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PATHETIC PICTURE OF COOLIES IN COOLIE

KEY WORDS:

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand is known as a messiah for pariahs and downtrodden class of society. He does not believe in caste or creed. He has his strong faith in humanity. He is a socially committed novelist. Mulk Raj Anand uses his talent of writing to eradicate the evils from society. He has written his books with some or other purpose. His themes are totally different and convey valuable messages

INTRODUCTION:

Mulk Raj Anand *Coolie* is a novel of deep social anger against the plight of the poor in India was published in 1936. It is translated into more than twenty languages. The novel highlights the loss of precious childhood, selfishness, and heartlessness in destroying irrevocably that tender shoot of spread as greed, selfishness and inhumanity. It is a mixture of inhumane and humane, the sordid and the beautiful. The novel describes the suffering of the coolies. It tells the story of the downtrodden section of society. Anand describes the gap between the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited, the ruler and the ruled and the masters and the servants.

The novel deals with the problem of poverty which is the root cause of all evils. Munoo the hero faces the maltreatment and humiliation at every stage of his life. He is denied of all rights and is exploited from birth to suffer till he meets his premature death. Munoo's problems are universal in nature. He represents the exploitation of millions of coolies who are leading life full of miseries. *Coolie* presents a chain of sufferings of the protagonist Munoo. *Coolie* is the tragedy of Munoo, an orphan, who moves from place to place in search of livelihood and happiness in this world where poor man's flesh and blood is treated as cheaper than bread. Munoo for happiness moves from the hilly area to the town, from the town to the city, and at the end he reaches in the mountains, and meets his tragic end. Munoo in his life has played the role of a servant, worker, and coolie to survive but incapable of finding a place for him in society.

Munoo-hero of the story becomes orphan at the age of fourteen. His father had committed a suicide as he was not able to pay the debt of the landlords. After sometime he lost his mother also. Now Munoo lives with his uncle and aunt. They want that now Munoo must earn money. His aunt always scolds him and abuses him. He afraid from his aunt too much. His aunt always shouts at him. Anand's Munoo is as innocent and lovely as Wordsworth's Lucy. The bringing up of Lucy is done by nature. She enjoys nature. The mountains, valleys, trees, the voice of running water and so on make Lucy happy and keep her away from the harsh realities of life. Munoo also love nature, he never feels lonely in the company of nature. Nature provides the fruit of all seasons.

In the village he was happy. When Munoo is translated to babu Nathoo ram's house at Sham Nagar and he faces the formidable Bibiji, his heart sinks. K.R. Srinivas lyengar writes:

"And in his heart, there was a lonely song, a melancholy wail, asking, not pointedly, but in a vague uncertain rhythm, what life in this woman's house would prove." (*Indian Writing in English 2008: 341*)

Munoo is like a rabbit in a trap. His movements, talks and happiness are controlled by Bibiji. He is not allowed to play with the children of his class and also not allowed to go anywhere in the house except the kitchen and the bath room. Bibiji always keeps him busy in the kitchen. Bibiji has told him not to touch her utensils without washing his hands because his clothes are filthy and his body is dirty. He is denied contact with the outside world and the

natural elements. He never enjoys personal freedom in its real sense. Munoo is told what to do and where he belongs; not as a human, but as an inferior being. He realizes his place in the world. He is a slave, a servant who must do the work, all the odd jobs.. He does not settle down to it easily. He has lost his own individuality then one day he runs away from the home and catches the train. In the train he meets Prabha Dayal. He takes child to his home and childless couple love him so much. Munoo starts doing job in the pickle factory. His life is running smoothly. But soon the pickle factory is sold out due to dishonesty of Ganpat. Prabha Dayal and his wife leave the city and go to village.

Now he is alone and has nothing to do for with two times bread. Munoo does not go back to his master's house and has slept in the street at night. In the morning, he goes to the railway station to find some work. He tries to do work as a coolie but is caught by the policeman for not having licenses. Then he tries his hand in the grain market but fails to make his two ends meal, due to cut throat competition between the coolies.

Now Munoo goes to Bombay with the help of an elephant driver. He gets job in a cotton mill with the help of Hari. The factory is huge octopus one with its numerous tentacles crushing the laborers in its deadly grasps, slowly poisoning them. The coolies working under such condition degenerate into moving corpses with fear fixed on their brows. The managers hires the workers charged them and give the low wages. The environment is too polluted in the factory. The wages are low and the coolies are forced to pay commission to their boss from their wages. Besides this they pay rent of the unsanitary huts. The wages left just for food to eat and live. Anand pictures the pitiable condition of the coolies in the city. The coolies sleep on the road and shop boards. They find some place in the street where shops close early and the boards are empty.

Through this novel Anand has presented the picture of the industrial workers in 1930s. At that time in addition to hard working conditions and low level of incomes, Indian industrial workers had to endure bad living conditions. The life of workers outside the workplace was not only inadequate to rebuild their lost labor, but gave them further physical and mental suffering. Munoo runs from there and is knocked down by a car. Mrs Mainwaring is in the car. She takes Munoo at her home. She is a divorcee. She keeps Munoo as her domestic servant. Sometime she exploits him sexually. Munoo's duty is to pull rickshaw for Mrs. Mainwaring when she used to go out for shopping. Mrs. Mainwaring in the words of Anand is a woman of pretensions and no morals, and makes Munoo her rickshaw-puller (perhaps something more than as well). She is attracted towards Munoo and often uses him sexually. Munoo becomes so weak that he is caught by the disease consumption. In spite of all possible efforts of medical treatment his condition deteriorated. When Munoo is on bed of death, he wants to live more, and wants to work also. "And again he reached out to life, the joys of life. I want to live, I want to work, to work with machines." (*Coolie 2001:*)

But is destiny is not with him and:

"In the early hours of one unreal, white night he passed away the

tide of his life having reached back to the deeps." (*Coolie* 2001: 318)

Munoo is not permitted to live more in the society, by the society. So at the end, he meets his tragic premature death. Such is the real story of Munoo-the coolie.

Munoo's life is deeply presented in the book and the life history of Munoo is not of Munoo's himself but he has represented the life of millions of Indian coolies who meet their death because of poverty, hunger, hard work, and starvation. Anand wants to expose all social evils in the tragedy of Munoo and wants to appeal to the Indian society to abolish the class division.

Poverty is thus the root cause of all the evils in the life of the protagonist. Due to poverty he lost his father and mother too. Both of them died, leaving their child, an orphan. Even Daya Ram wants to get rid of Munoo just because of poverty. The constant fear of poverty and hunger makes him accept various occupations at various places. At last Munoo realizes that the root cause of his tragedy is poverty

Coolie is written in the vein of a realistic fiction. The solid facts of life have been recapitulated here. The illusion of reality or miserable life in *Coolie* is created by starkly realistic narration. It is well-known fact in India that an orphan is very often maltreated by his uncle and is thrown into the busy stream of life even as a child. This psychology is the first stroke of realism at the beginning of the novel. *Coolie* is the transcript of life; there are events which have accuracy and photographic realism. For instance, this piece of conversation.

Anand has truly the fiery voice of the people belonging to the poor class and untouchables. He has successfully communicated the hopes, aspirations, pains and frustrations of this class of society.

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