political mechanism at the hand of the Imperialism and moneyed native class to tighten the hegemonic power for their

own interest. Capitalism gets studied with casteism that disrupts the intra-social relation in colonized India portrayed profoundly in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Class struggle and its different forms of exploitation flourish under the realm of colonialism and capitalism with other two native social evils—casteism and feudalism. Casteism, therefore, plays an important role in sustaining discrimination in society. It becomes a hard political barrier to resist rights for the lower classes. The caste system remains no longer as an internal spiritual issue to the colonizer, rather, they utilize it for their own benefit.

... the evolution of a caste cluster into an ethnic group within a racially stratified system reflects a complex political process. Elite cluster members create and 'sell' a myth of cluster solidarity to the emerging colonial government, position themselves as brokers of political influence for members of their caste clusters, and employ these newly created patronage resources to build a base of political support. (Rudner 19)

It is, thus, appeared as the reciprocal relation between the colonial power and the higher caste. Indian history nurtures casteism as a practice for thousands of years. In pre-independence India, this practice is not systematic and political. But in the imperial era of the British Raj, the social division on casteism becomes more visible and applicable. The division of labor and recognition become apparatus at the hand of the native moneyed elite who undermines and subjugates the people like Bakha for sustaining their class and caste interest. The following lines are justifying the above-mentioned argument:

The critics argued that the interpretation by the British had made the caste system systematic by conceptualizing the Indian caste to 'English caste'. In other words, the caste system was introduced to a different style of ruling. If during the pre-colonial days, the caste system was weaker in methodology and enhancement, after the colonial era, the system had become applicable, approachable and controllable. The system went viral to the whole India, as the British made it practicable, dominating and permanent. In the end, the Indian individuals were trapped in the 'newness', declining to de-code the caste system. (Sunmugam et al.)

The long historical process of class diversification and a complex and rigid hierarchical structure which is consolidated with imperial power and capitalism. As the British rule is unable to penetrate multifaceted Indian communal relationships, they utilize and apply this social diversification for their economic and political interest.

The process of class formation is historically conditioned and the British colonial rule played a crucial role in determining the levels of class consciousness of the emerging bourgeoisie of India. Further, the British rules followed complex social, political and administrative policies to rule over India for achieving their basic goal of exploitation of the whole Indian society. The British established a very powerful colonial bureaucracy and a uniform Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act for the governance of India. Since Indian social relationships were very complex, the British showed an immense cleverness and caution in dealing with established social norms and traditions of the heterogeneous and complex Indian society. (Bhambhri 55)

The exploitation of feudalism is also a concern in Anand's novels. Munoo and Gangu uphold the prevailing injustice and abusive treatment of the landowners in the rural areas. The greediness and

selfishness of the landlords take the lives of Munoo's parents and make his entire life empty and uncertain. Gangu, too, suffers from the high rate interest of the mortgage that eventually leads him to leave his own village. The process of feudalism reveals in the study of Alice Thorner where he shares the article of Amit Bhaduri to explore the schemes of feudalism that is exploitive and tyrannical in nature.

He listed four prominent features of these semi-feudal relations; share-cropping, perpetual indebtedness of the small tenants; concentration of two mode of exploitation, namely usury and landownership at the hand of the same economic class; lack of accessibility to the market for the small tenant. Indebtedness arises from the continual need for the consumption loans.The tenant cannot move away without settling his debt, and he has no alternative source of credit. The rate of interest on these consumption loans is extraordinarily high...usury is thus an important additional source of income to the semi-feudal landowner. (1966)

The capitalist mood of production declines indigenous cottage industry that leads a vast majority of the total population towards cultivation. On the other hand, it can be said that, in the rural areas, this large population depends on the landlords economically, but "These few powerful capitalists and zaminders could dictate very harsh and humiliating terms to the many poor. The rich and powerful had full liberty to exploit the many poor and to grind them mercilessly under the wheels of economic monopolies" (Singh 187).

In these novels, Anand lights on class struggle and socio-political evils predominate the society for these existing apparatuses which help to enhance and strengthen class conflict. Class is the critical concept that Marxist philosophy centers its political and economic theories around. Generally, people who enjoy or carry the same social, economic, and political privileges or conditions, constitute a class. In Marxism, the mode of production, in every form of society, originates a unique class structure and determines social relationships such as...(Marx et al.)". In the capitalist or industrial-based society, the bourgeoisie or the capitalist and the proletariat or the working class constitute a basic social division. But the relationship between the classes is always in conflict and plays an antagonistic relationship. One class takes the superior position and controls the subordinate one. The study of Rick Wolff addresses the existence of a class system with its unique political power in the following way:

The unique culture, natural endowments, politics, and economics of each society combine to determine the specific qualities and quantities of its class processes. From one time and place to another, societies vary in terms of who produces and appropriates surpluses (of what size and in what ways) and who distributes surpluses (in what portions) to whom, for what purposes, and in what ways. Marx's attention to historical detail led him to identify five qualitatively different kinds of class processes (or "class structures"): communist, slave, ancient, feudal, and capitalist. He concentrated overwhelmingly upon the last given his judgment that it constituted the hegemonic class structure within modern society ...and recognized that multiple class structures typically coexist within most societies. (158)

Munoo, Bakha and, Gangu, are the typical figures of such societies, stratified under the colonial capital system of the contemporary era and creating antagonistic class relations. With their life journey, these characters encounter social vices, exploitation, corruption, and cruelties prevailing at the time.

These novels are the tales of the oppressed coolies who reveal the destructive effects of class exploitation in the domain of colonialism, capitalism, casteism, and feudalism. The themes of poverty, hunger, slavery, manipulation, cruelty, and other socio-economic crises are the common features in Anand's novels that are the consequences of the socio-political system of the time. Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu are the representative figures of the oppressed communities fighting against the crude reality to exist. Poverty and hunger are their curses for them. Munoo in Bombay, Bakha in Bulashah, and Gangu in Assam unveil the wretched and inhumane conditions of the workers. The position of the workers is no less than the slavery system in ancient times who are forced to render service for the owner. This slavery system is strategically changed only;

Capitalism, socialists concede, represents an advance on feudalism and chattel slavery by eradicating personal dependence. But because it places workers at the mercy of the capitalist class, capitalism does not overthrow the basic logic of enslavement. It simply exchanges one form of enslavement for another: chattel slavery for 'wage slavery' as socialists call it. So (socialists conclude) it is profoundly misleading to describe capitalism as a paradigmatically free society. In truth, capitalism is something close to the opposite: a realm of deep of unfreedom in which the "haves" use their economic advantages to systematically dominate the "have-nots". (Arnold 107)

The protagonists of the novels endure all the sufferings and humiliations because they want food. Poverty and starvation allow them to be dominated and exploited. Munoo cries 'I want only food', Bakha and his family depend on the mercy of the upper caste for their daily food supply and Gangu toils looking always for the eradication of starvation and poverty – emphasizing Anand's vision to highlight injustice and oppressive mechanisms. It is the poverty for which they sell their labor at a low rate. The protagonists and their communities struggle hard to ensure just wages according to the labor. Though few native elites or capitalists gain economic stability, they remain passive towards the people who are downtrodden and they are often violent and aggressive to exploit them. Munoo, Bakha, and Gangu are the perfect examples of this cruelty where they encounter a series of violence and humiliation from the Indian upper class. Munoo in Bombay and Gangu in Assam are directly connected with the foreign capitalists who run the industries for their own benefit by inflicting mental and physical pain on the working class. This is the real reflection of the contemporary time when the British govt. holds the power in their economic and political institutions by implementing a sense of terror and tension. The study of Fakrul Alam in his *Karl Marx on India: A Postcolonial Perspective* reveals;

...English colonization succeeded, it seems to Marx, 'through a frightful system of torture' in India (590) and a successful imitation of the "Roman divide et imperia (60) policy in the subcontinent. At home, on the other hand, it depended on bullying off politicians and perpetuates lies about their rule in India, on the other, it expanded and held on to power through its policy of divide and rule, and unrestrained use of force. (19)

This historic political technique – divide and rule – is applied to control the subjects and to create communal factions to prevent unrest against British sovereignty. It suppresses the collective interest of the working class and, therefore, the natives are often involved in chaos and clashes as they are directed to do so. It makes the lower class politically inactive and easily to be exploited. *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* have been focused on the downtrodden communities who are victimized under the grip of social evils and political power, and class distinction in colonial India. Society depends

on the services of these communities which remain unrecognized and suppressed; therefore, destined to suffering. Anand's novels shed light on the sub-continental socio-political and economic context that plays an important role to understand the lives of the working class under Imperial India. It can be said that social turmoil, class division, and imperial hegemony are not performed in isolation, rather they are interconnected elements unveiling different ways of exploitation and sufferings at the communal and economic levels.

Conclusion

The study explores social evils and exploitations in Colonial Capitalist India which are found in Mulk Raj Anand's major three novels—*Untouchable*, *Coolie*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. This study relates here Marxist thought to bring out the concrete reason for the antagonistic class relation and its impacts on contemporary society. This paper finds out that class conflicts and socio-political evils are man-made practices to dominate society. Human lives, in this world, are chained under some rules that are solidified by the political and economic policies applied via govt. and non-govt. institutions. On the other hand, it can be said that class conflicts derive from the economic condition, and this class conflict has been strengthened with political support as well as social practice. In these socio-political arrangements, lower-class people suffer the most. They have been exploited purposefully and systematically. The agonies and distressed lives of the working class have been portrayed analytically in this paper. Anand's protagonists Bakha, Munoo, and Gangu, as well as the entire lower communities, are victimized figures of these socio-political arrangements of the time. They are exploited and fettered at the hands of the upper class who run the socio-political system for their own interest. The protagonists, in the novels, are socially dead and their constant fight against the harsh reality remains silent and unnoticeable. These are not only colonial e.g. foreign domination and capitalism e.g. newly advancing economic systems exploit the working class, feudalism, and religious fundamentalism are similarly important in class distinction and breeding social injustice. Poverty, slavery, manipulation, cruelty, hypocrisy, and, in general, domination multiply the suffering of the working class. This paper, therefore, identifies colonialism, capitalism, feudalism, and casteism as socio-political evils and shows their impacts on the lives of the common people by analyzing the novels of Mulk Raj Anand.

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