



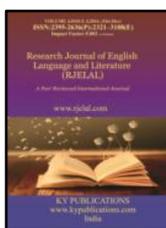
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STUDY OF WEAKER SECTION IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *COOLIE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the social reactions and the cross section of India between the weaker section and the elite's section of the society perfectly portrayed in his novel *coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand. He writes about the suppression, oppression, exploitation and humiliation of the people who face social economical, political and cultural exclusion. Mulk Raj Anand dramatizes the tragic life of the marginalised class in his novel through the character Munoo.

The frightening picture of the downtrodden Munoo represents the margin where as on the other hand the capitalist and the evil forces stand for the centre. The novel dramatizes with the vivid clarity the economic exploitation of the poor by the rich in which Munoo is a stark symbol of exploitation. *Coolie* proves witnesses the huge space between the poor and the rich in the society, and the failure to bridge the gap between these two classes.

Key words: Oppression, Humiliation, Suppression, Exploitation, Down trodden.

Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the Indian English fiction writer along with R.K. Narayan, Ahamed Ali, Raja Rao, was one of the first India- based writers in English. Anand is the one of the famous critic writer in Indian English fiction. Anand is not only a novelist and he is also a short story writer and art critic writing in English. Anand was among those who gave Hindustani idioms to English. In his work he arise our pity among the poor peoples of India by showing a real- life representation of the people. Anand is the first Indian novelist in English who portrayed the real troubled life of suppressed Indians. In this novels, he clearly point out the readers living conditions of people like a sweeper, a coolie, a peasant etc who suffered exploitation condition of poverty and bad actions. In his work Anand includes the lives of unlucky ones in his works. His great sympathy and intensity of narration

produced exceptional vigour in his novels as in the novels of Marxism Gorki.

Through his profuse literary output his writings Anand emerged as voice of the voiceless and the marginalized. Characters that marginalized by caste or class people his major novels. The untouchable sweepers, downtrodden coolies, the debt-ridden farmers, pitiable labourers, victimized women play prominent role in Anand's fictional world. He has selected real people as heroes whom he knew intimately during childhood. They are marginalized in one way or the other. He writes about, their life problems, sufferings and their struggle for existence and identity. Anand voiced those dregs of the society who were deprived of socio-economic opportunities for their sustenance and became victims of social, cultural, economic and political exclusion. He enacts the tragic life of the oppressed through novels especially untouchable,

coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Road, The Big Heat and The Old Woman and The Cow.

Anand's coolie gives a picture of a downtrodden boy Munoo who at his early stage being unaware of what's happening next of his own existence. It is based on sufferings of saga of Munoo who performs variegated jobs as a domestic servant, coolie, and rickshaw puller for sustenance. He struggles a lot in his life for food, shelter, identity and sympathy and finally dies of consumption. Rich people use to look down the poor as worthless, having no existence and significance as human beings. The marginalized often suffer at the hands of cruel forces in the society and have no identity of theirs. In the novel, the miserable coolies like Munoo and the like represent the margin and the capitalist and evil forces stand for the center. Throughout the novel, Munoo faces humiliation and oppression. In the novel his uncle, Daya Ram, masters- Babu Nathu Ram and his wife, Ganpat, Chimta sahib and many others have only contempt for Munoo. They slap, abuse and kick him. Through Munoo, Anand brings out the pathetic life of the poor.

DISCUSSION

Coolie is a serious tragedy of Munoo, the novel starts in Shampur and ends in Simla with his death. This story takes place in a picaresque manner. It starts in Shampur, Munoo is an orphan. Munoo's life is full of sufferings and in the beginning of the novel itself we can see how his aunt Gujri ill-treats him. Anand writes: 'Munoo oh Munoo!' she called again, exasperated and raising her voice, this time, to the highest pitch to which, in her anger and hate, she could carry it: 'Where have you died? Where have you gone, you ominous orphan? Come back and begone!' The piercing soprano resounded through the valley and fell on Munoo's ears with the deadening effect of all its bitter content. Munoo moved to Shampur along with his uncle. His uncle is messenger in the imperial bank. In that bank officer's house Munoo worked as a servant where he is treated in very shabby manner. His aunt does not give him a proper food she ill treats him and suffers him a lot in her hands. He got punishment endlessly. When he cannot bear it any longer, he leaves the house. If his aunt Gujri and Uttam Kaur

had not ill-treated him, his tragedy would have been avoided. In this novel, Munoo meets cruel and bad characters besides good characters like Prabha Dayal and his wife in Daulatpur, Chota Babu in Sham Nagar and Ratan in Bombay. Prabha Dayal is one of the examples of goodness.

Munoo met Dayal later ignoring his partner Ganesh' advice, patted Munoo on his back and said: "Come, come now, be a brave lad. Wipe your eyes. We will take care of you. We are almost nearing Daulatpur (*Coolie* 64). He boards a train to an unknown destination where he meets Prabha, a good man. Munoo compelled to work as a labour in a pickle factory and who accepted his lot with fatalism peculiar to the Indian peasantry, urged him to write coolie. Pillar of the novel is real and social realism. Mulk Raj Anand uses literature as a means to modify society has led critics to dub him as a propagandist.

Anand writes; "I feel that, only in fiction which is the transformation, through the imagination, of the concrete life, in words, sounds and vibrations, one may probe into the many layers of human consciousness in its various phases" (*Coolie* 136). He treats Munoo as his own son. Munoo finds that if Prabha is a truly kind and generous man, Ratan has a streak of heroism. Both these characters make Munoo's worldly happy. In an otherwise sad world, of cruelty and brutality, only Ratan and Prabha symbolize some good qualities but due to the forces of circumstances, Prabha is forced to sell away his factory.

He himself leaves Daulatpur in utter poverty. In the words of C.D. Narasimhaiah, "The situations Anand creates are convincing on the whole and reveal aspects of life hitherto generally kept out of fiction as though are tabooed from it" (242).

Thus once again Munoo's life becomes dangerous. Then Munoo reaches Bombay along with a circus troupe. Munoo becomes a worker in a cotton mill. After a trade union strike, he loses his job. He reaches Simla after, a road accident. Mrs. Mainwaring, an Anglo- Indian takes pity on him. She takes him to Simla and he becomes a servant in her house. For the first time in his life, Munoo is very much happy. Mrs. Mainwaring's love for Munoo in

Simla is a mixed one; she loves him for his native and uncorrupted innocence. Munoo's happiest life is in the house of Mrs. Mainwaring, but this is very short period of his life. But it is also a tragedy that his health fails here; his final stage of a Rickshaw puller is that most gruesome part of his story, this is very difficult job for him. He has all along been doing many kinds of jobs, but for pulling the rickshaw he has no stamina. He gets consumption and finally dies of it; this is the tragedy of his life.

The worst thing that Munoo suffers from is rebuking nature of Bibiji, the wife of Nathoo Ram. He is continually abused, warned and threatened with a copious flow of words. Munoo is humiliated with a series of words like 'you eater of your masters' 'shameless brute' 'a ssavage' son of bitch' unveiled brute' 'monkey' 'owl'. Munoo is continually abused in the Bakha in untouchable. Bakha is ill-treated due to his marginalized caste being an untouchable where Munoo receives subhuman treatment due to his marginalised class. Munoo and bakha both suffer due to their marginalized status. Very soon Munoo understands his position. When Munoo having impish curiosity to see various new things in the house enters the sitting room?... What right has he to join the laughter of his superiors?"(Coolie 22)

Munoo has been warned not to enter other rooms unless he is wanted. Whenever Munoo leaves kitchen and enters other rooms, he is warned of his position and his poverty.

Your place is here in the kitchen. You must not enter the sports of the Chota Babu and the children. You must get on quickly with work in the house. There is no time to lose... we have employed you not to delay the work in the house but to help to get it done. Since you are being paid a good wage more money than you ever saw in your whole life in the village, more money, in fact, than your mother or father ever saw. It would be worthwhile for you to do little work for it."(23)

Bakha suffers due to his caste; Munoo suffers due to his class and his poverty. Despite continual nagging by Bibiji, he does every work. No sooner does he

finish one work than he is ordered for another one by Bibiji. Even after doing every work, he is fed properly. Bibiji being an orthodox Hindu observes and maintains her notions of purity. Munoo suffers from the notions of purity. Munoo suffers from the notions of 'pollution' and 'touch' like Bakha though he is not from low caste. The way bread is thrown towards Bakha, Munoo is also served food in similar manner by Bibiji.

The treatment at Babu's house transforms Munoo from an energetic child to a slave. He had become a servant who should do the work, all the odd jobs, someone to be abused and even beaten. Munoo loses innocence and his own identity of his. He questions his identity:

What am I-Munoo?" he asked himself as he lay wrapped in his blanket early one morning. 'I am Munoo, Babu Nathoo Ram's servant' the answer came to his mind.. it did not occur to him to ask himself what he was apart from being a servant. His identity he took for granted, and the relationship between Babu Nathoo Ram, who wore black boots and himself Munoo, who went about barefoot, was to him like sunshine and sunset, inevitable, unquestionable. (34)

While portraying the heroes of marginalized caste or class, Anand juxtaposes them with the opposite pole. He talks about the polarity, the differences and the gap that these two poles have. The servants like Munoo represents one pole and people like Babu, the masters represent the other one. Munoo being poor cannot be compared with Babu who is master as well as rich. There has always been a wide gap between the two classes- the poor and the rich and the poor are always marginalized by the rich. Very soon he becomes conscious of this fact. He introspects about the reason of his suffering:

I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Varma, a Bramhin is a servant boy, a menial because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like sahib- logs, and all servants look alike. There must be only two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor. (56)

His poverty becomes a barrier for Munoo from involvement with the rich. He is continually warned

of his low status owing to his humility and servitude. He is warned of his low status owing to his humility and servitude. He is warned of his humility and servitude. He is warned of his position. He is even warned to keep distance. The poor are often considered by the rich as worthless, having no existence and significance as human beings. In the novel *Daya Ram*, his uncle Babu Nathu Ram and his wife, Gnapat, Chimta Sahib and many others have only contempt for Munoo. They slap, abuse and kick him. Anand's trust that pain is a brute fact in the world and that it is not inescapable provided man views and treats his fellow men as his equals regardless of their economic and social status.

Munoo suffer throughout the novel. In his village, he receives step son treatment by his uncle and aunt. Later at Babu Nathoo Ram's house in Shampur he suffers a series of pain, agony and miseries. He is constantly abused and beaten by Babu, his wife Bibiji. He is given overwork. Munoo's body gets absolutely exhausted by the evening. He is not given sufficient food supplement. To get food from his uncle when Munoo goes to his uncle's room, Munoo feels violently insulted, when he relieves himself at their kitchen doorstep after not finding any suitable place. His mistress berates and curses him:

Vay, are you eater of your masters! Vay, you shameless brute! You pig! You dog!" The storm burst on his head as, hearing no response to her call, she appeared at the door, saw him, and unable to bear the sight, withdrew. Vay, you shameless, shameless, vulgar, stupid hill boy! May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you die! What have you done! Why didn't you ask me where to go? May you fade away! May you burn! We don't know we are talking on an animal in our employ, an utter brute, a savage! What will the Sahib think who pass by our doors every morning and afternoon! The Babuji has his prestige to keep up with the Sahibs. Hai! What a horrible, horrible mess he has made outside my door! (17)

The lives of Munoo, Gangu and other coolies give easily understandable demonstration of the crushed humanity throughout the world. They do

laboratories work still they get abuses and good thrashing. They have skeletal bodies which show their poor condition under white reign. Even the mothers with new born babies are denied their right to suckle their babies. Here, the author Anand shows the madness of men who go after money like anything which shows the callousness of colonial monsters. The severely damaged lives of Munoo and Gangu are strong representation of capitalistic power. Through the lives of Munoo and Gangu, Anand shows the not so wonderful side of life under the capitalists. Anand shows the madness of men who go after money like anything shows the callousness of colonial monsters.

In this long saga of tragedy, Munoo is the victim; he is a transient victim of circumstances, he is an innocent victim. He is intelligent and keen participant in his life. Anand draws him in abundant sentimental detail as a sensitive boy. He is also imaginative, duty-bound, sincere and hard working young boy. He is a symbol of grim innocence and naivete. He moves in this novel, from innocence to a little experience. His death of consumption is symbolic of the positivity of life to a poor boy. He is a victim of impersonal forces. In spite of all the negative and destructive forces of life in a full measure, He does not become a fatalist but he merely keeps that sense of innocent boy at the world like Bakha, in untouchable, he is a living character. He is inactive, but not passive in his mind. He has the potential of a real hero. But he is destroyed by the system.

Being an ardent admirer of humanism, humanistic fervour runs as a red string all through his books. Sympathy for the poor and underdog is a real strain in his treatment for subjects. This is his message of comfort to the affliction mankind. In coolie Munoo's catastrophe has a general advance. The vital nobility and guiltlessness of person is not the protest of the rich and advanced high societies. That the men from lower social classes and financial foundations just as meriting these human properties is gotten out coolie by demonstrating the challenging of these misery men to dare to dream. The fiction of Anand is to a great extent practical. Social authenticity is a prevailing strain of his books. They express his logic of authenticity, naturalism.

They additionally express his fantasies. Consequently three things- authenticity, naturalism and social authenticity get blended in his fictions. The most imperative essayist in the new wave of authenticity the cleared over Indian writing in the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties was Mulk Raj Anand. As befits the desires of a social realist, he picked the novel as his medium, and it was the novel which was to stay prevailing type of writing for Indo-Anglican authors up to the present time. Anand's initial and best- books are intentional endeavours to uncover the misery of the lower standings and classes of India. They are undisguised in their supplication for social change, inspired by serious outrage and compassion. The designs of the books are changed, yet the hidden example is uniform the obliteration of a human exploited person in India, who notwithstanding his great will, his honesty and his goals to a superior life, is fiercely annihilated by the financial framework that is barbaric, whether in its conventional medieval manifestation of a position framework or in its later appearance as 'imperialistic free enterprise'. Anand's books are a long way from immaculate as gems, yet their enthusiastic authenticity is capturing in an effective, if unrefined way, and they stay impulsive perusing right up till the present time.

Mulk Raj Anand states that "Craftsmanship is forever's purpose". He is a realist whose social vision was moulded by time, place and the circumstances of the contemporary period. Anand is an essayist with a mission to put an end to bad faith, savagery, cold- heartedness, dichotomy and unfairness winning in the public arena. His written work is for the individuals.

In untouchable and coolie, Bakha and Munoo are epic saints of affliction. Alternate characters in these books face terrible and hopeless conditions due to their social foundation and monetary reliance. The female characters in both the books make a very forsaken perusing. The books of Anand present an anecdotal world inhabited by a striking assortment of characters, covering a wide range of Indian social and political world. The social authenticity in coolie is brought together by the strongly human identity of the saint, who experiences this world like a pole of affection

lighting it up and determining the visually impaired disarray of human connections. Munoo effortlessly rises above position of contemplation and considers just the two vital classes of humanity, "those who are well off and the less wealthy". These words are not only polemical but Munoo has also understood their truth through torment till the end of his life. Anand finishes up the novel on a tragic note:

"But in the early hours of one unreal, white night he passed away- the tide of his life having reached back to the deeps"(282).

Mulk Raj Anand depicts that the realistic picture of poor Indians where the mass suffer from exploitation. Being an author of the marginalized people has significantly managed the towns, with the compelling neediness, with vagrants, untouchables and urban workers. He depicts in his book that the Indian life is that of outcastes, labourers, the discouraged and persecuted one of the society. Anand says the noted writer P.K.Singh, incredible sympathy toward down-trodden individuals of India and his book subsequently toss light on the existing torments and dilemmas of 'the poor' (*Mulk Raj Anand and the Dalits* 89). His books present minute pictures of Indian society, with uncommon centre on the predicaments of poor individuals.

K.R.Srinivas Iyengar, in his *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1962) has expressed his views extensively on Anand's novels. He thinks that *Coolie* is a satisfied work. He pays a rich tribute to Anand for having chosen to paint, in his works, the predicament and plight of the bottom dogs in Indian society and for having done it spontaneously without any self-conscious display of Proletarianism. He considers vitality and sense of actuality as the remarkable quality of Anand.

While assessing the novel and the writer impartially, Saros Cowasjee says:

Coolie needs to be examined in some detail, not only because it received ecstatic praise from reviewers and Anand's literary friends and firmly established his position as one of the most interesting revolutionary writers of our time, but also because it is his most representative work and has within it the

germs of much of his strength and weakness as a novelist (*Coolie: An Appraisal* 10).

Conclusion

Mulk Raj Anand as a social realist, critic, and raised his voice against a injustice in society and speaks for unlucky, untouchable. He felt for various kinds of suppression which created problems in people's lives. Anand selects from the lower section of the society those with pureness and innocence and gives full life and blood to them. His novels mostly portray the tragedy of those free from moral wrongs under external and wicked forces. Through *Coolie*, Anand clearly portrays a picture of society how the poor treated by their sub humans. It brings out their miserable and pathetic life full of pains, sorrow and agonies; struggles for existence in life which is controlled by rich people. He is against a social structure that divides the people between the poor and rich. Munoo's journey of life starts with suffering and ends with suffering. Anand's humanistic concern for the underdogs of the society through *Coolie* validates his belief in the dictum of arts for life's sake.

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