Preface

The research is undertaken to study and explore the concept- ‘Childhood’. The term childhood is not defined in particular words. Developmentally and biologically it refers to the period between infancy and adulthood. Generally it is said that it starts at the time of birth. This concept has so many aspects which is refereed as the ‘the Images of Childhood’ that are noticed in the works of Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand. Though both the novelists belong to different countries and cultures; they have successfully delineated the images of children like: They are innocent, imitative, curious, emotional, stoical, honest, naughty and unaware of the future events. To point out social evils of their time, both the novelists have chosen child protagonists as sufferers at the hands of society. Society is villain for these two novelists. Villainous attitude of society is presented through the eyes of the children. That’s why social problems like child labor, untouchability, inclusion of children in the criminal world and disadvantages of Industrial revolution on children’s lives becomes more poignant in the eyes of the readers.

Many writers have written on the concept of childhood. The reading of these novelists motivated me to think over this concept. Then I found some similar elements in the novels of these two writers that made me study the social milieu of these novelists and how this social milieu affects the lives of children. Besides, I wanted to study if the exploitation of the children prevalent in their time is the same today. To give voice to the exploitation of children by social forces, these two writers have employed various literary techniques like selection of children as central characters; they are made to represent a social problem/s, stream of consciousness technique/child psychology, picaresque technique and poetic justice. It is clear that they want to bring about social stability in the lives of children in particular and social transformation in general. To the world they have projected themselves as social reformers in their respective nation and its culture. Both the novelists share much similarity in their writing. Both Mulk Raj
Anand and Charles Dickens have succeeded in delineating the child- mind- the most difficult thing to attempt at. It has been suggested that there are possibilities for depicting romance or pathos in child life but a few have succeeded so far in making a child as the centre of action or to make it reveal individual traits. Both Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand have given their characters maximum freedom to express themselves so as to make the images of children convincing. They might not have had the purpose of delineating the images of children but came out it naturally. Images of children are delineated in such a way that readers can understand at the same time both the social milieu of the two writers and its contemporary relevance. Here in this research total five works of both the novelists have been selected. Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield* and Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* and *Coolie* have been selected for the research.

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