

**Socioeconomic Struggle of Munoo in *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand**

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**Abstract**

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the prominent novelists in Indian English literature. The novels of Mulk Raj Anand depict ample examples of socioeconomic suffering of the characters. *Coolie* is deemed a panoramic novel, its action moves from the North to South of India and back up again to the North. In the novel *Coolie*, Anand presents socioeconomic struggle of Munoo. In the novel *Coolie*, he draws the stark picture of capitalistic society, deprived class and downtrodden society. He delineate the character of Munoo symbolically and focus on the reality of their times. The writer narrates journey of Munoo from his village to Shampur, from Daultapur to Bombay and to Shimla. The present paper is an attempt to study socioeconomic struggle of Munoo for livelihood. The paper also focuses on the suffering of Munoo in the socioeconomic point of view. The paper deals with the universal issues of segregation and discrimination of people in the point of views of poverty, social statues and class differences.

**Key Words:** socioeconomic, panoramic, capitalistic, downtrodden, segregation, discrimination etc.

**Introduction:** Munoo is the central character in the novel *Coolie*. Anand gives the minute details of the miserable trajectory of his life from childhood to youth. During his socioeconomic struggle in the life, Munoo comes across different known and unknown places and people. In the beginning of the novel, the novelist describes the wretched life of Munoo, the death of his mother, and helpless father, and the way he lives with his uncle and aunt. He is neither well treated nor loved by them. He is just fourteen years old, but his uncle and aunt are reluctant to keep Munoo in the house because they want him to earn money. Munoo says:

*“My uncle says I am grown up and must fend for myself. He has got me a*

*job in the house of the Babu of the bank where he works in Shampur.”*  
(C-p.2)

Anand emphasizes the problems of child labour and how the family itself is responsible to produce the child labour. Due to earn money and for live hood, Munoo gets exploits from the different people. His uncle gives him worst treatment and his owner Babu also exploits him. He gets trouble in his life because of poverty and low statues in the society. The Death of his father and mother proved tragic life and social discrimination in the society. Munoo is studying in the fifth class and wants to complete his study, but due to the force of his childless uncle and aunt, he has to abandon his education and join as a servant

in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram. The protagonist is absolutely unaware of the modern comforts and life style of the town. When Munoo begins to work as a servant in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram, he faces humorous problems from the first day. Sometimes, these unknown things create a humorous situation. Anand writes:

*“Now he did not know where he should go to relieve himself. There were houses all about, and there were forbidding bungalows cresting the hill. And he could hear people walking on the road. He did not know where the people in the towns went”.* (C-p.17)

He works hard in the house: washing dishes, bringing vegetables and cleaning them too. Munoo gets ill- treatment from Bibiji. When she notices that Munoo always joins her son and daughter in the play, she admonishes and reminds him that he is nothing but a servant in the house and he should stay away from her children. She also advises him to concentrate on work only. As the time goes by, Munoo spends miserable days in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram. Munoo gets worst treatment from his uncle and other people as a result of disappointed and which he becomes disheartened. On getting such worst treatment from the members of the house, Munoo thinks to escape from the house. He segregates from his friends, village and from known places therefore this segregation bring him disappointment. He revolts against the humiliation and without considering the result he bites Sheila the daughter of the master:

*“Before he knew what he has done he had bitten her on the cheek.”* (C-p.57)

This is the first revolt of the protagonist against his exploiters. The volcano of revolt, which burns inside gets burst. He meets to Prabha Dyal, a kind person, who promises him to take to Daulatpur and give him a job in his factory:

*“Will you come with us, ohe Munoo?” asked Prabha, ignoring his partner’s advice and gently stroking the boy’s dark hair, which grew long on all sides and shadowed his wheat-coloured face. “Will you come and live with us? I am from Hamirpur, near Bilaspur, so we will look after you.”* (C-p.63)

Munoo does not know where to go and what to do. He immediately accepts the proposal as he needs support of someone who can give him food and shelter. Prabha Dyal is a good natured man. Munoo starts his new job as a delivery boy. He delivers the products of the pickle factory to different shops. Anand describes in detail this new profession of the hero and his skills. He also describes social and capitalistic system in the novel. Munoo faces worst experiences and unhuman treatment from the rich and high class society. Anand described class struggle of Munoo with help of his journey of life. His life becomes happy for a short period of time. He enjoys his life in the company of Tulsi, Prabha Dyal, Parbati and others. In the factory, Munoo comes across several incidents related to workers. During the work, he gets worst treatment from Ganpat and Sir Todar Mal, the neighbour. After the departure of Prabha and his family from the town, Munoo has to face starvation. He tries to satisfy the hunger, he

stands as a beggar in the row in front of the temple. Anand narrates:

*“He ran and spread his hands before the dispenser of food.*

*“Where is your plate? The man asked.*

*‘I haven’t got one, Maharaj’, Munoo said with a tremor on his lips to convey an appeal for pity”.* (C-p.133)

Anand presents a series of misfortunes in the life of the hero and suffering of downtrodden people in this novel. The hypocrisies, lies, and harmful practices are presented by the novelist with help of different characters in the novel. Though Munoo starts to work as a coolie in the Daultapur station, he never gets success because of the license and the social system. He always gets lower treatment from different types of people. When Munoo arrives in Bombay with the help of an elephant driver, first he tries to find the earning source. By his good luck, he comes across a couple who have also come to seek same odd job in Bombay. When he finds Hari Har and his wife want to settle down in Bombay, he immediately gets close to them and helps them by taking his son on his shoulder.

During Munoo’s journey from his village to Shampur, from Daultapur to Bombay and back to North he came across to the different types of people and places but he didn’t get good treatment as human being. His struggle for earning money and livelihood are the basic aspects in the novels. Anand focuses on the socioeconomic struggle of the hero. He also focuses on exploitation of poor,

need and orphan by the society and capitalist system through the struggle of Munoo.

Munoo gets familiar with the new jobs and atmosphere. He starts to learn machine handling skill. The hero’s life in Bombay is adventurous one because he faces extremely new atmosphere as compared to the previous life. He learns social lessons from Ratan but unfortunately he gets separated from him due to the strike of the factory workers. The incident of accident brings Munoo close to Mrs. Mainwaring. She takes him with her thinking that he would be useful as an aide and would work as a servant in the house and pull rickshaw. She also thinks that the boy can be useful to fulfil her sexual desires. She gives Munoo good treatment. Anand narrates:

*“He was pleased with life, especially as the Memsahib has, with her own hands, given him some apples and bananas and sweets.”* (C-p.255)

Munoo embarks on his new life and serves his new memsahib as a domestic servant and a rickshaw puller. He serves his mistress and offers her every comfort. She becomes dependent on him. In the company of Mrs. Mainwaring, Munoo becomes aware of the sexual intercourse. His desire becomes ripe so he gets interested in her toilet and strolls around the bedroom. Sometimes, Munoo cannot control himself and his amorous feelings. But as a boy, he does not know what to do:

*“Munoo smiled with the quivering ripples of affection that the contact of her hands had produced him. He felt dizzy with the intoxicating warmth that*

*her coquettish movements had aroused in him. He hung his head down to avoid the embarrassment, which he felt, and yet unable to control the fire in his blood, he fell at her feet in an orgy of tears and kisses.” (C-p.259)*

maturity of the protagonist. Munoo, the protagonist of the novel gets the knowledge of the physical world. The socioeconomic struggle of Munoo is remarkable one. Anand presented ample evidences of Munoo’s life where he faces discrimination in the society on the basis of economic and social level.

This sudden change in the body of Munoo is the key aspect for Anand to observe physical

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