
The Realistic Picture of Society Portrayed in Mulk Raj Anand's Novel Coolie

Dr. Sushil Kumar Mishra

*Associate Professor and Head, Department of English and Foreign Languages, SRM University,
Sonapat, (Haryana) India*

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand is one of India's most popular short story and novel writers. Anand is a social novelist of contemporary society. He portrays the realistic picture of society. He created social revolution through his remarkable social ideology. He presents the appalling and inhuman condition of the life of villagers. The peasant's poverty and exploitation are exposed in Anand's novel Coolie. The heroes of Anand's novel Untouchable and Coolie are the real reflection of society and people. The glaring disparities between the rich and the poor, the discrimination on the basis of cast and class, the exploitation of the untouchable and the lower cast compelled him to think about the amelioration of the downtrodden and sufferers. That is why Anand became a champion of the poor and the exploited in his novels and short stories. He is against this dehumanizing and barbaric distinction. Coolie, published in 1936 is Mulk Raj Anand's second novel. It is a companion, piece to Untouchable. Coolie depicts the sad, pathetic life of Munoo, 14 years boy. The novel Coolie is Mulk Raj Anand's second novel. Coolie, published in 1936. It is a companion, piece to untouchable. Coolie depicts the sad, pathetic life of Munoo 14 year's boy. The novelist presents the real world of the lowest men in the society. His approach to the social problem is quite realistic. It exposes the miserable condition of coolies in India.

Key words:

Introduction

Coolie (1936) is a true manifestation of miserable and pitiable condition of the poor in the society. Coolie is a novel, beautifully expresses the struggling and starving the mass. It is a satire on the tragic denial of the workers, domestic servants, coolies, rickshaw pullers etc. who are tortured and tyrannized by so many evils like industrialism communalism and colonialism.

Coolie presents the picture of an orphan boy Munoo. He is despised by the society, rejected by his relatives and oppressed by his masters. He tries to avail changes of process. But his ill fate produces obstacles in his way. Anand presents the theme of the exploitation of the underprivileged in

Coolie. Its range is wider and more comprehensive than that of Untouchable.

In the beginning of the novel Munoo, a boy of fourteen years is studying in class five in a rural school of village, Bilaspur, situated on the Kangra hills on the bank of the river Beas, in Himachal Pradesh. Munoo in the company of his friends grazed his cows all days. He sits under the shade of a large Banyan tree. There he enjoys the fruits of the season. His happy life comes to an end when his uncle Daya Ram wants to take him to Shamnagar, a town ten miles away from their village. This novel portrays the class discrimination between the rich and the poor working class. Munoo is a hero of the novel. Munoo is a universal figure. He

presents the miseries of the poor and the downtrodden. Social conditions, like exploitation and poverty determines the life of Munoo in the novel. Coolie is a human tragedy caused by poverty, exploitation, cruelty, greed and selfishness. His Uncle Daya Ram and aunt Gujri want therefore that he must earn his own living. Munoo is an orphan boy. His father died of shock because he could not pay the debt to his landlord. His mother worked hard to earn enough to support him. Munoo could not forget the way in which his father suffered. His father worked hard every day. He heard that the landlord had seized his father's five acres of land. He knows how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment. His father left his mother a penniless beggar

The central theme of the novel is the tragic denial to simple landless peasant of the fundamental right. In spite of sad memories and ill treatment of his aunt and uncle, Munoo is happy. His happy life comes to an end, when he went to Shamnagar for seeking job for his livelihood. Munoo goes with his uncle Daya Ram, a peon in the imperial bank of Shamnagar. Munoo went there to work as a domestic servant in the house of Babu Nathu Ram. Babu Nathu Ram is the sub-accountant in the Imperial Bank.

While he was a servant in Babu Nathu Ram's house, Munoo desires to mix up and play with the children Leela and Sheela forgetting his identity of a poor and domestic servant as his status. Uttam Kaur, wife of Babu Nathu Ram takes too much work from Munoo and ill- treats him. She gives less to eat. Munoo is unable to bear the ill-treatment of Uttam Kaur. Munoo says

the ill-treatment of Uttam Kaur to his own uncle Daya Ram. Daya Ram convinces him that he must not mind what she says. Munoo was given less good to eat. His monthly salary of five rupees was given to his uncle by Babu Nathu Ram. Munoo was always out of pocket. He was fed up with this job and went to his uncle Daya Ram for money. His uncle Daya Ram also ill-treats him. Munoo lives the life of slavery. The cruel, inhuman and humiliating treatment of the family makes him run away. One day he ran away from there. In the train he met a Coolie named Prabha. He was an orphan like Munoo.. But now he is a Seth, the owner of a pickle factory at Daulatpur in partnership with Ganpath Seth. Prabha encouraged the boy and felt tender towards the boy. He developed kinship with Munoo as a son. Prabha provides Munoo employment in his factory. He rose early and started his work from early morning and continued his work up to midnight in factory and went to bed after midnight. He lives with the family of Prabha Dayal. By the God's grace he has found a sympathetic employer and a roof over his head. Prabha Dayal's wife treats him kindly. Soon Munoo is accustomed to life in the pickle factory. Munoo is afraid of Ganpath, business partner of Prabha, an accountant of bad behavior with workers. Ganpath behaves rudely to Munoo. Munoo realizes that he cannot work there. In the morning he goes to the railway station to work there as a Coolie. The policeman chases him away for he has no license and cannot work there. Munoo runs away from there. He joins the circus team and goes to Mumbai along with circus team. By chance Munoo meets Hari Har, His wife Lakshmi

and his children.. He helped Munoo to get a job in the textile factory. The exploitation does not end there. He wants to go away from there. Again he starts working in Cotton Mills owned by British man as a Coolie. Munoo is fed up there to see the class discrimination and exploitation of management.

Munoo stands in the middle of the road. An Anglo Indian lady stops her car near Munoo and asks her driver to put him in the car. She took him to Shimla with her. She is a divorcee. She exploits him sexually. She keeps him as her domestic servant. Munoo has to do too much work. He starts to suffer from tuberculosis. In spite of all medical treatment his condition deteriorated. Coolie is a powerful indictment of modern capitalistic society, and its tragic exploitation of the poor. Munoo, the hero of the novel wants to live but the society does not allow him to live. He dies of exploitation, poverty and hunger. He is the victim of social force. The tragic denial of life to Munoo is caused by his poverty, which is the sole cause of his tragedy. Class consciousness, class discrimination is the main theme of the novel. The novelist has felt the pulse of Indian society. He goes deep into the heart of the poor and the downtrodden. He selects the lowest classes and the labour classes to represent them in his novels. Munoo is a victim of poverty, exploitation, man's greed and selfishness. The root cause of Munoo's tragedy is poverty. He is exploited by the rich. Middle class people like Baboo Nathu Ram and Bibi Uttam Kaur also exploited him. The rich like Ganpath, and Mrs Mainwaring also

exploited him. The real aristocracy is represented by Mrs. Mainwaring. She exploits Munoo both physically and sexually. Munoo is an archetypal figure, a true representative of toiling, suffering, staining millions of India. Anand has focused attention on the wretched plight of the teeming millions of Indian who are exploited and are made to work hard, hardly to get two meals a day, grow sick and exhausted and vanish permanently. Coolie is based upon the class struggle, social injustice and psychological conflict of the rich and the poor. Mulk Raj Anand is the angry young man who cannot tolerate exploitation of one man, or of one class by another class. He is an enemy to all kinds of exploitation, be that economic, social or political.

Conclusion

Thus Anand attacks in his novels the evils of exploitation of one man, by another man, and one class by another class. Poverty misery injustice, exploitation, discrimination and hatred remain his faithful friends from his birth to death through Munoo, Anand has focused attention on the wretched plight of the millions of poor people of India who are toiling, suffering, straining and dying of dangerous deaths. Munoo, the hero of the novel wants to live but the society does not allow him to live. He dies of exploitation, poverty and hunger. Class consciousness, class discrimination is the main theme of the novel. The novelist has felt the pulse of Indian society. He goes deep into the heart of the poor and the downtrodden. He selects the lowest classes and the labour classes to represent them in his novels.

References:

1. "Mulk Raj Anand, 98; Wrote About India's Injustices". Los Angeles Times. October 1, 2004. Retrieved 2009-08-31.
2. The novels of Mulk Raj Anand: a critical study. Atlantic Publishers. p. 69. ISBN 978-81-7156-934-2.