

## **TWO LEAVES AND A BUD**

### **About the Author**

- Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand is a pioneer in the field of Indo-English fiction. All his novels and short stories bear him out as a champion of the underdog and his writings reveal his deep understanding of socioeconomic problems. Of all the Indian novelists in English, Anand is a writer with a strong commitment to expose the social evils of inequality and exploitation. He takes the cudgels against the cruel forces and unsocial elements which exploit the lives of the poor. Tenderness is the essence of Anand's humanism. He is a humanist.

Anand's first five novels are 'The Untouchable' (1935), 'Coolie' (1936), 'Two Leaves and A Bud' (1937), 'The Village' (1939) and 'Across the Black Waters' (1940). The thirties were the seed time of modern independent India. The Gandhian Satyagraha movement, the Organization of Marxist parties, the agonies of World War II in 1939, with the rise of Nazism, all had a definite impact on Mulk Raj Anand's mind.

Like many Indo-Anglian writers, this political action took the form of writing novels. With a social conscience, Anand wrote for the people and of the people because he is a humanist. One such novel is Two Leaves and A Bud. It was published in London in 1937. Later it was published in India. It comprises twenty six chapters.

### **ABOUT THE NOVEL**

Two Leaves and a Bud is a novel by Mulk Raj Anand first published in 1937. This deals with the oppression of the poor, and is about a peasant who tries to protect his daughter from a British soldier. The story is based in the tea plantations of Assam. The book was



2

subsequently adapted to a Hindi film, *Rahi*, by Dev Anand and simultaneously released in English as *The Wayfarer*. The book depicts in detail the concept of haves and have-nots and the exploitation of one at the hand of the other, in pre-independence India.

It is a novel on social exploitation, full of violence and bitterness. It describes the hazardous life of Gangu, an indentured labourer, in an Assam Tea Garden owned by a British man. The theme is bitterness, violence and exploitation. It is about the injustice done to the poor labourers. Anand's writing is full of disgust and hate. The angry young man in Anand is more evident than the artist. The gift of Mulk Raj Anand's imagination and his gentle and humane sympathy for his subject adds a new dimension in sensitivity to contemporary literature.

This is a dramatic novel that ends with a "tragic clash of interests and destinies".

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

Gangu is a middle aged peasant. He is living in Hoshiarpur with his wife Sajani and his daughter Leila. Because of his outstanding debts he ends up losing his lands. So, he readily agrees to travel to Assam to undertake a plantation job that would pay well and allow Gangu to own his own land. However upon his arrival Gangu finds that this was all a trick and that the job is essentially slave labour. Their pay is not even enough to buy food. Many of the merchants offer loans with interest rates so high that repayment is impossible. Gangu and his family are forced to live their lives in squalor and to endure all sorts of abuse and degradation. On top of this Sajani and Leila are subjected to rape and other sexual degradation.

The general poor treatment and living conditions provoke concern in the plantation's doctor, John De La Harve, especially as the threat of cholera looms over the plantation. He tries to persuade the plantation's boss, Croft-Cooke, into improving conditions of the workers (coolies). Whereas Croft-Cook believes that coolies are sub-human and are not deserving of even the smallest human consideration.



3

As a result the plantation is struck by cholera and Sajani ends up contracting and then dying of the disease. Since he is too poor to perform the necessary last rites, Gangu tries to borrow money from Croft-Cooke but is turned away because he is believed to be carrying cholera.

Things take a turn for the worse when Reggie Hunt, a British officer, takes notice of Leila and chases her with the intent to rape her. Gangu tries to stop Reggie Hunt. But he is shot and killed by Hunt. The officer is charged with Gangu's murder, but a trial comprised mainly of Englishmen finds him not guilty.