

THE PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS AND MULK RAJ ANAND

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ABSTRACT: In the works of Dickens and Anand, we get the picture of the various forms of exploitation of children throughout the world. Charles Dickens, the great Victorian novelist and Mulk Raj Anand, the well-known Indian novelist writing in English have been the subjects of numerous critical works as well as research papers and These are two writers who have, notwithstanding the wide gap that separates them both in time and space, very much in common, As men with almost similar outlooks and attitudes both in life and letters, they all for a study in juxtaposition. but surprisingly no serious attempt has been made to examine these two novelists in a comparative perspective and to study their novels as like exercises in fictional writing with a high degree of commitment to some common socio-political ideologies, What is most striking about these writers is that they are not only good story-tellers but also great humanists whose vision of life is basically moralistic and humanistic, The present study which has been made on the basis of some of the well-known principles of comparative literature seeks to throw fresh light on the various aspects of the genius of each writer, In other words, this is an earnest attempt to examine and evaluate the two great novelists in a mutually illuminating context and discover many new aspects of their works hitherto not brought to light.

KEYWORDS: Exploitation, Society, Children.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Art is a reflection of life. Art presents various shades of characters and events that one may come across in life. Literature, being a form of art portrays life. Throughout the ages, literature in its variegated form has spoken of several social, political, economic, physical and psychological issues. Issues related to exploitation in the aforesaid spheres have also found their place in literary works.

Exploitation refers to the act of treating people unfairly in order to benefit from their efforts or labor. It means utilization of another person or group for some own purposes. Exploitation of children thus refers to unfair treatment meted out to children for any benefit. Exploitation of children includes using children for servitude through physical labor or personal, sexual gratification. Children also suffer from psychological exploitation, when they have to pass through difficult phases either in school or at home. They even suffer from social exploitation through racial discrimination or gender bias. Children are even economically exploited when they are not paid their due wage for any work they are engaged in. For them, childhood is not in a bed of roses. Theirs is a world of bleak desire, endless torture and utter despair.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION

Psychological exploitation means exploitation by creating mental pressure on an individual by making him or her pass through severe psychic trauma and destroying their psychological ability. It involves destroying the creative faculty of the children. Their cognitive development takes place only through accumulation of facts and figures. Their individuality is subdued under the complex concepts imposed upon them. Their psyche finds no scope of development. Dickens' *Hard Times* gives a vivid description of psychological exploitation of children under the dominative predominance of Grad grind and Bounder by. They emphasize imparting only factual education. In

this system of education, fantasy and imagination have taken no place. Louisa and Thomas, children of Gradgrind and their classmates have to memorize only facts and figures. Thus Dickens aptly says that the education system aims at 'demolishing their innocents'. Thus, only mechanized education system aims at killing the creative ability of the innocent students by entangling them with complicated norms, rules and facts. Creativity is not welcomed by trainers or teachers. Thus a teacher should implant only facts and figures in the minds of the students:

"You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will be of any service to them. This is the ultimate principle on which I bring up my own children and this is the principle on which I bring up these children.

‘Stick to Facts, Sir!’"

She is threatened to be turned out of school unless she segregates herself from the Circus Troup. She is addressed as "girl number twenty" and is perfected that her name is Cecilia and not Sissy. When she fails to provide a factual description of a horse, she is castigated for her inability. The students are not allowed to get any freedom of speech or expression. When the children try to peep through the canvas of the circus to get relief from boredom, they are chided by him. Thus cognitive development takes place only through accumulation of facts without any space for aesthetic explorations.

Physical Exploitation

Physical exploitation involves severe physical torture, abuse or making one work for a terribly long period in an unhygienic conditions for any benefit by the employer. Physical exploitation leads to serious physical disorder in the victim. Children often suffer from physical exploitation. Child laborers, either in factories or in domestic servitude, have to work for long times. They have to carry out heavy workloads that involves immense strenuous effort. This may results in physical disorders in their physique.

Dickens' David Copperfield discusses the evil effects of Industrialization that created a demand of laborers—even the children's were found to work in factories. In this novel, David, the protagonist is to work in a warehouse of a factory in the suffocating environment. In Coolie by Mulk Raj Anand, the protagonist Munoo is beaten whenever he is engaged in work. He receives physical torture throughout his life. He is ill-fed and taken to task by his first employer Babu Nathu Ram. He is insulted and humiliated and treated as untouchable. He is beaten for minimal faults. Even at Shimla, working at Mrs. Mainwaring's place, he had to undertake backbreaking labor by pulling the rickshaw. He enjoys pulling the rickshaw. He enjoys pulling the rickshaw for her while she goes for shopping from one shop to another. He gets infected with tuberculosis, yet he moves on, being enchanted by her passionate moves towards him. His excessive physical strain ends his life.

In The Untouchable, Bakha has to suffer physical torture at the hands of the high caste people. Cigarettes are thrown at him like one throws a bone to a dog. Jalebis are hurled at him like one throws wastes at a pig. He, along with other untouchables, is forced to live in foulness and dimness, restrained to a single- room cottage, without proper drainage system.

Social Exploitation

Social exploitation of children defines the exploitation of children in society. Society refers to a congregation of people living together in a more or less ordered community. They share the same ecological area and live in an interactive association with one another. It includes people of various occupations, religion and culture. It also includes any place or persons where people interact with one another. People suffer social exploitation when they don't get equal treatment and are subjected to specious discrimination aimed at segregating them from a particular group or ousting them from any institution. Society impinges callous attack on some people on the basis of caste, creed, religion or gender. Social exploitation refers to taking gratuitous advantage of one's social position and thereby concerning him, grudging him of various civic opportunities.

Discrimination on the basis of economic status or by their profession has been ubiquitous since ancient times. When an individual or a group of individuals are not allowed to participate in any social function, or celebrate their own festivals with due respect, thwarted if they want to go to any temple or place for worship, wells or market places by any trustworthy body or person, denied access to education or any respectable vocation, abused for carrying on any so-called scandalous occupation, molested or ill-treated in society, then it can be said that the concerned individual or group is suffering from social exploitation. People enjoy themselves making use of their wretched condition. Even Children, along with men and women suffered from social exploitation. This section of the article deals with social exploitation of children.

Children manipulative situations in social set ups like school, neighborhood and religious places and social gathering. We come across such reprehensible circumstances faced by the protagonists of Charles Dickens in British English literature and Mulk Raj Anand in Indian English literature.

Dicken's present the exploitation of children in school by the headmaster and teachers in David Copperfield at Salem House School. David's step-father, Mr. Murdstone separates David from his mother and sends him to a boarding school in London only to get rid of him. Mr. Creakle was a pitiless headmaster, who derived pleasure from beating the boys. David was sent with a placard by Mr. Murdstone 'beware of him because he bites'. This makes David's position in the school is more vulnerable. Mr. Murdstone, out of his egocentric complex attempts to take revenge on him. He sends him to school when other boys have left for vacation only to get him tortured by Mr. Creakle. After the death of his mother, David was all the more deserted by Mr. Murdstone.

In the Oliver Twist novel Oliver is a story of an orphan child. He is the hero of the novel. It is a journey of orphan and outcast child. Oliver Twist is basically about the exploitation of a child. Oliver is born in a dark workhouse about seventy five miles north of London. His mother's name is not known. She died almost immediately after giving birth to the child leaving behind a locket and a ring as the only tokens of the child's identity. Nobody knows who she was, but the doctor notices that she wasn't wearing a wedding ring. The infant's father is unknown. On her deathbed, Oliver's mother prays:

"God will raise up some friend's %r her abandoned child."(P.150)

Oliver's mother's prayer enacts God's mercy in providing friends for the orphan. The Maylie, is the old lady who feeds him when he is half-dead on the road to London. Writer says:

"She took pity for the poor orphan, and gave him what little she could afford — and more — with such kind and gentle works, and such tears of sympathy and compassion, that they sank deeper into Oliver's soul, than all the sufferings he had ever undergone" (P.46)

The orphan is brought up at a "child farm" in the country until he is about eight years old. Dickens draws the attention of the readers towards the problems of orphan and outcast. Oliver's treatment in the parish is truly criminal. The novel emphasizes the need for kindness and compassion, especially in our treatment of children. Dickens illustrates the ,orphaned, working class children in Victorian England. Dickens addressed the children not by their given names, but rather akin to their employment or socio-economic status. Unnamed by his mother, Oliver is named by Mr. Bumble, the parish Beadle. Mr. Bumble explains:

'Oliver' means peace. Dickens has shown the social ranks by clothes of the orphan children. Dickens has suggested that only clothes can differ the ranks and positions of the people. He describes Oliver as being an "excellent example of the power of dress." When Oliver was wrapped in a blanket, he was nameless and could have been the child of a nobleman.

Oliver became a pauper. Oliver is raised under the care of Mr. Mann and Mr. Bumble in the workhouse. They are very corrupted. They decide it's time for Oliver to start working and they send back to workhouse. Child welfare system in the workhouse was compt. The boards of educators are called wise people. Thus Dickens depicted individual and institutional follies in the Victorian era. Oliver spends his first nine years in a workhouse. On his ninth birthday, he is described as being:

"A pale, thin child, somewhat dimintiti!e in stature and steadily small in circitimlerece? (P.49)

Charles Dickens attacks on the Victorian period where poverty, starvation and diseases and death were the main problems of the society. The death rate was high as food was out of rich for the poor.

The Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand pictures social exploitation through the lives of Bakha and his sister, Sohini, children of a scavenger. Bakha, almost a youth in his teens and he is treated condescendingly for being a scavenger. Being a sweeper, he is treated as an untouchable. He is forced to live in a colony of outcastes. His life is subjected to utter misery imposed on him on the basis of his social stratum. He has to abide the abuses from the villagers like Havaladar Charat Singh:

"Do you know you are responsible for my piles? I caught the contagion sitting on one of those unclean latrines!"

People hold him responsible for their physical problems. As they were considered outcastes, they were denied access to civic amenities like wells and places of worships. The outcastes were not allowed to escalate the platform surrounding of the well. If they did, the water would be considered as polluted one. Even though who held a considerably higher position among the lower castes used to heave abuses at those who were lowest of the lower castes. Gulabo abuses Sohini as 'prostitute' and 'illegally begotten'.

They were destitute of education because ‘schools were meant for the babus, not for the lowery sweepers.’(30). They were not allowed to take part in sports either, lest their touch would “defile” the high caste students through the trainers. People walking along the road would consider their standing on the road as impure and thus make contemptible comments:

“Keep to the side of the road, you low caste vermin! ...Do you know you have touched me and defiled me? ... Now I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself.”

Bakha has to shout his arrival near market places and temples to avoid coming in close propinquity of high caste people:

‘Posh, posh, sweeper coming.’

On another occasion, when Bakha gets too deeply moved by the rhythmic chanting during the prayer, his ‘hands joined unconsciously, and his head hung in the worship of the unknown god.’. At once someone cries out “Polluted, polluted, polluted.”. Bakha is forced to get down from the steps of the temple with so called pure priests hurling abuses at him:

“Get off the steps, you scavenger! Off with you!

You have defiled our whole service.

You have defiled our temple!

Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony.

get down, get away you dog!”

The term “our temple” suggests the temple is open to only people of higher castes. The worshippers shout at Bakha’s ‘impertinence’ of standing on the steps of the temple. When Bakha goes to a local gathering of people having come to attend Gandhiji’s lecture, he is conscious of not touching any person belonging to the higher caste.

Another novel, *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand presents a heart-rendering picture of Munoo, the protagonist’s, suffering from physical, social and psychological exploitation. Munoo, an orphan of fourteen years old is sent to work as a domestic helper of Babu, working as a peon in the bank. He has to serve food and given stale pancake to eat. He spends lot of sleepless nights. He had to defecate near the wall outside the house and has to face the wrath of the Babu and also by his younger brother. Munoo suffers from ill-treatment by his mistress. He is called a ‘good for nothing pig’.

She even asks him not to look at her working because she will get tarnished. He is rebuked for joining the amusement of his superiors and he is proscribed from joining the sports of the Chota Babu and the children because his place is in the kitchen and have to perform domestic chores. He has to spend a wretched life in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram, tolerating an assortment of curses, off and on. Anand here draws a vivid picture of harsh reality. Even Nathoo Ram’s daughter pushes him treating him just as a servant. He is made to work very hard throughout the day and by beaten for the least blunder. Munoo longed for love and compassion. When Munoo is unable to carry a tea-tray and the cups get devastated, he is slapped. When he returns to his uncle and complains of his ill-treatment in Nathoo Ram’s house, he is thrashed ruthlessly by his ownuncle. Munoo then escapes to Daulatpur and starts working in a pickle factory. There again he has to suffer mean deringsupremacy of Ganpat. Munoo realizes from Sauda’s speech that there are only two kinds of people in the world; there are the rich and the poor, and between these two there is no connection.

Munoo’s narrative of suffering enters into another episode when Mrs. Mainwaring takes him to Shimla as a servant where Munoo suffers from “a deep rooted feeling of inferiority to the superior people”.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse for the children and the youth through their exchanges of sex or sexual acts for drugs, food, shelter, protection and money. It involves taking undue advantage of children with economic, social or familial volatility. Downtrodden children’s are often found to work in the public places to earn for their livelihood. These children’s are obliged to serve others for skimpy amount of money to support their families. Their childhood lingers in the dark world of inhuman and perturbing employers. Childhood seems to be lost in a melancholy of poverty and insecurity, where the least ray of hope for refuge draws them into the labyrinth of hypocrisy. They get intertwined in horrible circumstances that agitate them or at least blotch them sexually. Both in British as well as in Indian English literature.

In Anand's *The Untouchable*, Bakha's sister Sohini is given contemptible suggestions when she is engaged in cleaning the lavatory of the priest's house. Sohini tells her brother:

"That man, that man, ... that man... made suggestions to me."

When she screams in protest, he comes out by shouting that he has been tarnished. Anand here presents the remorseful state of the downtrodden scavengers who not only have to suffer molestation at the hands of the higher caste people are also abused. The hypocrisy of the so-called high-station inmates of the society is attacked here. The priest molests her while at work taking full advantage of her social wavering and economic liquidation to satisfy his covetousness. Such sexual abuses make them and their dear ones lose faith in her life as a whole and they mourn their birth. Bakha says:

"So beautiful and so accursed! ... Oh God! Why was she born, why was she born?"(57)

In *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand, the end of Munoo's perpetual journey of anguish and servitude in the house of Mrs. Mainwaring focuses on his attending towards his mistress. Attracted by Munoo's physique while at work, Mrs. Mainwaring asked him to wash his hands and come to her so that she could file his nails. She manicures him with a wild excitement in her eyes. Her coquettish movements and passionate is enough to arouse his passion. Munoo acts as her permanent rickshaw puller. He also has to fulfill her sexual urge. It is quite evident from his comprehensive looks which makes a coolie suggest him to leave the lady's service. Here Anand provides an repercussion of Munoo's compulsion of attending on her and also driving her rickshaw. His physical labor along with an illegitimate affair with his mistress makes him to meet a premature death.

Emotional Exploitation

Emotional exploitation defines attacking one's own emotions and feelings with the harsh criticism, disparagement, mortifying and crushing an individual. It also includes teasing a child's mental capabilities, refusing love and affection, shunning him or her from their family, punishing them or confining them to a claustrophobic set up at home or at the school. Children are significantly affected by emotional exploitation. They are made to give up their emotions and feelings in an acquisitive world. The spontaneous eruption of their emotions they don't find any way out and are thus concealed under a maze of restrictions imposed on them by the society or by the school. They are all turned into heartless machines by automated system of schooling and nurture. This destruction of emotions depicted in Dickens' novels in *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield*.

Children may also be affected by emotionally through the ignorance of adults regarding their physical, emotional or social needs, refusal of acknowledgement of child's interest and activities, frightening through excessive teasing, scaring, verbal threats, isolating a child from family and peers, not permitting them to play, give the extreme punishment, corrupting or having awkward expectations from the child. These disturbing situations faced by the children have been portrayed in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand's- *The Untouchable* and *Coolie*.

Thus, both in European as well as in Indian contexts, emotional exploitation torments children. This part of the article deals with the emotional exploitation as highlighted in the novels of Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand. In *Hard Times* by Dickens Louisa, the daughter of Mr. Gradgrind is married to Bounderby only for utilitarian purposes--strengthening the relationship between Gradgrind and Bounderby. She is not allowed to make friends with anyone. Even her rearing is done only on the basis of facts. She doesn't have an opportunity for amusing herself and her brother as a child:

"I can't play to you, or sing to you, I can't talk to you so as to lighten your mind, for I never see any amusing sights or read any amusing books that it would be a pleasure or a relief to you to talk about, when you are tired."(45)

Tom replies: "It's very unfortunate for both of us"(45) He wishes to blast off all facts:

"I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them (facts) and blow them all up together."(46)

Later, when she grows up, her father gives her the proposal of getting married to Bounderby. She marries him without any adoration or emotion within him. She accepts the proposal only to convince her father's interest. Her father is happy to have prepared her as an emotionless unflustered individual:

"I have confidence in your good sense. You are not impulsive, you are not romantic, and you are accustomed to view everything

from the dispassionate ground of reason and calculation."(86)

Louisa later laments of not having the scope of nurturing her emotions:

"What do I know father...of tastes and fancies, of aspirations and affections;
.You have been so careful of me, that I never had a child's heart."(90-91)

She also adds that as a child she has never "dreamed a child's dream, never had a child's belief or a child's fear."(91)

When Grad grind wants to know I Louisa has been offered any other proposal for marriage,
she replies:

"Father, what other proposal can have been made to me? Whom have I seen? Where have I been? What are my heart's experiences?"(90)

Grad grind's inculcation of facts subduing all emotions in his son, makes him indisciplined and he commits robbery. This shows too much self-possession is vicious. The famished imagination of the children dispossesses them of the glories of childhood.

In Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Coolie*, we find the childhood impulsiveness of Munoo is destroyed under inhuman masters when he is sent to work in the town by her uncle to earn something for the family. There he is treated like a dog. He is prohibited from any amusement. He is not permitted to play with his master's children, not even allowed to laugh at any hilarious matter. Later when he goes to work for Mrs. Mainwaring, the lady's bewitching sexual approach creates havoc in his youthful heart only to be shattered by the lady's whims.

And also in the Mulk Raj Anand novel, *The lost child*, the protagonist, a young boy is also there accompanied by his parents. He wanders about the pleasantries on offer and is particularly interested in the toys sitting beautifully in the fair stalls and shops. He yearns to play with them but his desire is dismissed by his father. His mother offers a warm and tender reply and asks him to look at the beautiful setting instead. The little boy's innocence is reflected by the fact that on watching such beauty he forgets the pain of his dashed hopes of a toy. The child, unaware of their whereabouts, loses his way this time and reached the fair instead.

In his fearful astonishment, he runs all over hunting for his parents. Tears trickle down his face, his turban is undone and his clothes are drenched in dust and sweat. His desperate attempts to relocate his parents find no sympathy in a crowd of strangers which is consumed in self-indulgence, frolics, and merry making. He gets tired, rests and dries his tears only to start running again. He keeps yelling for his mother and father, in the hope that they may hear his mournful cries.

He reaches a temple but the huge crowd at the door knocks him off of his feet. Lying on the ground he is almost trampled over by the crowd of devotees when someone helps him to his feet. The man is sympathetic to the boy's plight and enquires about his situation and family. The child is overcome with grief and emotions and cannot stop wailing. The only words he can muster are that explain his desire for his parents.

At last, he offers him some sweetmeats including the burfi. But even this noble attempt failed to soothe the hurt of the lost child. The child continued sobbing writhing in anguish and screaming for a glimpse and reunion with his mother and father.

The child relishes the fluttering of the winged creatures like butterflies and is overjoyed to see the delightful beauty of flower petals. The child's mind does not burden itself with the irrecoverable past or the unachievable future.

The author has touched the courage that the theme of child exhibits. Even after realizing the harsh reality of being lost, he remembers to do the right thing and look for his parents. He is also well aware of the natural bond and instinct of parents and their children and is immune to the allures of fleeting pleasures in sweetmeats or joyrides offered by the kind man.

III.CONCLUSION

The child characters, their qualities roles, social and religious dimensions have been the focal point of discussion in the chapter. In the novels of Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand are reflection of 'childhood. The authors himself had to undergo humiliating treatment by the capitalistic forces during the industrial revolution in Great Britain. The miseries of childhood are vividly described by Charles Dickens' in his own unique style. He has also portrayed poverty, poor slum conditions, and economic problems in a realistic way. Especially, the suffering of the innocent children is the focal point in all the above mentioned novels. The chapter thus is a great contribution to the body of knowledge in English literature. And in the views of Mulk Raj Anand that the children suffers from the various forms exploitation in various places. Their exploitation ranges from physical and sexual to

psychological, social and emotional. They are exploited by the employers in their respective workplace, by parents at home and by people where they interact with in their society. In most cases, life does not give them any choice but to surrender, either in compulsion or to avoid any unwanted incongruity. This rejection leads them to be imperfect by their mentality, premature death, emotional vacuum and mental aloofness with others. But they are to be retrieved from the process of loss to avoid erosion of sweet emotions, disappearance of innocent smiles, and destruction of dreams.

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