

Tribhuvan University

Peasant Women's Consciousness and Resistance: A Study in Subalternity in

Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*

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by

Govinda Karki

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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**Tribhuvan University**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Govinda Karki has completed his thesis entitled “Peasant Women's Consciousness and Resistance: A Study in Subalternity in Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2067/05/01 B.S. to 2068/05/21 B.S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Mr. Hem Lal Pandey

Supervisor

Date: -----

**Tribhuvan University**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Approval Letter**

This thesis entitled "Peasant Women's Consciousness and Resistance: A Study in Subalternity in Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Govinda Karki has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

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Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

Head

Central Department of English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Abstract**

This thesis studies Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) from the perspective of gendered subaltern. Gendered subaltern raises the issues of the poor peasant females who are ignored, forgotten, backward in position and whose voices remain silent. These females are docile in front of their male counterparts. As the female characters in the novel are exploited at the hands of colonial rulers, they cannot speak up for their rights though they try to resist to hegemonic control of colonizers and their Indian agents during colonial period. The characters, Sajani, Leila, Chambeli and other women in the novel struggle against pathetic plight precipitated by the colonial elites and their stalwarts. Thus, this thesis studies the female characters from the viewpoint of subalternity and explores the causes making them silent. This is explored with the help of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory which helps to analyze the representation of gendered subaltern in *Two Leaves and a Bud*.

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### **1. Peasant Women's Consciousness in *Two Leaves and a Bud***

This research work examines Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) from the perspective of gendered subaltern, which focuses on subaltern women's consciousness and resistance to hegemonic control of colonizers and their Indian agents during colonial period. The novel is set towards the end of colonialism in India. The study of the gendered subaltern explains that the female characters in the novel are directly or indirectly dominated by the male ruling ideology in their life and they cannot speak for the rights. All the female characters are suppressed by the male characters. The voice of the female characters such as Sajani, Leila and Negi and other women is represented by Anand. These characters in the novel struggle against pathetic plight precipitated by the colonial elites and their stalwarts. So, this thesis studies the female characters through the lenses of Subaltern Studies project and explores the causes making them silent. Especially, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory regarding the gendered subaltern, discussed in *Subaltern Studies Project*, helps to analyze the representation of gendered subaltern in *Two Leaves and a Bud*.

In Asam Tea plantations, the female characters face multiple inhuman conditions as indentured labour. In other words, the labourers lead a life of inhuman subjugation at the hands of tea-plantation owners, who are almost white males and few Indian male brokers. In the beginning, the poor and helpless people are framed into working in the tea plantations by the people such as Buta, the coolie catcher, who tempts them with false promises. The tea estate is like a prison for the labourers, especially women, because they cannot escape a life of suffering inside the plantation. There, the situation is so oppressive that Gangu's wife Sajani and daughter Leila either fall victim to sexual exploitation or are treated as low class slaves. Sajani dies as a result of dire health and sanitation

situation and Leila is raped by the British colonizer, Reggie Hunt. These female characters are compelled to undergo such a horrible situation as they come from lower socio-economic strata in colonial period in rural Indian society. So, the female characters are exploited at the hands of the British colonizers who have usurped major Indian companies. In this way, this research explores the subjugation of women in the Macpherson Tea Estate of Assam through this fictional work.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the women are perilously exposed to sexual assault by the lustful British colonizers, particularly Reggie Hunt. Any kind of resentment or protest by a woman or her husband is dealt with a heavy hand. The wife of Negi is a victim to the carnal desires of Reggie Hunt who is always on the lookout for quenching his lust by raping the wives and sisters of coolie workers. Leila escapes an attack on her chastity with great difficulty. But her escape in her hut results in the death of her father Gangu. There is a premonition of the incident at a very early stage of the novel. Leila, a very young child, runs away innocently at the sight of Reggie Hunt as she is afraid of the white man. All these justify that the colonizers are insensitive and callous towards the coolie women especially who are sick, weak and helpless all the time at the places and have no sense of self respect and dignity. These women have suffered all this as they are employed by powerful male colonizers in the Tea Estate. As these characters come from poor working class peasantry during colonial time in India, they can be subsumed in subaltern groups according to subaltern theory.

In addition, this study explores the misery and wretchedness of the poor labourers especially female characters and their struggle for a better life. The novel begins with presenting Gangu's family travelling on the train in search of better life.

As the story develops his contact with reality shatters his dreams as his wife and daughter become disappointed. In the journey to Assam, Gangu recalls a song which was sung by Sajani for Gangu. With this song, Anand indirectly narrates the truth and reality of journey; he had wished to believe that it was possible for a man and woman to be companions in life and death together. In fact, everyone has to face alone, but even in life, unfortunately, people usually travel very much alone. This statement proves literally true in the case of Gangu's family. As Priyanka Sharma notes:

It [Gangu's family] has been deprived of their land in native town because of the enticing promises of Buta, who is the agent of British colonizers. The promise of a piece of land is enough to entrap the poor Gangu and his wife who have been deprived of their possession of the ancestral land. Here, in the Tea Estate, he and his family are offered a hut which has been constructed without any attention to the hygienic requirements of the occupants. (2)

As a result, Gangu's wife and daughter are infected by disease and reach on the brink of death. So, it is the poor working coolie women who ultimately find themselves at the receiving end of suffering. Unfortunately, they are in no state of raising their voices against injustice in the Tea Estate although the daughter Leila protests the activities of the colonizers.

When they arrive at the new tea estate of Assam, Gangu and his wife and daughter are ill-treated by the estate managers and owners. They are looked at with lustful eyes. Even the young children are not spared. The novel paints the picture of utter appalling situation in the tea estate. To the sheer negligence of the owners, disease like cholera is spread in the estate and as a result hundreds of coolies die every year. The coolie women live in pathetic condition. The houses

are in filthy conditions as they do not have any sanitation facilities. Gangu's wife dies. The coolies face such a situation that they do not have any money to conduct the funeral of the dead. Later on, Gangu becomes victim of inhumanity as he is accused of spreading the disease in the estate by the owners. In this way, the agents of British rulers like Manager Reggie Hunt consider the workers as "sub humans" and "shocking barbarians" whom they can always exploit (5).

Anand's novel, *Two Leaves and Bud* is here analyzed in the light of subaltern theory. The novelist fuses gradual up-gradation and maturity in his female characters with the maturity of subaltern group. Echoes of representation of subaltern characters can be traced from his very first novel *Untouchable*. Sohini, Bakha's vivacious sister resists against her physical exploitation by Pandit Kalinath. However, she fails to counter strike for having been conditioned in age long conventional Indian culture. Leila in *Two Leaves and a Bud* goes one step ahead by revolting against her physical exploitation by the tea planter Reggie Hunt. Unfortunately she loses her father. In *The Village*, Maya, the beloved of Lalu, is married to an unsuitable man. She suffers from unhappy loveless married life and soon becomes a widow. Widowhood in India is a curse on women. A widow is prescribed by very rigid rules and social ostracism to the punishment meted out to her for noncompliance. It ceases life to an insensate thing.

The study depicts the rendering inhuman condition of the poor working class women under British colonial rule in India. Moreover, the study also aims to plead for values such as compassion, humanness, peace, love, fulfillment of basic material needs and good neighborliness which would generate lasting happiness to the society and its members. Accommodativeness and sensitivity must be cultivated so that social and economic injustice might cease to cause unhappiness and discontent and make the world a better place to live in. Anand

explores socio-economic problems and waste of precious human energy, creativity in an unjust colonial society, for lack of which women suffered more because of their gender.

Spivak has pointed out that the "subaltern" objectified as a collective term is actually thought in the figure of the male. This neglects the gender axis along which power operates and, for that matter, remaining in complicity with the knowledge/power network they set out to counter. To counter this tendency, Spivak undertakes to represent the female subaltern, not by way of speaking for them, but by way of a politics of representation, a politics of reading that portrays them by moving (decentering) oneself to the space of subalternity. Rather than replacing the male subject in history with the female subject, she seeks, through the representation of the stories of their exploitation and subjugation, to locate their resistance in the form of an excess that refuses to be domesticated by the knowledge/power network.

Thus, the subalterns are those people who are marginalized and exploited. The subaltern is the figure who is at once incorporated and marginalized. S/he is excluded by discursive practices that produce discourses of sexual difference, state and citizens' relations, success and failure, reason and unreason, and so on. Subalternity is the site where identities are always in crisis. Representing the subaltern is representing the "text" of subalternity, and is to trace the techniques of knowledge and power network.

Subalternity, being a space of difference, is thus a struggle or negotiation taking place at the "margin", which offers what Bell Hooks calls "the powerful possibilities of the margin. . . . a dialectical space of dynamic interplay between repression and resistance" (Kaplan 143). The politics of reading is a decentering of identity politics - decentering oneself to the margin, identifying with the subaltern, that is, taking up subaltern perspectives and surrendering oneself to the space of

subalternity, while still inhabiting one's locality. In this, one practices to read and speak from the in-between space, which Spivak does in the subaltern theory.

To counter the universalism that is constitutive of the structure of violence and domination, the self must be displaced from its familiar ground to the limits of representation. For Spivak, the "gendered subaltern", in decolonized space, "is the naming of 'woman', a literal referent for 'the disenfranchised woman whom we strictly, historically, geopolitically cannot imagine'. 'Subaltern is the name of the social space that is different from the classed social circuit, the track of hegemony.' 'The irreducible other in that space' holds the name 'woman' (139), who cannot speak for themselves. The context in which the subaltern cannot speak is one in which binary relations dominate with one of the terms in a relation functioning as the organizing principle of the relation. Two of the binary pairs instrumental to the containment of women's agency are the conceptual versus the corporeal, and the masculine versus the feminine. To disrupt and unsettle this culturally and historically imposed constraint, Spivak offers a different theorization of the body.

Spivak talks of the gendered body of the subaltern woman as "the place of knowledge, rather than the instrument of knowing" (260). She sees the undividedness of the subject, which is necessary for the guarantee of truth and objective knowledge, and which is accomplished through representing itself as "originary" and sufficient in itself and excluding its Other, as subjected to attacks from the quickening disintegration and fragmentation of daily lives, with the subject being drawn deeper and deeper into the cutting force that divides it between its self-understanding and the experience of its daily practices. For Spivak, instead of "presupposing the identity of the male-gendered position and

the position of the thinking (speaking) subject" (259), the subject should be seen to be fundamentally divided in the interplay between *savoir* and *connaissance* in the power/knowledge network, displacing the dichotomy between mind and body that governs dualistic thinking. Knowledge being always produced in relations of difference that divide the subject, the body as the place of knowledge is "the meeting point of discourse with the nondiscursive domains of institutions, political events, and economic processes" (Bernauer 109).

Since the major objective of the study is to demonstrate poor peasant people's struggle for a better life, who are victims of capitalist system, who are sunk in poverty, exploitation and suppression, who are paralyzed with fear, a comprehensive analysis of Anand's basic concern against social system in *Two Leaves and a Bud* lies outside of this project. Given nature of research, available time and resources, this study does not offer an analysis of Anand's own relationship with oppressed class, even though such an analysis would definitely add up to the inhumanity of capitalists and coolies' struggle for a prestigious life and its consequences. In this way, this study makes significant contribution mainly in two areas of concern. First, this study brings Anand's growing concern with human hearts and his desire of achieving a healthy synthesis between society and individuals, where women are treated equally as men and feel satisfied as a result of the fulfillment of basic material needs.

The eminence of Anand's fictional art lies in the realistic portrayal of the abject plight of the suffering mass. Anand presents the loss of identity for his protagonists and prepares them to regain such identity though after a prolonged struggle. His intimate contact with the suffering underprivileged and the myriad levels of Indian masses with their differences of caste, creed and colour seem to

have implanted in his mind profound impressions about the still sad music of humanity. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks:

Some of the best studies of social life are, naturally enough, in the regional languages; and it is not easy to translate the racy idioms of every day speech into English. Urban life in India attracts the novelist by its excitements, perversions, sophistications and violent alternations between affluence and poverty, splendor and squalor; but the interior, the areas of obscurity and inaccessibility have their attractions too and sometimes bring out the best in the creative novelist. (327)

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) has received lots of critical attention from a large number of critics. The novel deals with the evils of the class system and covers a wider range of suffered life of downtrodden especially women in India. Its locale is a tea plantation in Assam and its hero a Punjabi peasant Gangu and his family--is an extension of same suffering and exploitation.

*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.

Set in colonial period this novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* has depicted contemporary social reality of 1930s. H.M. William has rightly observed these statements:

Of the Indian writers after 1930s, Mulk Raj Anand's the most celebrated of all the English medium novelist and short story writer. He had strong links with the social realists of 1930s. His aim was to provoke pity for the Indian poor and to denounce the evils of British rule and capitalist exploitation. (9)

Here, H.M. William portrays Anand as humanist writer. Anand depicting the structure of a society, picturises the social reality of 1930s and the re after the sense of class consciousness and class position was a fire issue of that period. Focusing on such issues, Anand picturizes tragic reality of humanity.

Similarly, P.K. Rajan in *Mulk Raj Anand: An Evaluation* also states that early novels of Anand do not present protagonist with consciousness of their class position and strong sense of determination needed for any meaningful social change:

In his early novels like *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the protagonist remains simple, transparently innocent, direct in their responses and engaged in a straight confrontation with society. They are victims, they accept their suffering with meek submission, they do not take a conscious creative role in changing their destiny; and an organically evolved pessimism envelops their lives. (181)

Here, P.K. Rajan portrays Anand's early novels illustrating the unconsciousness of growing protagonists, their class positions and lack of consequences. Like

above, this novel is a voice of downtrodden people. Similarly, Marlene Fisher in *The Wisdom of Heart* observes:

In Gangu particularly this quality becomes exasperating and tends to blot out almost everything else about him. It is of course, part of Anand's design to him as a beaten man, first at the hand of money lender of his village, then at the hand of the British, and finally totally crushed by the death of his wife. (48)

Here, Fisher portrays unjust colonial capitalistic ideology in which Gangu's family has been exploited. In this way, Gangu's family suffers and cannot raise voice. Gangu's family comes from the working class peasants, who work for meager wages. From the time of colonialism, these people have been kept as slaves and they cannot raise their voice for their rights.

Similarly, another critic R.S. Singh in "Indian Novel in English; A Critical Study" has rightly observed:

Like Munoo, Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) also is passive and fatalistic. The system of the plantation owners of Assam was so cruel and powerful that it demanded completed surrender even from the rationalist English doctor John de le Havre who was kind to Indians. Reggle Hunt, the symbol of oppression is portrayed in black colour: sadistic, lustful and arrogant. (45)

Anand has presented Gangu quite passive, fearful and fatalistic character. So, he does not protest against the colonizers. He is the representative of subaltern character. Moreover, his wife and daughter are the typical subaltern characters as they cannot speak for themselves.

Anand shows these coolies being under compulsion to renounce all pleasures in life and work as a beast of burden sans humanity. His writing covers essential human sympathy, humanistic compassion, search for identity, human desire to earmark a little space in this vast world and panoramic view of the rural life in India. Anand discloses from the preface of the novel about his vivacious characters and their social conditions which forced him to write about them. He admits:

All these heroes, as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories, were dear to me, because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during the my childhood and youth. And I was repaying the debt of gratitude I owed them for much of the inspiration they had given to me to mature in to manhood, when I began to interpret their lives in my writings. They were not mere phantoms. They were the flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood, and obsessed me in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist's soul. And I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of life. (Anand 6)

All this criticism shows that Mulk Raj Anand has depicted the pathetic condition of the working class people, especially women in India, whose life has become miserable as a result of their being poor and females. Thus, this thesis, by taking insights from Spivak's theory of subalternity, examines how the female characters are exploited at the hands of the British Colonizers at tea estates, exploring the subjugation of women in the Macpherson Tea Estate of Assam.

## II. Representation of Gendered Subaltern in *Two Leaves and a Bud*

Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* represents the subaltern people through the characters through Sajani, Leila and Negi. These characters suffer on account of economic, gender and domestic violence. This chapter particularly investigates the representation of those female characters that belong to subaltern class. Gangu's wife Sajani, daughter Leila and other coolie women suffer in the Macpherson Tea Estate of Assam as a result of colonial oppression especially perpetrated by males who are mostly British. As their basic materials needs have not been fulfilled, they live a very wretched life. They are forced to work beyond their ability; in addition, they are low paid. So, as a poor working class people from rural undeveloped areas in pre-independent India, they are exploited and victimized by directly male colonizers and indirectly by Indian males. Thus, particularly Sajani and her daughter Leila, who are victimized by British males violence and rape, are the characters of the investigation of this thesis. This thesis presents these female characters as the gendered subaltern.

Anand's novels are reflections of contemporary Indian culture. In Michael Foucault's view that all discourses of an era are both production and propagator, determines what is 'true' and 'normal' during the period in relation to these all other forms of behavior or either seen to have criminal, insane or sexually deviant. Dynamism of subaltern theory brought marginalized women out of the prison of colonialist and elite historiography. It brought fourth them from passive tolerance of their own exploitation to resistance and revolt,

In Post-World War II period momentum attained by voice and resistance of the suppressed and marginalized class like Dalit, subalterns and more especially of women has affected the literature of the time. More or less, all writers have realized

its inescapable force. Anand's inclination and concern towards the margin is evidenced in his numerous works.

To understand the representation of Sajani and Leila as subaltern women in the novel, we need to know the notion of the "gendered subaltern" and the idea of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) underlines the silencing of the women in colonial and postcolonial scenario. Without taking account of her consciousness, however, the Hindu widow has been silenced in the male group's ideology. Spivak states, "The dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subaltern subject as female was successfully effaced" (98). In Spivak's narrative, the Hindu woman agency was denied, first by the legal displacement of her subject in the patriarchal religious system, and second by the imperialist construction of her as a victim of the patriarchal barbarism. Spivak writes, "Between patriarchy and imperialism the figure of women disappear not in to a pristine nothingness, but in to a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world women' caught between tradition and modernization" (102). By discussing the silencing of the Hindu women, Spivak highlights the limits of representing the gendered subaltern caught between patriarchy and imperialism.

As Gangu is a poor powerless peasant, he cannot directly oppose the whites. He cannot afford to lead a good life in colonial period in India; his family suffers and his wife Sajani and daughter Leila becomes victim of exploitation and oppression. The family especially Sajani is tempted by the false promises of Buta Ram who is the agent of British colonizers. He takes the poor women and daughters to his bosses so that they would exploit the helpless. In return, the agents like Buta Ram receive baksis from their Shahibs. When Gangu decides to work in the Tea Estate owned by the colonizers, the day of suffering of his wife and daughter begin. When the novel

begins, the family is travelling on the toy train to the Tea Estate. The mood of the family seems sad as they think of new life in the Tea Estate. Anand writes:

His wife, Sajani, who sat facing him, with his fourteen - year old daughter, Leila, on one side...she seemed distant, absorbed in something, far away from him. What was she thinking? He wondered. Why she was not connected with him? . . . Why couldn't she talk to him and give him faith, strengthen his hope rather than merely depend on him? (1).

Although Sajani has been with Gangu in difficult times, she seems to be disconnected with him due to poverty. Unfulfillment of basic needs has affected their relationship between the husband and wife. Anand further describes the miserable condition of the children of Gangu:

The children, Leila and Buddhu, looked eager and excited in spite of the fact that they were gummy eyed from several nights of sleeplessness. But they were unthinking little things, reflected Gangu. They were spontaneous and natural, happy and trusting slaves to anyone who would win them over with the gift of a sweet or a toy. They had no appreciation of the pain that lies quiescent under everything, the suffering that men imposed on themselves and each other. (2)

As a people from lower, working class peasant, Gangu children are compelled to live a life of servant, because in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak extends the definition of the subaltern by including the females of the urban sub-proletariats into category. She advocates an emphasis on both the economic and sexual aspects of the oppression

of the gendered subaltern. Spivak's theory helps to note the oppression from both patriarchy and class on the gendered subaltern.

Gangu, his wife and daughter agree to go to the Tea Estate owned by the British rulers as Buta Ram somehow manages to make them leave the native place and go away to unknown place. But he is attracted by Poorna's beauty. Sajani also falls victim to the hegemonic exploitation of But Ram who tempts the very poor working class people like Gangu and Sajani. So, by depicting the plight of Sajani, Mulk Raj Anand raises the issues of third world poor working class women. Like most of the poor women who are gullible, Sajani is completely taken in by his false promises. At the same time, Sajani shows some wisdom and concerns for her daughter as she says, "Our Leila is growing up" said Sajani to her husband though she meant the remark for the ears of Buta. This reflects the foreshadowing of the attempted rape of Leila later at the hands of white colonizer, Reggie Hunt.

On the train, when Gangu asks the coolie catcher Buta Ram, the agent of colonizer about the life of workers in the Tea Estate, Buta Ram persuades Gangu with false promises of lots of money and land. As their basic needs have never been fulfilled throughout their entire life, Sajani wonders at the prospects of better and comfortable life:

Sajani was surcharged with a glow of wonder. She who had sat brooding, now on her husband, now on herself, shuffled like a hers, rearranged the apron round her head, and stared furtively around to see if everyone believed in the possibility of this miracle. For though she had no idea of the value of money, though she could not even count up to a hundred, the sound of 'lakhs' made her feel that the place of which she was going must be a veritable paradise. (6)

Chakravorty Spivak claims that "Anglo-American women's issues are not appropriate and different from the issues of the women from the third or non-Western societies" (34). The African women's issues and the South Asian women's issues are much more distinct from the issues of the Anglo-American women from the past to the very recent times. Anglo-American women are superior to the non-Anglo in terms of many perspectives. Non-Anglo-American women have the experiences of double marginalization or many other forms of marginalization in terms of class, caste, gender, ethnicities, regions, colonization etc. so, the study focuses on the human mind and detects the ugliness in it.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her witty commentary "A Literary Representation Subaltern: Mahasweta Devi's Standayini" (SSV) states:

Subjectivity and voices of women are ignored. She is reduced to the object of male desire. Women are treated as playmate for pleasure and entertainment of male. Male rarely treat them as human beings. Whether women are looked 'from above' merely as sexual object or 'from below' as goddess. Moreover, she has pointed the parallelism between Joshoda (the central female character of 'Stanadayini') and the subaltern divine. At one aspect, she has been turned in to an object of the male's desire. On the other, she has been worshipped as she feeds the children with her breast. By presenting as goddess, the patriarchal society has tried to hide the injustice and oppression upon females. It is just the patriarchal politics to use women for their benefits. (129)

Thus, she gives the issues of gender subaltern a separate position in subaltern studies as subaltern studies had not taken the women's issue distinctly. Till then subaltern studies had undertaken empirical study on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, class, color, space and economy.

Gender subaltern specially raises the issues of those female who are ignored, forgotten, backward in position whose voices remain silent, who are docile in front of male and who are in suffocation. It strengthens the voices of such marginalized female. In this context, Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is the manifesto for gender subaltern. While pointing out the vulnerable point of subaltern studies, Spivak makes it clear that subaltern studies, as a discourse to speak on behalf of marginalized groups, has not paid as much attention to women as it should have. Among the subaltern groups, women's position is very poor and miserable, their subjectivity and identity is erased from the history. Actually they have no history. Women have doubly subalternized. On the one hand, like their male counterparts they are suppressed as colonized subject and on the other hand, their own male counterparts dominate them.

In the colonial atmosphere, women's position was very poor than males. Here, his specific focus is upon the gendered subjects. In the course of rewriting subaltern subjectivity, women identity is erased. According to Spivak "if in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (274). She holds the plight of subaltern is more serious in comparison to their male counterparts. Spivak also argues in the same essay that subaltern people cannot represent themselves. Instead, they have to be represented by others. The problem with representation however, is that the subaltern's voice get overshadowed by the very chance of investigators. The elite

intellectual can be representing the subaltern voice through an elite perspective and subaltern people's reality cannot be represented.

When Leila talks about the misbehavior of exploited women in the Tea Estate, her voice is not heard by any one. She angrily says to her mother: "you must be feeling happy that I had to hear all this" (102). This behavior of Leila hits her mother like an arrow; "we are also surviving somehow. I will also like that. And if there is no place the mother Ganga will accept her daughter" (102). This shows the miserable condition of female workers in the tea plantation.

Sajani as a subaltern woman always becomes passive, docile, submissive and meek. From the very beginning of the human civilization, there is the trend to dominate the lower class people by the upper class. Those who are subaltern and marginalized are exploited mentally and physically. The have-nots are exploited by haves. In such deep level of exploitation female are more exploited than male because they are doubly marginalized in the patriarchal society. Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" says "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (88). Spivak's words are very contextual in the case of Sajani.

The situation of women is perceived not only as the result of unequal gender relations, but as the consequences of the wide range of oppressive situations that transcend gender categories the consequence of wide range of oppressive situations that transcend gender categories and are also related to race, class and citizenship cleavages.

When the family of Gangu reaches the Tea plantation, Sajani readily offers to do the house cleaning at another coolie Narain's house. The statement that "I'll sweep the room and treat the floor with cow-dung if you get up," said Sajani, with the

immaculate instinct of the fastidious village women whose whole life had been spend cleaning and washing and cooking and cleaning again" (36). This shows how women in the third world countries remain within the four walls of house working very hard. Males in these countries confine women in household works as Gangu tells his wife and daughter. He calls his daughter and then to his wife: "Leila, go my child and help your aunt to cook! The mother of Leila, perhaps you will go and meet your sister too" (36). This shows how males in Indian society patronize and voluntrequlize women.

After his arrival in the tea plantation, Gangu and his family is targeted. Even the small child is not spared. When the white man Hunt eyes Leila with sexual passion, Narain and Gangu try to defend her saying:

She is only a little child, Huzoo, ' said Narain before Gangu could answer. 'That is Buta. "Acha,' said Hunt, and walked away towards the Sardar, followed by a crowd of curious, big-eyed urchins; 'Bless your fate, brother,' said Narain to Gangu. 'He is very budmash sahib. He is always drunk. He has no consideration for anyone's mother or sister. He is openly living with three coolie women!' 'Why, but my daughter is a child,' Gangu said, 'He couldn't have said anything to her.' (46)

"Nobody knows what may or may not happen here, brother," says Narain. "Nobody's mother or sister is safe in this place" (42). This proves how the subaltern women fall victim to the predatory nature of the colonizers.

The female workers get very much frightened at the sight of the white people as they mistreat the workers. "The coolie women shuffled like hens at the arrival of a much - dreaded cook" (49). Reggie Hunt puts on the atmosphere of pompous white so that the workers respect him with awe:

. . . rather exhilarated, Reggie Hunt thought the fluttering of the women and their furtive glances betokened admiration for his person, which indeed it did among some of them, though more because he was a sahib than because he was Reggie Hunt. And as if in recompense for this popularity, he relaxed the willed extroversion of the dominant white man to a casual even temper. (49)

In order to impress the coolie women, he flatters them. In fact, he knows that the women are more diligent and hard working. The way Spivak defines subalternity is the way Sajani and Leila are victimized. As a subaltern woman Leila is sexually objectified. The English Shahibs make different excuses to go near to the women workers. This shows how males employ techniques to quench their sexual thirst:

The women workers are more efficient,' Reggie assured himself, quite insensitive to the undercurrents of emotion he had let loose in their souls. He favoured them almost involuntarily, hoping to establish a relationship of informal intimacy to facilitate the next stage of union with one of them, especially as he felt a strange stirring in his loins which the saddle encouraged. (50)

By establishing close relationship with the women, Reggie Hunt wants to sexually exploit the coolie women in the tea plantation.

As the white people consider themselves superior beings, Reggie Hunt regards the white race superior and the black Indians inferior. This thinking makes him feel that the blacks respect the whites, which he writes to his father:

The white man is tolerated here because of his superior clothes, respected because of his knowledge and admired for his personal qualities, he had written in his pretentious screed. 'One' can only

control these people by strength, courage and determination . . . A large ink blot discharged from his over- eager pen had somewhat marred the general effect, but Reggie had scrawled on with unabated vigour. And in spite of the weather, I am going to stick it, Dad, because it is the way to two thousands a year. (55)

As the workers are poor and ignorant, they do not know the good manners. So, the white people look down upon the black plantation workers. A white girl makes fun at the Indian women workers:

These Black velvet skins' said Tweetie with a snort half of amusement, half of disgust, 'they are taking to deceiving you by putting moss-covered logs of wood at the bottom of their baskets, instead of bricks. And one of them had put her baby into it. Almost choked him with leaves. When I found out and asked her why she was plucking. Crafty bitch!' 'Dock her pay altogether!' said Reggie sharply. And cut three annas off the pay of each one of the frauds. Dirty cheats, the whole bag of them. And not only here too, the whole bag of them. And not only here too, the deceitful bitches. They try the same game in bed, leaving you high and dry at the critical moment. (57)

Even the trivial needs of the daughter Leila are not fulfilled; as a result, she is compelled to live a wretched life. But her father cannot afford to fulfill her demand. "Leila said she wanted a necklace, a nose-ring and silken glass bangles to wear like those which the wife of Buta wore" (67). This creates squabble in the family and it is the female who suffers most as result of exploitation of the workers. Anand writes:

There is no need to do that, 'Gangu said. 'You'd better take all the money we have. We will be needing it. And then there is nothing here

that anyone can take away. How much money have we there? He paused for a while as Sajani went towards a corner of the room, lifted a brick by applying the lever of a pair of tongs, and began to take out some coins. 'Sevonn rupees and some annas,' she said, counting with difficulty. 'I suppose five rupees is the money we had left from the bonus for pocket expenses that Buta gave us before we started from the villages,' said Gangu, talking more to himself than to anyone else.

'Buta have we earned only two rupees since we came? (89)

This is how it is the Sajani who suffers most because the family of Gangu gets very low pay, which is barely enough to tide things over. As there is always shortage of money at home, familial feud is always instigated. Sajani says:

I did some shopping at Seth Kanoo Mal's' said Sajani. So, don't think I have stolen any money. We have been eating food all these days.' But Gangu was not accusing her to stealing his money. He was thinking, as he had been thinking for days, what a liar Buta had been in all his talk about high wages, about the free gifts of land, of being able to save money from one's earning and of being able to set up on one's own after one's contract was over. The bonus apart (and Gangu was sure that it was a kind of bribe that Buta had given them to induce them to come with him), what had the family got after almost a whole week's work? It did not even work out at eight annas a day for the whole family: three annas for him, two annas for his wife and daughter, and three piece for his child. (64)

When there comes the question of distribution it is the women who get the least. It is the male who gets more. Moreover, during colonial period, women as gendered

subaltern, were compelled to accept what they were offered. In the village Gangu had been able to earn eight annas a day alone by working on the landlord's land when he had lost his own. And the planter Sahib, while giving him the contract, he said that there was no land yet which he could spare to give him for cultivating rice.

The daughter Leila is confined to the slum area of the plantation site, so she feels suffocated. Whenever she hears about the city and shopping, "she was now thrilled at the idea of being in a crowd of men and women who had issued out of their huts and were going to trail along the pathway to the village, as thrilled as if she were going to a fair" (66). But her happiness soon turns into sorrow as her mother dies of cholera. Anand writes:

How terrified she had been at her peril! The vision of her mother scolding her had occurred to her in a flash. Then the vision of Jaswant weeping over her body. She could have borne her mother's abuse, even accepted blows from her, but Jaswant's weeping would have made her weep too. That small pale face with the sad green eyes was so lovely. She had wished he were her brother, her real brother, though when they played hide-and-seek, he always waited for the opportunity to catch hold of her and squeeze her till her bones cracked. And he was such a tease, always disarranging her apron, taking her unawares and closing her eyes and asking her to guess who it was. She wondered where he was now, and what he was doing. Why had her father come so far away? For she might still have been in the same village as he, though her mother had forbidden her from going out to play with boys and she had but rarely seen him. (67)

Leila recalls the expression on her father's face as he stood in the doorway of their hut and asked her mother how much money they had. And she knows they could ill afford to spend any money on things which after all were not necessary. They feel if they had not come so far away from their village because they were poor, they would not suffer as of now. But Gangu listened to Buta's tales and believed them. Now he is ashamed to find what a fool he has been. But he should not suffer so. They must not inflict any more burdens on him. All his hopes have fallen to pieces. And it is best to go on now till he could get some land. He is in the belief that things might alter. Meanwhile, she wishes she could cry with her happiness and pain, for it is both, at being here among all the sights and sounds of the bazaar, among the people and things, with her mother and her little brother near her and her father not far away. But this is only her dream. The reality is that the family is stricken by cholera because of the unhealthy living condition in the coolie's huts. Anand writes:

Leila dragged her from where she had collapsed and, covering her with blankets, mats, jute cloth bags, with whatever she could find, she massaged her limbs as she sat frightened out of her wits at the thought of both her father and mother stricken with fever. And she ran to and fro with excitement as she realized that her mother lay in a swoon, unaware of everything around her and only moaned in a low voice: 'Oh, my God, Ishwar, Ishwar, Parkmatman.' The girl brought a tumbler of water and applied it to her mother's mouth. (256)

In course of narrating the story of Gangu's family, Anand gives the account of the condition of women in India. The miserable plight of Indian women is presented as below:

75% of the coolies on the Assam plantations suffer from caratomalasia (had eyesight) for lack of proper nourishment, fats and greases.' '50% of the population of India suffers from dental diseases for lack of any milk in the diet.' 'Two million women die in childbirth in India as a result of malnutrition.' '20% Anglo-Indians and members of the upper classes of India die of gluttony, overeating - another form of malnutrition.' (257)

Then, Anand cites another quotation, written in ink on the margin. 'Wages of coolies on the Indian plantations have not changed for the last seventy years. The wages of a coolie in 1870 were five rupees per month. In 1922, the maximum wages of a coolie on the Assam tea plantations did not exceed seven rupees per month.' (112). Sajani dies as she suffered from dire poverty. So, Gangu cries, "'The liar,' said Gangu burst forth, 'he killed my Sajani with his lies! She was unhappy from the very moment she arrived here, though she didn't say so, because she did not want to hurt me. And then she took my illness and died'" (113). After the death of Sajani, Leila becomes very sad and always gets lost in the fond memory of her mother. As she sings:

*'Mother, O Mother*

*O my mother*

*Whenever the memory of you comes to me*

*There is a sudden pain in my heart . . . (205)*

The son represents pathos of the female subaltern people like Leila as she sings as she walks into the forest gathering fuel for the hearth fires of her father's home. She has sung snatches of other songs as she had issued out of the coolie lines, songs which she heard in her village during her childhood, but she dropped them almost as abruptly as

she began them. The above mentioned refrain from a folk song, however, has stayed in her throat. It makes her sad, but she says:

'Two, three things came to my mind to tell him  
 But I completely forget all that I had to say when I was in his presence,  
 O my sister, all my tenderest wishing remained in my heart,  
 She learned across the boughs and found herself coiled in the gap of a  
 python that would bushes hung low over her eyes. (234)

Then she feels the sweat pour down over her forehead and her heart palpitates with a terrible sense of fatality. She feels she is dying. But after the loss of a breath, she finds her will rigidly in control of her life, though her body shakes and trembles as if it were possessed by wild fever:

As she stood thus paralyzed, a sudden impulse to get free arose in her mind. At all costs she must not die. And she writhed with a terrible aspiration of the spirit. But in the flooding hush of the fast - gathering darkness, she writhed and wriggled in vain. Her face twisted and her body contorted and she felt consumed by the sinuous warmth that this furious activity sent rippling up to her head. It seemed that she would never be able to extricate herself from the snake's terrible embrace, and she cried. But the tears would not come to her eyes and her voice was choked. (211)

The symbolic description of "the snake's terrible embrace" can be taken as colonial, male, white clutches from which Leila makes constant attempt to free herself. The 'snake' is thus colonial presence in India. The statement "she thinks she must not die at any cost," reflects that she must resist exploitation and oppression.

Given narration shows Leila's pitiable situation where she cannot do anything for her freedom. She is frightened. She has to bow her head under the patriarchal and colonial code of conduct. She does not have freedom. Rahal Gairola in *Burning with Shame: Desire and South Asian Patriarchy* from Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" To Deepa Mehta's *Fire* writes:

We may thus say that for the use woman identity has great use value in the schema of gendered society but little exchange value, since gender can never fully be exchanged or reach a point where it establishes as equivalence with another facet of identity as rooted so deeply with in both the self and society (subjectivity and agency). Any exchange at all occurs within the gender subject, who scrambles to promise her own identity, bartering of gender roles and other facets of identity. This is an individual, eternal, symbolic act never uniformed by the surrounding society. For subaltern women this means subordination to the patriarchal codes that constitutes her subjectivity for she must be to a certain extent validated by those in power. (308)

The miserable condition in the hot sun without any facilities makes the workers' life difficult. As Anand writes, "A whole gang of suckling humanity lay there under the torrid sun upon the Mother Earth. She herself had spread a ragged piece of blanket for her son on the pathway, but the baby's body was growing strong, for it had rolled into the dust. She rushed towards it and caught it up" (98).

The coolie women are aware of their exploitation, but they cannot directly raise their voice against the Indian brokers and the white owners. However, the women express their disgust and protest silently:

That wicked son of a pimp is on the warpath to day,' said Chambeli, mingling the spark of her anger against the Sahib, her jealousy of Neogi's wife and her contempt for the Sardar with a false self righteousness and a falser sympathy for the miserable women near her. 'But does the illegal son of a shameless mother think that I don't know how much money and land he got by selling his wife? And she, the sluttish whore to thousand lovers, stands there quiet as a thief, that bitch who has become loaded with jewellery overnight when she hadn't a ring on her finger for years . . . (134)

One woman named Chambeli is conscious and courageous enough to denounce the activities of the owners at the plantation. She knows how the poor male workers send their wives and children to the home of white people, where the women are sexually.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud* women are projected as 'object' and 'others'. Yes, some there be who gives their wives away to the sahibs for money and then preen themselves on their power before us', 'said Chambeli brazenly, aloud so that Neogi and everyone might hear her. . . . Because, Sahib, none of our wives, sisters and mothers are safe', someone ventured from the back of the crowd (161); as Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" argues that subaltern female cannot be heard and read. Subaltern classes cannot represent themselves and in different types of mythical construction of society and culture, female are in subordination position. They are misrepresented. According to Spivak: "As long as the women [as wife: stri] does not burn herself in fire on the death of her husband, she is never released [Mucyate] from her female body [stri] i.e. in the cycle of birth" (299). Many writers with the help of myth here attempted to depict women as subaltern and they generalize that they cannot speak because of such reasons, writers can speak on its

own. Chambeli by shouting aloud shows her resist but after that also she has no way to get freedom. She thinks that final destination is only subordination for her.

The women coolies are compelled to work as rigorously as male coolies. The supervisors do not hesitate to punish women. The picture of a mother who is chased to the work spot even while she is feeding her child shows how inhuman the rulers are even towards the women.

The white compel the coolies to hand over their wives and daughters to them for the sake of fun and frolic and many a time to satisfy their sexual passion. The young officers like Hunt are always in search of young girls and women. Narain tells Gangu that Hunt stays with three women who are wives of the coolies. When Hunt comes to the work site he tries to exhibit his boasting personality on the women. “The coolie women shuffled like hens at the arrival of a much dreaded cock” (49).

Being the masters, they expect that their slaves should offer their wives and daughters to them willingly. Sometimes they bribe the poor husbands by ‘bakshish’ to win their wives. If they protest they use their guns to terrorize them. Hunt offers five acres of land to Niyogi for his wife whereas he lashes one of the coolies, for not giving up his wife to him. When they get fed up with them they throw them away in order to set the new ones. In urban areas the British behave like cunning imposters. But in the remote part like the valley of Assam they behave like wild animals. Here they are not afraid of the poor coolies because they know they will not raise their voice against them.

In the patriarchal society, women get no space to speak against the authority because the patriarchal norms are forcefully imposed over them. In such kinds of society, women are treated as second class people and their duty is to fulfill the male’s desire. In this connection Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" says “subaltern

women will be as mute as ever" (90). She further defines, in the history of male dominated authority, women are always treated as the commodity. In the same way, in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Sajani, Leila and others as subaltern women lives in the Tea estate without identity and have no courage in own and have to live in a shelter of others.

Spivak expresses her view regarding females' silence in her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" discusses about the history writing process of colonist where women are neglected she writes:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern project, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of sexual division of the labor, for both of which there is "evidences". It is rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (274)

In the novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* the females are in the shadow. They cannot speak for their rights. They have no means of expressing their rights. Apart from this multi dimensional exploitation, coolies are also victims of poverty and hunger. The peasants from various parts of the country join the tea estates as coolies in order to save themselves from the poverty and hunger. But both follow them there too like their shadows. Narain comes to the tea estate as victim of the famine. Three of his brothers and two sons die of hunger. Narain and his wife survive by eating the figs and leaves of trees. They escape from death and come to experience the hell even before the

death. Gangu also faces the same destiny. When he broods over his poverty he shows his faith in God's honest intentions He says:

I have always said it and I say it now again that though the earth is bought and sold and confiscated, God never meant that to happen, for he doesn't like some persons to have a comfortable living and others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men, and yet many die of hunger and most live under a heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if the earth were made for a few and not for all men. (257)

Deep in his heart, Gangu knows that he has no hope in the tea estates. He not only accepts his destiny but also becomes indifferent to it. "He felt he wanted no gold, no silver but only food and to exist" (261). Though his senses turn numb by the cruel fate, the sense of hunger stays perennially insistent. The meager wages, the penalty to be paid to the office and persistent demand of money from the moneylender frustrate him to such an extent that he says to Narain: "Yes brother, money is everything. It is the crux of the worldgold. Gold is the living source of man. Every absurdity appears agreeable in a man on whom gold has smiled, even though he looked like a dog and think like a donkey" (264).

Indrani Chatterjee in the *Colouring Subalternity: Slaves, Concubines and Social orphans in Early Colonial India*, Chatterje says:

Male gender society tends to use the women as for the sexual pleasure. Males have the strong desire to keep sexual intercourse with females. Bur they do not like to marry them. Claims of marries were the exception rather than the norms; later historiographical glosses turned co-habitational slaves into wives. (58)

She means to say that in the patriarchal societies females are used as the object of sexual pleasure. Females are just for male enjoyment. They are compelled to have sexual relations with males and after that they are left alone to be mother without father. The norms made by males do not work on the women's behalf except the exceptional case.

Anand also represents the realistic picture of physically exploited and molested women peasants. The two young girls Barbara and Leila are the symbol of unfulfilled hopes and broken spirits. The European bosses pester and exploit the coolie labourers. The evil atmosphere and 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. The women peasants are the worst sufferers as they are the victims of vicious--base appetites of wicked men. The women in the novel are 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 carnival 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 a gaze 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 up charge, 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)

Anand has narrated the heart stricken situation of poor Gangu who was too away from his native land with his young daughter Leila and son Buddha to suffer more on present work station. *Two leaves and a Bud* presents the picture of the European club-life along with the Indian hut-life, the exploitation of the bosses and the suffering of the coolies and the lust and ire of Reggie Hunt. Reggie exercises illegal power. This Angrezi sahib cast his lustful eyes on the young coolie women's half naked body---vaguely covered with tattered clothes. His indiscriminate amorous advances make women run away at his sight. The young coolie women in disgust keep themselves at arm's length from his filthy presence. Reggie's lustful gaze caught Leila one day and he was fascinated to see her youth. Anand has neatly projected Reggie's burning lust for Leila who tried to seduce her. Anand sketches Reggie's mind for her through these lines: "Slim young body defined by the narrow girth of her skirt and the fine stretch of her bodice, her whole demeanor like a bird that would flutter in the hands of the shikari" (121). Maddened by frustration, lusty Reggie asks her to come at his bungalow. Leila, a very young child, runs away innocently at the sight of Hunt. She was conscious to her youth and beauty protests against Reggie's lust. Reggie persuaded her madly. Leila, with great difficulty, escapes an attack on her chastity and slips into her hut. Reggie Hunt's cruel behaviour and lust for the young child can be seen clearly. He asks her to come out of her hut. But she refuses. Seeing this Buddha gets frightened and ran to call his father to rescue her. Lust-blind Reggie attempts rape on his daughter. Gangu tries to save Leila from his orgies but he is

indiscreetly fired and shot death at the point of Reggie's gun. Leila's escape in her hut results in the death of Gangu.

In this way, this thesis analyzes how Gangu's wife and Sajani suffer at the hands of white colonizers and how Leila attempts to resist it. The study has investigated the representation of gendered subaltern during the period of early twentieth century colonial Indian. *Two Leaves and a Bud* depicts the picture of the subaltern women. Women remained as the center of being victim of various oppressions. The subaltern women of the novel are taken as instruments by male colonizers and their Indian men who run after the rulers for petty interest as well. So, it is clear that females are not in such condition that they can think of raising their voices for the upliftment without the help of males.

### III. Peasant Women's Suffering in *Two Leaves and a Bud*

This study on Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* explores the misery and wretchedness of the poor labourers especially female characters and their struggle for a better life. It analyzes the text from the viewpoint of gendered subaltern theory developed by Spivak. In the novel, Gangu's family, Sajani and daughter Leila comes from the working class peasants, who work for meager wages. From the time of colonialism, these people have been kept as slaves and they cannot raise their voice for their rights.

In Asam Tea plantations, the female characters face multiple inhuman conditions as they are made to work overtime. The labourers lead a life of inhuman subjugation at the hands of tea-plantation owners, who are almost white males and few Indian male brokers. In the beginning, the poor and helpless people are tempted into working in the tea plantations by Buta, the coolie catcher, who tempts them with false promises. The tea estate is like a prison for the labourers, especially women, because they cannot escape a life of suffering inside the plantation. There, the situation is so oppressive that Gangu's wife Sajani and daughter Leila either are sexually exploited or are treated as low class slaves. Sajani dies as a result of dire health and sanitation situation and Leila is raped by the British colonizer, Reggie Hunt. These female characters are compelled to undergo such a horrible situation as they come from lower socio-economic strata in colonial period in rural Indian society. So, the female characters are exploited at the hands of the British colonizers who have usurped major Indian companies. In this way, this research explores the subjugation of women in the Macpherson Tea Estate of Assam.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the women are violently exposed to sexual assault by the lustful British colonizers, particularly Reggie Hunt. Any kind of resentment or protest by a woman or her husband is dealt with a heavy hand. The wife of Negi is a victim to the carnival desires of Reggie Hunt who is always on the lookout for quenching his lust by raping the wives and sisters of coolie workers. Leila escapes an attack on her chastity with great difficulty. But her escape in her hut results in the death of her father Gangu. Leila, a very young child, runs away innocently at the sight of Reggie Hunt as she is afraid of the white man. This justifies that the colonizers are insensitive and callous towards the coolie women especially who are sick, weak and helpless all the time at the places and have no sense of self respect and dignity. These women have suffered all this as they are employed by powerful male colonizers in the Tea Estate. As these characters come from poor working class peasantry during colonial time in India, they can be categorized into subaltern groups.

Gangu's wife and daughter are infected by disease and reach on the brink of death. So, it is the poor working coolie women who ultimately find themselves at the receiving end of suffering. Unfortunately, they are in no state of raising their voices against injustice in the Tea Estate although the daughter Leila protests the activities of the colonizers.

When they arrive at the new tea estate of Assam, Gangu and his wife and daughter are ill-treated by the estate managers and owners. They are looked at with lustful eyes. Even the young children are not spared. The novel paints the picture of utter appalling situation in the tea estate. To the sheer negligence of the owners, disease like cholera is spread in the estate and as a result hundreds of coolies die every year. The coolie women live in pathetic condition. The houses

are in filthy conditions as they do not have any sanitation facilities. Gangu's wife dies. The coolies face such a situation that they do not have any money to conduct the funeral of the dead. Later on, Gangu becomes victim of inhumanity as he is accused of spreading the disease in the estate by the owners. In this way, the agents of British rulers such as Manager Reggie Hunt consider the workers as helpless barbarians whom they can always exploit.

In this way, the study depicts heart rendering inhuman condition of the poor working class women under British colonial rule in India. Thus, this thesis studies the female characters from the viewpoint of subalternity and explores the causes making them silent, exploited and poor.

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