

Capitalism And Marginalization In MulkRaj Anand's Coolie

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Abstract

Anand is admired for his novels and short stories, which have acquired the status of classics of modern Indian English literature; they are noted for their perceptive insight into the lives of the oppressed and for their analysis of impoverishment, exploitation and misfortune. Munoo, the protagonist of *Coolie*, is a young boy who endures a great deal of suffering at the hands of capitalist forces. He is taken advantage of by powerful individuals, and he eventually passes away from excessive sexual abuse. Anand's novel, "*Coolie*," uses the term to represent the marginalized and exploited, specifically focusing on Munoo's journey as a migrant child worker searching for work. This exploitation of working-class people clearly underlines the continuous rift between the proletarian class and the imperialist bourgeoisie class. Anand was a lifelong socialist. His novels attack various aspects of India's social structure as well as the legacy of British rule in India; they are considered important social statements as well as literary artefacts. Anand himself was steadfast in his belief that politics and literature remained inextricable from one another. He was a founding member of the Progressive Writers' Association and also he helped in drafting the manifesto of the association.

Keywords: Capitalism, Marginalisation, Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand (12 December 1905 – 28 September 2004) was an Indian writer in English, recognised for his depiction of the lives of the poorer class in the traditional Indian society. One of the pioneers of [Indo-Anglian](#) fiction, he, together with [R. K. Narayan](#), [Ahmad Ali](#) and [Raja Rao](#), was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an International readership. Anand is admired for his novels and short stories, which have acquired the status of classics of modern Indian English literature; they are noted for their perceptive insight into the lives of the oppressed and for their analysis of impoverishment, exploitation and misfortune. Anand's novel, "*Coolie*," uses the term to represent the marginalized and exploited, specifically focusing on Munoo's journey as a migrant child worker searching for work. Man has been exploited since time immemorial adopting different tools by powerful forces. One such tool is capitalism that

tortures and exploits the poor individuals who are at the bottom of the socio- economic hierarchy. This exploitative system also takes away their natural happiness and creates deathtraps to their existence. And, thus, the marginalized section becomes the victim of authoritative forces that exploit them socially, economically, politically, and sexually too. Mulk Raj Anand as a champion of humanism represents all these tribulations of society through his novels. He satirically observes the causes which relegate people owing to their class subsequently denying them equality both at the economic and social level. These inequalities stem from the institutionalized economic forces and make all the difference in their lives. Anand through his novel *Coolie* highlights the plight of proletariat section of society and explores the theme of exploitation and capitalism in a very realistic manner. In capitalist society poor working-class people were not given any chance to speak, their voice was suppressed. Munoo and others like him had no any option to have better life. They were helpless, hopeless in the face of colonial capitalist machinery of oppression and injustice. Ananda, MulkRaj. This exploitation of working-class people clearly underlines the continuous rift between the proletarian class and the imperialist bourgeoisie class.

Munoo, the protagonist of *Coolie*, is a young boy who endures a great deal of suffering at the hands of capitalist forces. He is taken advantage of by powerful individuals, and he eventually passes away from excessive sexual abuse. This kind of exploitation affects millions of people, including Munoo. This type of exploitation and denial of life and happiness to the impoverished and underprivileged is widespread throughout India and it is portrayed by the novelist quite evidently. The characters similar to Munoo reside in little towns or villages, or in large cities like Daulatpur and Bombay as Munoo in the novel, they are bound to suffer. It depicts the horrible and hopeless circumstances of the disadvantaged group, which frequently falls prey to authoritarian powers. Anand's "Coolie" is presented as a counterpoint to Rudyard Kipling's "Kim," which explores the adventures of a young boy in British India, while "Coolie" focuses on the perspective of a marginalized, working-class individual.

Munoo, an orphan hails from countryside. He is happy living with his playmates in the idyllic natural surroundings of his native village in spite of ill-treatment by his uncle and aunt. Even this small rural community is not free from feudal and capitalist exploitation. He comes to know the pathetic conditions of his father how the landlord seized his property:

The landlord had seized his father's five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and the harvests bad. And he knew how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless beggar, to "support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms. The sight of his mother grinding grain between the scarred surfaces of mill-stones which she gyrated round and round, round and round, by the wooden handle, now with her right hand, now with her left, day and night, had become indelibly imprinted on his mind. Also, the sight of her as she had lain dead on the ground with a horrible yet sad, set expression on her face, had sunk into his subconscious with all its weight of tragic dignity and utter designation. (pp.2-3)

Munoo is denied the right to an independent existence at the immature age of fourteen. The first person to take advantage of him is his uncle, and his poverty is the cause. In the city, he works as a servant in the home of BabuNathoo Ram, the Sub-Accountant of the Imperial Bank branch in Sham Nagar. Because of his wife, Bibi Uttam Kaur, he is put under a lot of work and endures greater hardship. On his first day as a servant, he is labeled as a simpleton and rustic loafer because he has urinated close to the house's wall without knowing where the latrine is. He and his uncle are humiliated by the snooty and suspicious woman, who also takes away his three rupees in salary. She declines to give him the money he requests for meals. He lacks appropriate clothing and footwear. When Baboo beats him one day, his uncle doesn't show any pity. Additionally, he once bites Bibiji's daughter while performing a monkey dance. These incidents give the whole thing a more somber and realistic feel. He has experienced the pains of his job and places in the world before fleeing Sham Nagar. He is aware that he is a servant and a slave who must perform all weird tasks. He is of the opinion that: "There must be only two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor" (67). Ultimately, he fails to keep his spirit high and runs away from the house to defend himself from the cruelty and ruthlessness of all the house holders.

After running from Sham Nagar, Munoo comes to Bombay and takes up the job of a coolie in a cotton mill. Here he faces the industrial and colonial exploitation at large scale which hardly leaves a respectful and dignified position for the marginalized section of society. In Bombay, there are many big industries and their owners are the forces of exploitation of the poor coolies. Munoo takes up service in Sir George White's Cotton Mill and there he happens to meet

industrial and colonial exploitation in a more frightening way than he met earlier. M.K. Naik says:

The factory is a huge octopus with its numerous tentacles clutching the labourer in its deadly grasp, slowly paralyzing and poisoning him. The British Management offers no security of tenure, a landlord, who rents out ramshackle cottages at exorbitant rent and money-lender all rolled into one. The Pathan, door-keeper practices usury with even more drastic methods. The ill-paid, ill-housed, under nourished and bullied labourer is broken. Anand tries to lift the image of Munoo, a boy, Coolie represents all the cadres of the society starting from coolies to autocratic Englishman. The variety of the ranks of people is basically selected to highlight the contrast between the various classes.

The novel also deals with sexual exploitation of the poor. The poor are the victim of even sexual exploitations by the capitalist forces. Munoo is the victim of sexual exploitation, and ultimately it causes his death. He comes in contact with Mrs. Mainwaring in the fifth and final act of Munoo's tragedy when her car knocks him down and he is taken from Bombay to Simla. There he acts her rickshaw puller. She is attracted towards the boy of sixteen years and uses him sexually. He is pleased living with her and is contented in the job of rickshaw-pulling since he feels himself inferior to the superior people who lived in bungalows and wore Angrezi clothes. He is overworked in her house and as a result of this he dies of consumption at the age of sixteen. His premature death is caused more from the result of sexual excess than due to the strain of pulling the rickshaw. The forces of exploitation tempted him easily because he is poor, helpless and alone and hence, suffers in their mighty hands. Munoo's journey becomes a symbolic representation of the broader struggle for dignity and equality for the workers. The exploitation faced by coolies serves as a call for social change, urging readers to question and challenge the prevailing capitalist structures that perpetuate such injustices. Anand provides a critical examination of capitalist values through the characters and their experiences. The pursuit of profit, unchecked capitalism and the disregard for the well-being of the laboring class are portrayed as detrimental to the social fabric of society.

The novel also underscores the importance of communalism for capitalist forces as such forces exploit the illiterate and uneducated masses in the name of religion and rituals. The massive and unbridled forces use them for their own benefit as they become successful in breaking the workers' strike and their genuine demands succumb to their masters' planned communal

disturbances. The rumour of kidnapping the children from each community prevails and it gives rise to hatred among them and hence, their unity is ultimately broken. Politicians with personal grievances also contribute to the stoking of communal hate. Thus, in the whole episode of communal riot the exploited workers are exploited again i.e. they lose their job, their earning and even their lives. Their means of livelihood is shattered and communal exploitation is exposed to the zenith. The voice of the oppressed and downtrodden is thus represented by Anand's Coolie. The novel might be viewed as what Marx and Engels call it: "The "dangerous class", [lumpenproletariat] the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue" (14).

This exploitation of working-class people clearly underlines the continuous rift between the proletarian class and the imperialist bourgeoisie class. At the one end, there is Munoo who represents the working class, and on the other hand, his masters who represent the elite class that generally exploit the working class. Overall, Anand has painted an accurate image of how the poor and disadvantaged are exploited. He presents the miserable state of these people in pre-Independence and post-Independence era and vividly depicts the dehumanizing effects of labour exploitation. Coolies are treated as mere commodities, devoid of dignity and basic human rights. The relentless pursuit of profit by the capitalist class leads to the devaluation of human life, reducing individuals to expendable units of labour. The novel explores not only economic exploitation but social injustice and discrimination also become its integral part. Munoo's experiences highlight how caste and class intersect, leading to further marginalization and oppression of certain groups within society. In this sense, the novel is a true chronicle of never-ending agony, suffering, and protracted struggle interspersed with fleeting moments of hope and relief. K.K. Sharma puts it as : "Coolie is a sincere protest against the emergence of a new world of money and exploitation and class distinction. It shows how working class is beaten down by the powerful agents of capitalist system even in the present time". (36) Hence, it becomes pertinent for the government to formulate the economic policies that ensure economic independence of the marginalized class. However, it is never proposed that the disadvantaged class will go for class struggle with the capitalist class in their attempt to create an equitable society. Besides, the bourgeoisie class should lend a helping hand to society in making this world

more equitable and more cooperative by providing its support to eliminate the age-old struggle between the poor and the rich. This will definitely pave way for an egalitarian society that will be free from the disparities arising out of feudal and capitalist system evil of capital exploitation.

He says;

“Coolie touches the pathetic and the sublime areas of human experience. Here Anand explores the limits of pain central to existence. He places Munoo in opposition to a debasing and debases society- a frail, defenseless figure in a predominantly hostile world. Society is the great destroyer that fells N. Sinha, rightly comments on the indictment of the evil of capital exploitation. He says; “Coolie touches the pathetic and the sublime areas of human experience. Here Anand explores the limits of pain central to existence. He places Munoo in opposition to a debasing and debases society- a frail, defenseless figure in a predominantly hostile world. Society is the great destroyer that fells K.N. Sinha, rightly comments on the indictment of the evil of capital exploitation.

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Religious bigotry, hypocrisy, feudal system, east-west encounter, the place of woman in the society, superstitions, poverty, sufferings, misery, and hunger ; these are the issues well rose by Anand in his works.

Munoo, a young orphan, faces a series of misfortunes and is forced to work as a domestic servant, coolie, and rickshaw puller to survive. He experiences exploitation and mistreatment by various people, including his uncle, a shopkeeper, and a factory owner. Munoo, a young orphan, faces a series of misfortunes and is forced to work as a domestic servant, coolie, and rickshaw puller to survive. He experiences exploitation and mistreatment by various people, including his uncle, a shopkeeper, and a factory owner. The constant overwork and harsh conditions take a toll

on Munoo's health, leading to illness and eventual death. Munoo dies prematurely, a victim of the economic system and the exploitation faced by the poor. The novel concludes with the tragic death of Munoo, a young orphan who experiences relentless exploitation and hardship as a coolie, highlighting the stark realities of poverty and the suffering of the Indian working class.

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