

# The unfathomable depths of corruption in annawadi



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, Boo employs the themes of corrupt law enforcement and false hope to signify that Annawadians are doomed to escape their lot in life due to the 'uneven' land on which their entire community lies. These themes are the 'uneven land' on which the Annawadians will never be able to escape from and are forever chained under tenuous change and improvement. As a result of this 'uneven' land, the Annawadians are restricted to a life of impoverishment, neglect and primitive survival.

The most momentous of themes that Boo uses to convey as a part of 'uneven' land is corruption. Corruption is by far the number one cause of this 'uneven' land in the fact that it seeps through every part of Annawadi's society. From corrupt political leaders to corrupt charity organizations, this is only scratching the surface. A great example of this corruption negatively affecting the residents of Annawadians would be the law enforcement. The police force of Annawadi is a strong instigator of the 'uneven' land. Annawadians are standing on since for the police, everything can be resolved as long as money is involved. While Abdul and Karam were incarcerated, the police officers constantly manipulated both of them to cough up money so they would not end up with criminal charges and receive beatings. "Beatings, though outlawed in the human rights code, were practical, as they increased the price that detainees would pay for their release." (107). Primarily, the police officers can increase their profits by beating the prisoners which result in the prisoners going bankrupt after leaving the prison while the police officers are reveling in their new coerced cash. This is not morally right since police officers are supposed to protect

people, keep people safe, while in Annawadi, it's the complete opposite; the police in Annawadi are 'killing' people both literally and financially. This all points back to the 'uneven' land that Annawadi is sitting on. By letting this kind of law enforcement thrive in a slum-like Annawadi, there will only be chaos and trouble. Hence, the ground will never be 'even.' With police officers invariably looking for ways to drain the pocketbooks of residents, Annawadians will never have enough even to get by, always living on the very edge between life and death.

The most corrupt of all is the false hope that is promised to Annawadians by the government officials in which the residents of Annawadi are assured better housing, more job opportunities, and education. The Annawadians are optimistic that their lives will improve, but this is all just a guise as once again, the 'uneven' land restricts them from doing so. This false hope encompasses events such as the fictitious fundraiser facilitated by Asha; the money that Asha receives is supposed to help children obtain the proper education, but instead, the money is distributed among various 'other people' who are supposedly helping out with the schools, leaving Asha some of the money for herself. Virtually, none of the donations are used to improve education, but all of it is used for self-interest. "Working with community development officials across the city, he found frontmen to receive government funds in the name of educating children. Then he and his colluders would divvy up the spoils."(227) This is the kind of false hope the authorities of Annawadi are campaigning towards. On the surface, the goal and purpose of bettering Annawadi may support a good cause, but on the underside, everything is linked to the ulterior motive of maximizing profits. If

everything in Annawadi's society operates this way, there is no opportunity for the slum to advance. Money will never reach the people that need it most; consequently, people will never be able to experience a better lifestyle, always made to think that what the officials of Annawadi are doing is for the benefit of the residents, but in reality, it's all an illusion in which the advantage is really for the government officials. This false hope contributes to the 'uneven' land Annawadians live on by displaying a facade which always leads back to the Annawadians' expectations and dreams being crushed by misleading promises.

Through the themes of corrupt law enforcement and false hope, Annawadians are doomed to escape their lot in life due to the 'uneven' land on which their entire community lies. The portrayal of corrupt law enforcement reinforces the concept that justice is based on who can pay the most and who is willing to succumb to police manipulation. While the portrayal of false hope serves to convey the insurmountable delusion that conditions in Annawadi will improve. Throughout the entire story, these two themes are sprinkled everywhere justifying the never advancing society of Annawadi and the 'uneven' land that its residents will forever be barred to.