



Munoo, the Protagonist in “Coolie”, a Victim of Exploitation by M R Anand

Koyyada Rajani
Department of English Osmania University
Cell: 995943910

ABSTRACT

Coolie is a ravaging account of the poverty and exploitation faced, not just by the protagonist, Munoo, but thousands like him. Anand shows how the racial and class hierarchies imposed by British colonialism have intersected, or overlaid, the existing caste system to make life impossible for “Coolies”. All the common enemies of the suppressed and exploited people in the novel show the real scenario of India. The foundation of the country was built on basis of casteism and classism. Anand portrayed how British colonizers were exploiting the coolies. The protagonist Munoo also was deceived by the high class people. Munoo has no real control over his life; over the work he does or where he lives or how he is treated. The novel takes us to different places and cities showing the inhuman and degrading treatment that the poor Munoo 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. As he moves from one place to another in search of a job or a home, he moves from one tragedy to another. In his travels and through the various people he meets and is employed by, he is

exposed to the multiplicity of life in India which is made vivid by Anand’s prose. If the novel’s portrait of Munoo’s life raises difficult questions about Indian society, Munoo’s death raises the question of whether there can be any future for a “Coolie” if nothing changes.

Key Words: Exploitation, Suffering, Deception, Suppression.

INTRODUCTION

Coolie, by Mulk Raj Anand, was first published in 1936 and helped to establish Anand as one of the foremost Anglophone Indian writers of his day. Coolie narrates the story of the protagonist Munoo, a boy from the hills of Kangra. Being an orphan, he was brought up by his aunt. At the age of 14, he leaves the beautiful hills and river Beas at his- native village to Shampur town to work as a servant. However, early in the novel they reveal they can no longer support Munoo and insist that he get a job. This is the beginning of a journey that will take Munoo to Bombay and beyond, but it also marks the end of his childhood. With his Uncle, Munoo travels to a nearby town where he finds

a job as a servant to a bank clerk, Babu Nathoo Ram. Munoo is mistreated by his master's wife but he admires his master's younger brother, Prem Chand, who is a doctor. Babu Nathoo Ram himself is something of a caricature; a typical example of a Middle Class Anglophile who has internalized the values of the colonizer and firmly believes in the supremacy of white people. A great fuss is made when the aptly named Mr. English visits the bank where Babu Nathoo Ram works, but Anand uses this episode to undercut the apparent superiority of the English. When Prem Chand enquires about the best place in Britain to further his medical training, it is revealed that Mr. English is uneducated and doesn't know. After accidentally injuring Sheila, Babu Nathoo Ram's daughter, Munoo is beaten and decides to run away. He makes it as far as Daultapur, where he is taken in by Prabha, who runs a pickle factory. Prabha and his wife are kind to Munoo, although the work is hard. Throughout the novel, Anand points to the way the lower classes are exploited by those above them, with Munoo being the ultimate example of this exploitation. Here, he shows how Prabha must appease his neighbor, the Public Prosecutor Sir Todar Mal, with free pickles and jam to prevent him having the factory shut down because the smoke irritates him. Ultimately, however, it is Prabha's own business partner, Ganpat, who

cheats him and leaves him bankrupt, suggesting a lack of class consciousness or solidarity.

Munoo, a victim of exploitation, like thousands of others

Munoo's life in Bombay proves to be a series of sad experiences. What is most surprising to him is the fact that even in that glamorous city there are thousands of people who sleep on the pavements because they have no homes. It is with great difficulty the a man by the name of Hari, whose son Munoo has saved from being run over by heavy traffic in a road, gets Munoo a job in the cotton mill in which Hari himself also gets employed. The hut, which they get on rent, is soon badly damaged by heavy shower of rain; and they have to move to a chawl where a large number of workmen lodge. Here the street is full of urine and dung because there are only seven latrines for two hundred people. Both Munoo and Hari become targets of exploitation by Jimmie Thomas, the head fore man of the cotton mill, and also by Pathan get keeper of the mill. They are further exploited by a Sikh shop keeper who sells grocery to needy workmen on credit, charging high rates of interest. Here Jimmie is the greatest villain, as the Ganat and Police were in Daulatpur.

The management of Sir George White

Cotton Mill, in which Munoo, Hari and Hari's wife Laxmi are working, does not lag behind anybody else in exploiting the poor. The management announces a curtailment of the working days at the Mill in order to reduce its wage-bill and maintain its profits. The management is as greedy as is its head foreman, and as it the Sikh shopkeeper. The management swayed only by the commercial motive of making the maximum possible profits by the sale of its products. When under the influence of Communists leaders of the Red flag Union of the workers, the workers are getting ready to go on strike, the management spreads a false rumor that some Hindu children have been kidnapped by the Muhammadans. This rumor leads to communal clashes among the workers, and then to a communal riot in the city in the course of which large number of the people of both the communities, Hindus and Muslims are murdered and Munoo himself narrowly escapes being killed. The mischievous action the management of the mill is aggravated by role of a Muslim leader, Maulana Hasrat Ali. Munoo is exploited greatly in once way or another, by one person or another. Munoo universally symbolizes the suffering of the oppressed and those taken advantage of. According to the novelist, there is a need for reestablishment of kindness. Anand not only makes a hero out of the boy but also gifts him with self-esteem.

Suppression takes major role in Coolie to show how pathetic the lives of the Indian people are under the suppressive forces.

CONCLUSION :

Coolie marks a greater self-assurance in the art of Anand and a further depending description of marginal living. It comprehends greater variety and deeper levels of degradation than does Untouchable. Munoo, the central character of Coolie, is exploited all the time in one way or the other and his future is typical of the future of millions whose only common feature is patient suffering. The novelist brings into prominence the requirement of reestablishment of kindness in the world lost in capitalism and colonialism. Munoo is a person with lot of problems. He creates pity in our minds but no fear. Here, Anand does not romanticize the character but renders the societal forces of catastrophe, that is, capitalism and colonialism, as they are found taking place in existing society. Especially the country like India there is crores of people who are exploited by upper class hypocrisy. These people's only sin that being born in poverty and illiteracy. The novel has been described as a naturalistic portrayal of life and its darkest moments that being central theme throughout out it.

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