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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MULK RAJ ANAND AND CHETAN BHAGAT'S SELECT NOVELS:

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ABSTRACT :
A comparative study of Mulk Raj Anand and Chetan Bhagat's select novels, namely Coolie, Untouchable, The Leaves and the Bud, Half Girlfriend, One Indian Girl, Two States, and Five Point Someone, has been undertaken. This selection is based on the fact that these two authors, when compared, represent different eras of Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand, a pre-independence writer, portrayed the social conditions of that time, including the prevalent caste system, racial discrimination, and social hierarchy. On the other hand, Chetan Bhagat is a contemporary writer who depicts the current social issues and problems faced by Indian society. This article is based on the analysis of their novels, focusing on understanding Indian society, social commentary, literary analysis, comparative analysis, social realism, portrayal of marginalized communities, women's empowerment and identity, social hierarchy, and class structure. Technical terms and definitions are explained, and the importance of solving social problems is discussed. The article concludes by highlighting the key takeaways, understanding the problems, and presenting the results.

KEYWORDS:
Comparative analysis, literary analysis, portrayal of marginalized communities, social commentary, social hierarchy, social realism, women's empowerment

INTRODUCTION:

This article compares the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, a well-known pre-independence writer, and Chetan Bhagat, a modern author who writes about present-day concerns. It examines how each writer presents different aspects of Indian life through their characters and storytelling. Looking at their works together shows how their writing differs in focus, themes, and style. Anand mainly portrays realistic social conditions of his period, whereas Bhagat focuses on concerns and experiences associated with contemporary India. Their works explore topics such as identity, relationships, social change, and the experiences of people from different sections of society, along with differences in how their stories are told. Mulk Raj Anand writes about the conditions, traditions, and inequalities of pre-independence India. In contrast, Chetan Bhagat focuses on modern lifestyles, personal choices, and the thinking patterns of today's generation. Although both authors address caste, class, and gender, their treatment of these subjects reflects the distinct contexts in which they write.

Another important element in their writing is how they present women's experiences. Anand shows the challenges faced by women in a more traditional setting, while Bhagat writes about the struggles and choices of women in contemporary society in a direct and easy-to-follow manner. Their works also bring out differences in social status and gender expectations.Their writing styles and storytelling methods reflect

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their individual approaches to literature. Through their narratives, they draw attention to social concerns and encourage readers to think about possible responses to these issues.

Anand's novels such as Untouchable and Coolie focus on the lives and hardships of people from oppressed communities. Bhagat's books like Five Point Someone, One Indian Girl, and Half Girlfriend deal with issues such as academic stress, social divisions, and changing relationships in modern India. In conclusion, studying these two writers together helps in understanding how Indian society has changed over time and how different authors respond to these changes through their work.

LITERARY REVIEW:

Comparing the writings of Mulk Raj Anand and Chetan Bhagat requires an understanding of the different social, historical, and cultural environments in which they produced their works. The writings of both authors are closely connected to the social conditions of their respective periods and reflect real-life experiences. Their stories examine the challenges and concerns faced by people in the societies they portray. Through his novels, Mulk Raj Anand presented a realistic picture of life during the colonial period and highlighted the difficulties experienced by disadvantaged communities. Works like *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* demonstrate Anand's concern for disadvantaged communities and his skill in portraying their experiences. These novels discuss issues such as caste divisions, labour exploitation, unequal treatment of women, and traditional social practices. His continued emphasis on social change has played an important role in shaping Indian English literature.

The experiences of Bakha reveal how caste-based discrimination affects the dignity and daily life of marginalized individuals. Its realistic portrayal encourages readers to understand the hardships faced by socially excluded groups. Through Munoo's experiences, the novel presents the harsh realities of poverty and labour exploitation. Anand sought to encourage readers to reflect on social inequalities and discriminatory practices. Although some critics argue that his outsider status limited his portrayal of untouchability, the enduring relevance of Untouchable and Coolie proves their literary and social value even today.

Chetan Bhagat, a contemporary writer active since the early 2000s, addresses the concerns of modern India. His novels explore mental health pressures, class differences, changing gender roles, and the aspirations of a globalized society. Books like One Indian Girl, Half Girlfriend, 2 States, and Five Point Someone are written in an accessible, cinematic style that appeals to today's readers and encourages reading habits in a digital age.

One Indian Girl captures the career dilemmas faced by modern women, while Half Girlfriend highlights class divides and evolving relationship dynamics. Five Point Someone reflects the academic stress and societal pressure on students aiming for elite institutions like IITs and IIMs. Bhagat's strength lies in mirroring current lifestyles and thought patterns in a relatable manner.

Anand's fiction provides insight into colonial Indian society, whereas Bhagat's novels reflect the experiences and attitudes of contemporary urban India. Comparing the two is difficult because they belong to vastly different contexts, but such a comparison is valuable. Anand's writing shows us the kind of social change society must pursue, while Bhagat's work reflects the personal and psychological challenges of modern life. Together, their novels offer both a historical lesson on what society should not be and a contemporary guide on how individuals navigate today's world.

CHARACTERIZATION AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATION:

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Mulk Raj Anand's novels Untouchable, Coolie, and Two Leaves and a Bud vividly portray caste discrimination, class disparity, and the exploitation of the poor through realistic, non-imaginary characters that deeply engage readers.

In Untouchable, Anand depicts Bakha, an 18-year-old sweeper, whose daily life reflects the humiliation of caste hierarchy. Bakha believes that adopting the habits and appearance of British soldiers may help him gain respect and confidence. Yet his father constantly scolds him for being lazy. His sister, Sohini, represents the plight of Dalit women in pre-independence India. Through the character of Kali Nath, a priest who exploits her, Anand exposes how upper-caste men manipulated untouchability for personal gain. The story is structured within a limited time frame, making Bakha's experiences more immediate and impactful. Anand also acknowledges humanity among the privileged through characters like Colonel Hutchinson and Iqbal Nath. Bakha's reaction to Gandhi's ideas reflects the novel's interest in social awareness and change.Overall, the novel draws attention to discriminatory social practices and their impact on individuals.

Similarly, Coolie presents the tragic life of Munoo, a poor boy whose suffering symbolizes the condition of India's oppressed classes. His cry, "I need food, I need work," evokes the reader's empathy and reflects the desperation of the era. Through characters like Sukhi and her husband, who struggle with poverty, and Gopal, who wanders aimlessly due to unemployment, Anand portrays economic helplessness. The exploitative nature of the rich is embodied in Seth. Anand also revisits the theme of gender discrimination through another character named Sohini, illustrating how women were doubly marginalized. The novel underscores family bonds, self-respect, and the cruelty of the social system.

In Two Leaves and a Bud, Anand shifts focus to the exploitation of tea plantation workers under colonial rule. Through characters like Gangu, Karvu, and Badrinath, he reveals how middlemen and wealthy planters deceive and oppress laborers. The novel exposes colonial exploitation, dual oppression, and the dehumanization of workers, while still asserting human resilience.

In contrast, Chetan Bhagat's novels address contemporary social issues through urban, middle-class characters. In One Indian Girl, Radhika Mehta is a successful IIT-IIM graduate and banker who faces gender bias despite her achievements. Comparing Sohini in Anand's works with Radhika reveals how women's struggles have shifted from caste-based sexual exploitation to modern workplace discrimination and societal expectations, reflecting changed yet persistent inequalities.

Half Girlfriend explores the divide between rural poverty and urban privilege through Madhav and Riya. While Anand depicted stark class conflict and economic exploitation, Bhagat presents class difference through cultural gaps, language barriers, and relationship dynamics, making it relatable to modern readers.

In Five Point Someone, Bhagat critiques the education system and parental pressure. He highlights how parents prioritize academic performance over a child's genuine talent, a theme that resonates with today's youth.

2 States: The Story of My Marriage_ indirectly addresses caste and overtly discusses regional prejudice. Through the marriage of a Punjabi boy and a Tamil girl, Bhagat portrays differences in customs, traditions, and familial expectations, showing how cultural divides persist in modern India.

Anand created characters to expose pre-independence realities of caste, poverty, and colonial exploitation, aiming for social reform. Bhagat creates characters to reflect post-liberalization India's concerns – career stress, gender roles, class mobility, and regional identity – aiming for relatability and mass appeal. Both use characterization as a mirror to their respective societies, but their purposes diverge: Anand seeks to awaken social conscience, while Bhagat seeks to narrate contemporary aspiration and anxiety.

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METHODOLOGY:

The research uses thematic analysis to identify and compare major ideas and social concerns found in the selected novels. This approach research method explores social, political, and economic disparities, caste systems, and individual thought processes in their works, set against their contemporary societies. By identifying, coding, and interpreting themes, thematic analysis facilitates a nuanced understanding of how these reflect the authors' perspectives, styles, and historical contexts, making it an ideal choice for this study.

FINDINGS:

The study reveals that issues related to caste, class, and gender continue to influence Indian society across different historical periods. Anand's writings, characterized by their lyrical and poetic style, expose the social evils and caste system of his time, while Bhagat's straightforward and conversational approach addresses contemporary issues faced by youth. Despite their differing styles, both authors share a common goal of highlighting social injustices and promoting change, with Anand focusing on the struggles of the marginalized and Bhagat tackling modern-day challenges. Their works serve as a reflection of their respective eras, offering valuable insights into the social realities of their times.

If we creatively reflect on the renowned novels of Mulk Raj Anand, it becomes clear how deeply the caste system was entrenched in society at that time. The characters he portrayed vividly reveal to readers the social evils of that era. He chose only lifelike characters, and the roles they played were not imaginary. Whether good or bad, his commendable style presented them exactly as they were. His sentences sharpen our thinking and his words strike the heart in a way few other writers achieve. Similarly, looking at Chetan Bhagat's novels, their uniqueness lies in selecting characters that remain relevant even in the 21st century and using them to highlight current social issues. These qualities truly win readers' hearts. Comparing the works of these two great writers shows that, despite generations and centuries passing, gender inequality has not disappeared. The problems women face have only changed form but have not been fully eradicated. Likewise, the disparities between the rich and poor have not diminished; they have merely taken on new appearances. Although this comparison is complex, examining Mulk Raj Anand's and Chetan Bhagat's novels helps uncover the deeper truth that lies at the root of these enduring social issues.

CONCLUSION:

Anand's novels provide insight into the realities of colonial India, while Bhagat's works reflect the concerns of contemporary society. His novels, such as 'Untouchable' and 'Coolie', highlighted issues like casteism, poverty, and social inequality, giving voice to the marginalized. Anand's writing style, marked by realism and empathy, continues to resonate with readers.

In contrast, Chetan Bhagat's novels, like 'Half Girlfriend' and '2 States', focus on contemporary issues like economic disparity, cultural differences, and the pressures of modern life. Bhagat's writing style is simple, relatable, and engaging, making him a popular choice among readers.

The works of both writers enrich Indian English literature by presenting different aspects of Indian society and culture. While Anand's works are considered classics, Bhagat's novels are widely read and appreciated for their relevance to modern Indian society.

In conclusion, Mulk Raj Anand and Chetan Bhagat are two distinct voices in Indian English literature, each offering unique perspectives on the country's social, economic, and cultural landscape.

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