

## AN EVALUATIVE APPROACH ON SUFFERINGS AND EXPLOITATION OF UNDERPRIVILEGED SECTIONS IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S 'COOLIE'

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### ABSTRACT

*Mulk Raj Anand is considered to be a doyen of Anglo Indian literature. With him, India has received an unceasing champion of the cause of poor and lowly whose writings arrest the critical attention of the learned people towards the inhumane, hatred and unjustified conditions of downtrodden and deprived of Indian society. Anand's 'Coolie' is one classic example of the story of the underprivileged class of the society and of the oppressed people. The novel 'Coolie' presents the picture of exploitation, caste-ridden society and the sufferings of the underprivileged section. It takes us to different places and cities showing the inhuman and degrading treatment that the poor Munoo, the protagonist gets at the hands of the socially, economically and politically affluent and higher classes of Indian society and how he copes with all circumstances alone. Anand was able to strike a chord in the heart of the conscientious Indians with the beautiful and real to life portrayal of the downtrodden masses of Indian society, the so-called 'have-nots'. The portrayal of the sufferings of the underprivileged section is found throughout this novel as well as in 'Two Leaves and a Bud'. We may point out such causes behind this problem such as society's responsibility of such a bad condition, the lack of power of the downtrodden people, the oppression of the higher class and capitalistic society etc. The sufferings and exploitation of Munoo are the sufferings of millions of downtrodden people of India. The novel named "Coolie" explores the societal, psychological exploitation of underprivileged class. The picture of exploitation of the underprivileged is depicted in Anand's works. The exploitation of the downtrodden section is epitomised by focusing on the sufferings and exploitation of the protagonist of the novel "Coolie" named Munoo who represents all underprivileged Indians.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Exploitation, Downtrodden, Sufferings, Social and Economic Disparity, Poverty, Underprivileged Section*

### INTRODUCTION

Mulk Raj Anand was a prominent twentieth-century novelist. He was a committed writer conditioned by a complex of factors. He was an Indian writer in English, notable for his portrayal of the lives of the poor castes in traditional Indian society. His realization and sympathetic depiction of the poor makes him famous in India. Indo-Anglican literature is defined as the contribution of Indian writers in the literature in the English language. Anand was born on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1905 and died on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2004. With the passing away of Mulk Raj Anand, India has lost one of its great progressive writers. He belonged to a generation of writers committed to the democratic ideals of social justice. Anand inherited from his father the pieties of craft and from his mother the rich tradition of mythology. He grew up, as he himself wrote, like most of his contemporaries, "a very superficial, ill-educated young man, without any bearings". Anand continued his interest in social themes with his next few novels dealing with the destiny of the working class and the exploitation and sufferings of the underprivileged section in India. Anand, as a prolific writer first gained wide recognition

for his novels *Coolie* in 1936, *Untouchable* in 1935 and *Two Leaves and a Bud* in 1937. All his novels such as *Coolie*, *Untouchable* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* deal the problems of poverty in Indian contemporary society. Traveling widely in affluent countries in Europe and coming in contact with the Marxian philosophy and the revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution as also with rational philosophers and political activists, made Anand opine for the alleviation of pain and suffering of the common man in India – his native land – a land of nostalgia. The outlines of *Coolie* delineate a bohemian life sage of an adolescent hill boy Munoo. K.Shivarama rightly puts:

“Anand draws vast spaces and creates memorable characters. He is not sufficiently detached to maintain the aesthetic distance which, properly speaking yields the ironic stance. Munoo is conceived as a romantic hero, and as such, there is no incongruity in the delineation. He is, first and last, a victim rather than a rebel and, therefore, is capable of rising to a tragic stature”. (32)

Anand has observed life in several dimensions. He believed that the downtrodden are not born, but made. He reflected over the different facets of the tyranny the outcasts were compelled to undergo. He was amazingly discreet. His childhood experiences are reflected through his novels and through the sufferings and exploitation of the outcasts in his novel. Since his childhood age, he despised casteism and disregarded the division between human beings on the basis of the financial aspect. He condemned exploitation of the poor, the downtrodden and the outcasts. Like Charles Dickens, Mulk Raj Anand in terms of critical realism that inspires the reader to seek a humanistic and compassionate understanding of life.

Anand has a philosophical bent of mind. He tends to use art as a means of critical realism. His works do not reflect the literary art and excellence. He is fully devoted to realism and tries to portray the reality and its pangs and pathos in his novels. In *Coolie*, he presents the picture of the exploited mass. He always deals with the theme of his novel from humanistic perspectives. He presents his art not for art's sake, but for human sake. He transcended his fiction beyond the level of art. Saros Cowasjee has analyzed Anand's source and method of incorporating the pain of the said class in his essay *Anand's Fusion of History and Fiction*. He feels that Anand is “concerned with the long-range truth of history which may differ from everyday occurrences.”

Mulk Raj Anand's protest against social discrimination and exploitation of downtrodden people is reflected through his novel *Coolie* as well as *Untouchable* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Anand with sympathy and indignation had portrayed the wretched conditions of the oppressed and underprivileged section. Anand's avowed purpose as a writer of the thirties is to treat literature as a testimony to the rampant oppression of the underdogs and corruption of the higher classes. Anand's panoramic presentation of Indian society in *Coolie* is based on his socialist ideas, but his social realism is blended with his humanitarian zeal. *Coolie* admittedly is a prose epic in which Munoo, the protagonist represents specific stages of the proletarian novel. Munoo's life at the beginning of the novel is typical of the underprivileged class. In this connection Saros Cowasjee writes:

“What Munoo suffers at the hands of his master is no more than what he suffers at the hands of fellow workers as downtrodden as himself. who are capable of cruelty and callousness born out of a savage struggle for survival”. (35)

### Historical Background

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Coolie* is first published in 1936. It is historically located in the 1930s. In his novels,

there are depictions of the sufferings, pitiful condition of the underprivileged, downtrodden people. The novel *Coolie* especially reflects the Pre-Independence era and the class conflict. Anand tries to identify himself with the marginalized so that he may give a magic touch to the untouchables and make their lives bearable. Politics, philosophy, ethics, and religion each contributes to his philosophy of love and compassion based on universal peace at the altar of domination of man by man. Social norms are prevalent to rule human lives on our continent. Caste-based hierarchy significantly controlled the human lives since the time of Aryan dominance in India. The varnasrama contains four classes, e.g. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, divided along the levels of job and profession. This class system creates a social distinction and discrimination in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Class conflict is a term long used by socialists, communists and many anarchists who define a class by its relationship to the means of production- such as factories, land, and machinery. Anand in *Coolie* has depicted the plights and predicaments, sorrows and sufferings, trials and tribulations of the people of their generation. Mulk Raj Anand, the voice of speechless and impoverished human being portrays the human predicament realistically with all its dynamics. Anand observes the pedigree of the underprivileged and oppressed and puts all efforts to champion their causes. Real life representation of the destitute million has been visualized in his novels with clarity and precision. Anand in his contemporary age realizes the need of reestablishment of kindness which is lost in the midst of inefficacy and inhumanity in the world. Anand presents a moving voice of downtrodden Indians who were deprived of their basic rights of living in his novels. Anand brings back to our memory the realistic picture of early 19<sup>th</sup> -century society that reflects the oppression and sufferings of the poor and underprivileged class and the class discrimination in India. The then social despair, the disappointment of the underprivileged section, their ostracized, downtrodden life all created an effect on Anand's mind. Therefore, Anand's novels are a reaction against the socio-political, religious and economic injustice that has engulfed the people of his time. He as a socialist reacts to this situation with an unprecedented vehemence. The period of the 1930s was the seed time of modern independent India, a packed decade indeed when Raja Rao wrote *Kathapura*, and Anand too could not but respond to the impact of events in India. He wrote of the poor, for the poor and as a man of the people. Anand's *Coolie* is epical in sweep and panorama in purview, pictures of the effects that the pervasive evil of the class system fall upon the society, mainly upon the downtrodden person as Munoo, a hill boy and his fellow coolies through industrialization, capitalism, communalism etc. In his Indian past, however, Anand's attitude is ambivalent. As M.K.Naik writes:

“On the one hand, he is indignantly critical of the dead wood of hoary Indian tradition – Its obscurantism and fossilization; on the other, as his life-long interest in ancient Indian art and the intuitive understanding of the Indian peasant mind, in his writings indicate he is equally aware of its inner and enduring aspects as well”. (155)

### **Sufferings and Exploitation of Underprivileged section in Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie***

Anand's *Coolie* is one classic example of the story of the underprivileged class of the society and of the oppressed people. The word 'coolie' suggests one who transports the load from one place to another, on his head or on his back, on a car or a bicycle. Thousands of coolies carry things at railway stations and in marketplaces; there is no respectability associated with their profession. As we read Anand's novels, we are transported back to the thirties of the last century when unemployment was rampant, when coolies were despised by people of the middle or upper classes. Munoo, the protagonist of the novel, has to work as a coolie in Daulatpur when Prabha, his uncle is reduced to bankruptcy. The term 'coolie' applies to Munoo's time in Daulatpur as later on in Simla he is a rickshaw puller. During his stint as a coolie, he

had got ill-treatment and poor pay from people belonging to middle and upper classes. Anand in his novel *Coolie* as well as *Untouchable* with sympathy and indignation had portrayed the wretched conditions of the oppressed and underprivileged sections. The novel *Coolie* begins with the paragraph:

“‘Munoo ohe Munoo oh Mundu!’ shouted Gujri from the verandah of a squat, sequestered, little mud hut, thatched with straw, which stood upon the edge of a hill about a hundred yards away from the village in the valley. And her eagle eyes explored the track of gold dust which worked its zigzag course through rough scrub, beyond the flat roofs of the village houses, under the relentless haze of the Kangra sun. She could not see him”. (1)

This paragraph presents the picture of sufferings of the downtrodden people and their day to day life. They are bound to spend their life in “little mud hut, thatched with straw”. Anand has presented the misery of socially backward class and coolies in India. *Coolie* centers on the malefic, eventful life of Munoo, an innocent adolescent boy. The exploitation of Munoo, a hill boy symbolizes the sufferings and pangs of the underprivileged class as a whole. So, Anand through the life of Munoo tries to portray the whole mass of downtrodden and their deprived lives. Munoo serves as a domestic servant in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram. He has to do all the work like a slave and besides all these physical sufferings; he is also deprived from education. Munoo is not only the victim of such exploitation, the novelist makes it quite clear, that such exploitation and denial of life and happiness is the lot of the poor everywhere in India, whether in village-like Billaspur or small town like Sham Nagar, or big cities like Daulatpur and Bombay as mentioned in the novel *Coolie*. *Coolie* can very well be taken as a sociological, economic, political and cultural chronicle of Pre-Independence India. Peter Quenelle called the novel “India seen third class” other items used for novel include “The Odyssey of Munoo through India”. Anand portrays Munoo’s exploitation and suffering is a direct expression of his love for humanity and disapproval of economic inequality. In *Coolie* Anand reveals the curse of exploitation, child labour, social governance, social set up of society, customs, religious belief, prejudices and the theme of the miserable masses is studied in a rural and urban setting where hunger and starvation are caused by the operation of natural forces. The theme of suffering caused by vicious circumstances in life has been realistically depicted, and the heroic struggle of the central figures, against heavy odds, raises the novels to the lofty heights of an epic. Francis H. Stoddard writes about novel which Sharma quotes as:

“A novel is a narrative of human life under the stress of emotion. It differs from the epic in that. It is a narration of human rather than superhuman life, under the stress of ordinary rather than of excessive or heroic emotion”. (67)

**Concept of Exploitation:** *Coolie* is powerful social tragedy due to the artistic treatment of cruel, inhuman social forges of poverty and exploitation. The awareness of this new phenomenon first emerged several years ago in Latin America and more particularly in Asia. But the complete understanding of the term exploitation came into existence with Karl Marx, the first revolutionary against industrialism which is basic factors of exploitation. He strongly believes that the worker become all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity. The realistic picture of poor Indians where mass suffer from the exploitation is truly depicted by Mulk Raj Anand in *Coolie*. There are exclamations with which this novel begins:

“Munoo ohe Munoo oh Mundu!” (1)

With these Punjabi rustic words the novel begins and explores the social evils of child labour and suffering saga of Munoo. When this novel opens Munoo is a poor orphan boy hardly fourteen years old. He is the figure of exploitation. The novel opens with the shrill soprano of Munoo's aunt resounding through the valleys. He is continually beaten by his aunt, and his mind is haunted by the death of his parents. He has inherited poverty and squalor from his exploited father who died when Munoo was a mere child. The term exploitation comes to the situation of Munoo as a servant at the age of fourteen years old. Munoo is appointed as a servant in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram on five rupees a month. In words of Bibi Uttam Kaur:

"More money, in fact, than your mother and father ever saw".

Thus Munoo as a representative of the poor, underprivileged section presents the exploitation and sufferings on the hand of the upper-class society in *Coolie* as Bakha presents this severe exploitation in *Untouchable*. Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper* also portrays the exploitation of the human beings at their early age through the mechanism.

Exploitation has a strong relationship with the society and its people who are manipulated for the benefits of others. The term exploitation refers to using another person's labor or work without offering adequate rewards including all kinds of abuses as physical, verbal, Emotional, sexual, psychological and mental. With regard to *Coolie*, M.K. Naik observes:

"The central theme of the novel is the tragic denial to a simple landless peasant of the fundamental right to happiness. The terrible destiny of being a victim of exploitation is indeed Munoo's dubious birthright".

### **Social Responsibility for Bad Condition of the Underprivileged Sections**

Anand's titling of his remarkable novel as *Coolie* pinpoints a profession crowded by have-nots. The Marxian theory calls such persons who do not have the means of production – proletariats. *Coolie* centers on the downtrodden people. Munoo's exploitation is symbolically the exploitation of the poor. Munoo's predicament is characteristically that of the proletariats. The boy's ordeal as a servant begins in Babu Nathooram's house where regular torture from the house owner reaches its height in a beastly physical atrocity resulting in his absconding from the site of horror. His adventures begin by way of a massive journey from Sham Nagar to Daulatpur, from thence to Bombay ending in Simla where he breathes his last sigh, being afflicted by consumption.

"A downpour and he began to doubt if he would ever get well. He felt exhausted and lay weary and apathetic, looking at Mohan frank-eyed and helpless, clinging to him as if the mere touch of his friend's body would give him life". (282)

At the same time, he comes across a score of people. The action of internalization and indoctrination takes place in the case of Munoo. The social reality gives effect and molds his consciousness. Self-love converts into self-pity. Munoo feels alienated from the only society he comes across. Humanity has vanished along religious lines; innocent people are butchered without instigation and a permanent scar settles on the psyche of people. Besides the broad religion-based chasm, the society painted in *Coolie* is hierarchically subdivided into segments. Munoo is a product of a tabooed, superstitious society. Society plays a part of the cruel machine for the poor, downtrodden. Society never tries to eradicate their pangs and poor downtrodden status. Exhibition of prestige and exploitation of power go hand in hand in the cruel the

world since Anand is out to locate the sources and possibilities of suffering in the social sphere. Anand in *The Road* (1961) also discusses the theme of underprivileged sections and their sufferings. Bhikhu, the protagonist in the novel, is a revelation of Bakha of *Untouchable*. *Coolie* mars human dignity. Society plays an inactive role in the problems of underprivileged class. They are deprived of every pleasure but there is no source of solace for them. It exposes ruthlessly and with shocking realism the cruelty and in human behavior of the rich and the tragic destiny of the masses, their poverty, their animal life, their exploitation and their stoic acceptance of the tragic denial of life and happiness. The novel portrays the tribulations of an individual coolie in a class-ridden society. Prof. Saros Cowasjee has rightly observed here in his preface to the novel *Coolie*:

“The first contact with reality shatters his dreams. Arriving in the house of a bank clerk, he falls foul of shrewish and vindictive housewife and before he flees from his employer’s frenzied rage he has relieved himself near their doorstep and thereby lowered their social prestige”.(6)

*Coolie* embraces three or four cities in the grim struggle of life, but the movement of the poor lad, the coolie, is not caused by curiosity but by the helplessness occasioned by the complications of the plot developing in a natural way. *Coolie* may be called the ‘struggle for existence novel’. The cruel and inhuman forces of life compel the simple lad, the hero, to move from one place to the other. Society can never be found to shower sympathy to the underprivileged section. The upper-class people in order to get pleasure and comfort employ the poor in their service and thus the poor lose their comfort and rights, but the society remains inactive to their sufferings. The hero represents the poor and simple working class tortured and crushed by the privileged, higher and richer classes. Anand places Munoo in opposition to a debased society – a frail, defenceless figure in a hostile world. Society is the greatest destroyer that demolishes Munoo and his hopes. K.N. Sinha rightly observes:

“The tragedy of Munoo is an indictment of the evils of capitalism. But the purpose of the novelist is not to present a gloomy picture of life. On the contrary, he wishes to arouse the conscience of humanity against the ruthless exploitation of the weak. He handles in this prose-epic the realities of the human situation as he sees and understands them”. (33)

### **Man’s Cruelty to Man: Caste and Class Inequality**

Anand’s avowed purpose as a writer of the thirties is to treat literature as a testimony to the rampant oppression of the underdogs and corruption of the higher classes. Anand’s humanism recognizes the fact that pain and cruelty are two other serious maladies of the world. His humanism places man in the center of all things. Anand discusses the history, misinterpretation, misuse, and effects of the caste system and class divisions in India. Anand delves deep into the depth of human consciousness of lowly, the squalor and ugliness of human life, against a background of a taboo-ridden society and its callous laws. In *Coolie*, Anand portrays the adventurous journey of Munoo, an orphaned village boy from the Kangra hills, who is forced to leave his idyllic village, Billaspur in search of a livelihood. Munoo moves from village to town from town to city, from city to Bombay and from Bombay to Simla. Poverty compels Munoo to be apprenticed to life at the age of fourteen.

“The heat of the closed carriage and the rocking of the train made him fatigued and dizzy. He sought to counteract the urgings of sleep by staring out to the desert again. But the dancing shimmer of the heat

waves struck a kind of awe into his brain; his eyes closed against his will, and he succumbed to forgetfulness". (148)

The pathos of Munoo's life at the early adolescent period is expressed in *Coolie*. Munoo represents the whole downtrodden section and their sufferings due to poverty and due to economic background, they have to suffer under the higher class authority. Thus, Anand here tries to focus on the man's cruelty to man. Munoo has to live in a filthy state:

"And to live in a fifteen-by-ten room, cramped on the floor, amid the smoke and smell of cooking and of the food eaten, amid a chaos of pots and pans, old beds and crawling children, in the publicity of the common staircase, the common washing place, the common latrines, and amid the foul smell of sewages that filtered over the pathways, conduces to comradeship". (208)

The theme of the abolition of the underprivileged section is Anand's main concern in his campaign for the betterment of humanity. According to Primal Paul Anand's desire is to create in readers an urgent awareness of the dehumanizing social evils, to stir the springs to tenderness in them, and to activate them for the removal of these evils in order that a desirable of a just social order may come into being. The sufferings of the downtrodden and underprivileged section are depicted in Dickens's novel and Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper*. The tendency towards actual social existence explains the situation of the underprivileged section and their inequality.

### **Physical, Psychological and Sexual Exploitation**

In *Coolie*, Munoo is an archetypal figure, a true representative of tailing, suffering and starving millions of India. Through him, Mulk Raj Anand has focused attention on the wretched plight of the teeming millions of India, who are exploited. They are made to work hard and they hardly get two square meals a day, grow sick and exhausted and die prematurely. His life of drudgery from morning to night is full of the most violent invectives and insults hurled at him. His mistress berates him worse than beasts. Since Bibiji is a barren woman, she has no love for Munoo and often picks up the quarrel with him. When Munoo complains of the behavior of his master, Daya Ram turns a deaf ear. Instead of sympathizing with the suffering child he beats and kicks him. Bibiji's wrath knows no bounds at this critical juncture. He has no right to join in the merrymaking of his social superiors and eat from a plate as they do. Scrubbing the vessels, sweeping the floor, preparing beds and laying the table and of course, getting abused – these chores constitute his monotonous daily routine.

"'Come, vay, you dead one! Where are you now?' Shouted Bibiji, ... 'come and scrub these utensils with the ashes, you idler! Not a speck of dirt or grease must remain on that!' She roared. Then as he applied himself to the task, she cried: 'oh, God, leave it, leave it! You are no good! I will have to do it. I must do everything myself. Nobody does anything satisfactorily. Can't you see, you idiot, that black must come off? Just compare the sheen of those utensils which lie polished on the rack with those you have cleaned today! You must get the same brilliance". (25-26)

Uprooted from an idyllic milieu where he lived a carefree life as a grazer of cattle, Munoo now finds himself gradually spent and broken in both body and spirit. Munoo who had romantic illusions regarding the city life, its charm and glamour, is shocked to see the crude reality of life. In response to his sincere service, he is given stale and rotten food to eat. Anand handles the theme with great penetration and affinity. He pierces into their hearts and operates like an expert

physician, repudiating the mal- treatment imparted to this erroneously supposed squalor and filth in the Indian society. Anand presents the physical exploitation of the underprivileged section through the sufferings of Munoo.

Munoo's self -questioning, reflections on events and logical deductions speak highly of his evolving self. A self-assessment is articulated through one's own view of oneself as also through the view of others towards him. The master's daughter blatantly spells out that she would not play with a servant. For Bibiji, he is a spoiler of salt; for his uncle, mischievous, self-willed and obstinate; for Lehnu, a fellow servant, at dirty hill man etc. The fervent cry of his soul and the pain of his private self are psychologically poignant and true. Like Bakha in *Untouchable*, Munoo is untouchable in the house of Nathoo Ram. Sheila, Nathoo Ram's daughter, pushes Munoo away when he prances on all fours like a monkey to entertain her. She tells him:

“You are a servant; you must not play with us”. (33)

The social realism is also found in the poor condition of Indian labors. Bibiji constantly abuses him:

““You eater of your masters! Strange servant you are that you fall asleep before the sun sets! What is the use of a boy like you in the house if you are going to do that every day! Wake up! Wake up! You brute! Wake up and serve the Babuji his dinner! Or, at least eat your food before you sleep, if sleep to death you must!” (14)

Munoo's psychological penetration into the ways of the malevolent society and his own status in it exemplifies an innocent soul exposed to torture but not an apathetic, insensible heart bereft of finer feelings.

In *Coolie*, we find Mrs. Mainwaring. She felt pity for Munoo and took him away to Simla. She married, divorced and remarried several times. She came to Simla with Munoo and made him her domestic servant, her rickshaw-puller and as the novelist hints frequently something else. She exploited Munoo sexually that has never been stated explicitly but has been frequently suggested and hinted at.

“Munoo found that as the Memsahib's servant he had to fit into a new state of existence. His exact duties were not defined. He was just to remain at his mistress' beck and call, to do anything and everything that her ladyship desired at a particular moment. But in spite of the miscellaneousness of his duties, his life at Bhujji House resolved itself into a kind of pattern”. (257)

Munoo realizes it is his poverty, not caste that is at the root of all his distress. Dr. G.S. Balaram Gupta says:

“We see in *Coolie* how these evils of poverty and cruelty crush a bud of youth before it could bloom to any extent”. (38)

In *Coolie*, the central theme of exploitation at various levels and in varying degrees has been presented chiefly through Munoo's adventures and his journeys from pillar to post, the desperate struggle for survival of the working class. Anand also focuses on the consequences resulting from communal exploitation. The poor working class suffers the most. They have to tolerate unhealthy working conditions of the factories and the moral and physical degradation. Exploitation of the gullible Munoo continues unabated at Bombay the industrial and commercial capital of India. Naik describes the factory as a huge octopus with its tentacles in order to clutch the laborers. The exploitation leads Munoo to his death of consumption at a very young age. The underprivileged sections are degraded physically, psychologically and sexually in



this industrial society. They have to tolerate insult in every step. Munoo actually represents the whole exploited section and their sufferings like Bakha in *Untouchable*.

### Social Realism

Realism has always been Anand's forte. *Coolie* is a powerful social tragedy due to the artistic treatment of cruel inhuman social forges of poverty and exploitation. Anand's humanistic zeal is expressed through a host of negative pictures of the society. The exploitation strategy operates from a grassroots level in *Coolie*. Munoo's uncle, a chaprasi, wields his ruthless power over his orphaned nephew. Munoo is helplessly enmeshed in his clutches.

“And, as he thought of the conditions, under which he had lived, of the intensity of the struggle and the futility of the waves of revolt falling upon the hard rock of privilege and possession, as he thought of Ratan and Hari and Lakshmi and the riot, he felt sad and bitter and defeated like an old man”. (250)

A cyclic chain of shackles binds the marginalized from birth to death. The hierarchic hegemonic coercion goes on irrespective of caste, class, and gender. Like Gandhiji, Anand too fought for the essential development of the society that is to bring forth decency and dignity in human life. Bakha and Munoo are invested with such dignity in their characters. For Anand, dignity is the right of each man living under the sun. Anand's treatment of his theme in *Coolie* shows how as in *Untouchable* he is at his best when he observes keenly, describes realistically and with unflinching honesty. He maintains his balance even when his compassion and indignation clamor for expression. The social panorama against which Munoo moves gives Anand an opportunity to deal with a cognate theme – a relationship in which the element of exploitation is mixed with prejudices, misunderstandings, and inhibitions on both sides.

The Picture of the dirt and squalor in which the factory workers live is done with unsparing detail. The finest touch is the scene Where Munoo and Hari with his family are seeking a night's shelter on the crowded pavements of Bombay. In painting Munoo's lot, Anand is careful not to present a one-sided picture, his crusading zeal in attacking the social system does, in certain insidious ways, cripple his art. M.K. Naik says:

“The only explanation possible is that Anand is so busy painting his picture of social inequality that the artistic danger in leaving his protagonist a static and passive victim escapes his notice altogether”. (45)

In *Coolie*, Munoo has a traditional sense of inferiority. He tries to adjust to everyone but he fails. The reason for the failure is not any inherent flaw in him but the cruelty of circumstances, the greedy selfishness, and mercilessness of his fellow human beings. Society treats him like an animal. Anand suggests that if the society would be little sympathetic towards the downtrodden, they can get happiness in their poverty-stricken life. In *Coolie* Anand portrays the social picture that forces the downtrodden to lead an oppressed and suppressed life. Anand through the picture of social realism presents the exploitation and sufferings that become cancer in the society that needs a protest. *Coolie* touches the pathetic and the sublime areas of human experience. Here, Anand explores the limits of pain central to existence.

### Various Critical Works

The central theme of the novel is the tragic denial of a simple, landless peasant of the fundamental right to happiness. The terrible destiny of being a victim of exploitation is indeed Munoo's dubious birthright. A powerful critique of British colonization of India-*Coolie* beautifully describes the trauma suffered by those at the bottom rung of India's complex social hierarchy. Commenting on the humanist novel, Anand says:

“The novels about human beings need the author, and others, men, women and children in the whirlpool, where there are contrary impulses, clashing trends, doubts, misgivings, making life a river which flows...towards the ocean... If the novelist liberates his characters, and they take charge of their own destinies, fiction may release their inner sentiments...and reveal their predicaments, which...may lift the burden of pain and anxiety”. (115)

According to William Walsh, it is a quality working right through *Coolie* where Anand shows himself one of the first Indian writers to look on the savagely neglected, despised and maltreated power with an angry look of resignation. In an age where the awareness of Human Rights is a major issue, the literary depiction of the marginalized groups of people becomes very significant. In his *Apology for Heroism*, Anand has stated:

“The theme of my work is the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationships rather than only one single part of it”. (105)

Mulk Raj Anand emerges on the scene of Indo Anglican literature, as a crusader against social exploitation. The eminence of Anand’s fictional art lies in the realistic portrayal of the object plight of the suffering masses and his writings abound with the essential human sympathy. His writings provide a panoramic view of the rural life in India with all its merits and drawbacks. In his autobiography *Apology for Heroism*, Anand proclaims that

“A writer must go to the heart of the problem of human sensibility in the present complex world, the tragedy of moral man”. (119)

In one of his letters to S.A. Khan, he clears his stand as a novelist:

“I began to understand the roofs of misery around me before I began to write novels. And those novels are not of ‘commitment’ but of protest, on all planes and arising out of my human concerns”. (7)

In *Coolie*, Munoo’s short life acts as a mirror on which the social reality of the times is reflected in black and grey. Exhibition of prestige and exploitation of power go hand in the cruel world since Anand is out to locate the sources and possibilities of suffering in the social sphere. Saros Cowasjee has analyzed Anand’s source and method of incorporating the pain of the said class in his essay *Anand’s Fusion of History and Fiction*. He states:

“Anand is concerned with the long-range truth of history which may be differ from everyday occurrences and Gandhi’s speech is carefully drawn from a speech he gave at “the Suppressed Classes Conference” in Ahmadabad on 13 April 1921”. (99)

Like most humanitarians, he too is apt to allow the springs of his compassion wind their way to a sea of sentimentality. The oppressed class in the country now a day has reached a stage where they are no longer willing to fight for their rights through his novels such as *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. In an era where human rights and their awareness is an all-pervasive issue, literary depictions of the experiences of marginalized groups of people have special importance. M.K. Naik says:

“Every writer has the right to be judged by what he attempts to do can do, rather than by what he cannot do. Anand, as seen earlier, is a committed writer by conscious intention”. (174)

A powerful critique of British Colonisation of India – *Coolie*, beautifully describes the trauma suffered by those at the bottom rung of India's complex social hierarchy. According to Edward Burra, Munoo is very much like Bakha, the untouchable, differing only in physical appearance. In him, as in Bakha, there is an irrepressible curiosity and happiness. He comments:

“The shadow of joy and desire, and the simplicity of his mind in the face of ever-increasing suffering are magnificently done. He is incapable of dramatizing experience: so that in his sudden question “why some men are so good, and others bad” – there is an indescribable power. Yet he is no tragic hero; nothing nameable is wasted when he dies, nothing but his own love of life. But such is the force of the author's pity that all that is good in life seems to be irreparably lost with him”. (227)

## CONCLUSIONS

Anand presents the suffering, downtrodden class of the society through the novel *Coolie*. As he is a humanist, his novels bring out human predicaments in a very vivid and lively manner. M.K. Naik says - “R.K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual, just as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man”. Anand's condemnation of social orders and responsibility derives its effectiveness from a total control of all the aspects of his problem. He shows a sure grasp of the psychology of both Munoo and the higher class society in *Coolie*. M.K. Naik states:

“From the plight of the social outcaste, Anand turns to the lot of another class of the under-privileged in modern Indian society in *Coolie*”. (39)

The theme of the exploitation of the underprivileged is presented in depth in *Coolie* and the picture is drawn with vividness. *Coolie* tells the story of the experiences of Munoo an orphan, from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab till he dies of consumption in Simla. Anand's aim in *Coolie* is to bring the living conditions of the poor and the downtrodden through the portrait of Munoo. Mulk Raj Anand has contributed to Indian awareness of the need for social change.

*Coolie* is a veritable saga of unending pain, suffering and prolonged struggle punctuated only occasionally by brief moments of relief and hope. Munoo finds himself in the realm of melancholy but at the same time, he protests in his heart to heart against the atrocity. Mulk Raj Anand's protagonists rebel against the atrocities when it becomes intolerable for them. In this context, it may be possible to rework the category of 'Dalit' for more imaginative, empowering ends, to envision it against the backdrop of the rich human world. Such social political and cultural ends are more easily longed for than articulated clearly. Munoo passes through his journey of life, before his achieving destiny, which is merely survival. With regard to *Coolie*, M.K. Naik comments:

“The central theme of the novel is the tragic denial to a simple landless peasant of the fundamental right to happiness. The terrible destiny of being a victim of exploitation is indeed Munoo's dubious birthright”. (46)

Anand extends the reach of the proletarian novel of the nineteen thirties. His novel *Coolie* refigures the terms of analysis in the name of exploited mass. Anand presents the misery of socially backward class and coolies in India. Anand suggests that humanism is the only solution to the problems.

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