

Coolie: Organic Force of Society

Abstract

This paper presents Anand's protest against exploitation of marginalized in the hands of elite class. Rich and high caste people represent a combine organic force of society which does not let downtrodden to develop. Mulk Raj Anand is a majestic novelist of pre independence era deals with the issues of deprived section of society, their sufferings, miseries, shattered lives. Through his works Anand always portrays the real picture of our society who always exploits the weaker section as he portrays in the character of 'Munoo'. According to Anand Munoo is the victim of combine organic force of society which does not digest him as a progressive man. Munoo is a universal figure who represents the suffering and starving of millions of people like him. *Coolie* is the life story of Munoo. It tells us about the trials and tribulation of a sensitive, inquisitive hill boy in a world whose life is entangled between the colonialists and colonized is in the form of master servant relationship. Munoo is a victim of society and it's so called system. His life becomes a saga of pain and sufferings. Novel takes a deep insight into the life of Munoo hence portraying the heart rending condition of Munoo and how he deal with them alone. This paper presents Anand's protest against the combine organic force of society which treats poor like a beast.

Keywords: Marginalized, Organic force, Inquisitive, Tribulation.

Introduction

Herbert Spenser regards that society performs a living role. Just man works in society on the basis of personal envy, jealousy, hatred and other man made evils. Society is nothing but sum of different man and woman who live in it. Therefore, the man made jealousy and other man made evils combined together work with a force. If any person breaks the established code of society that combines force stands against him like a living character. This then becomes the organic role of society.

Aim of the study

My aim in this study is to dig out Anand's impact on literature as well as society and its exploitation on downtrodden by elite class people. The analysis focuses on the novel *Coolie* which is a combine organic force of society.

Coolie

In *Coolie* (1936), Anand took the central theme of exploitation. Here, Anand portrays two classes of characters; The Exploiter and the Exploited. The combined organic force of society does not let Munoo, get free from the circumstances in which Munoo is surrounded. In *Coolie*, Munoo is the victim of the organic force of society which actually made his life what it was. Anand only describe the running commentary of the film. The awareness of Exploitation first emerged several years ago in Latin America, and more particularly in Asia. However the complete understanding of the term Exploitation came into existence after many decades of the people's slumber in the form of Karl marks, the first revolutionary against Capitalism and Industrialism which are the basic factors of exploitation. He was a revolutionary by nature. He observed;

"The worker becomes 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 more commodities he creates. With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion to the devaluation of the world of men."¹

The society has strong relationship with exploitation. The two main strata, the poor and the rich, are made in the society on that basis. The exploitation is prevalent in the society always favouring the rich. It is also based on the canons of economics that economic cycle always favours the rich, while exploitation goes on unhindered in the society, poor becomes more poor and the rich, the richer. The term exploitation, gives us two aspects of it. In exploitation one is used for specific purpose to benefit the exploiter, the exploitation may be of two kinds. The fundamental is to make a poor boy, over the age of twelve and under



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twenty. The other is to exploit someone in cruel manner and unjust way. If we want to explain it in simplest of terms, exploitation is to use someone's labour or work without adequately compensating it. It includes all types of abuses physically, verbal, emotional, sexual, psychological and mental.

Anand has painted the true picture of Munoo - the protagonist, in his novel *Coolie* giving it the real colour of life. The De-facto, harsh reality is exhibited by Anand in *Coolie*. The character of Munoo is clearly assimilated in the heart of the reader. The exploitation and suffering mated out to poor Munoo is the realistic account of a poor boy who suffers silently in the society. We find this situation in our day to day life. Dr. Anand is quite successful in making a pan picture of the factual situation in the novel. Not only this, he has used the real language prevalent in the society that gives the realistic effect of freshness and reality. Bibi Uttam Kaur uses the words for Munoo are quite real and almost similar with the words used for Bakha in *Untouchable*.

The role played by Munoo in *Coolie* is similar to that, which Bakha plays in *Untouchable*. Munoo is in the house of Babu Nathuram, where Sheila, the daughter of Babu Nathuram pushes Munoo away when he tries to please her by prancing on all fours like a monkey. She abhors him for this and says; "You are a servant; you must not play with us."²

Anand has presented the poor condition of Indian labourers to show the socio-moral paradigm in the society. Munoo faces the real starvation with empty belly is ironical and full of reality in the agriculture based nation- India. Seth Prabha Dayal picked up Munoo who has come down forced by the circumstances to get some good luck in plains. Seth Prabha Dayal, who is an owner of a pickle factory in Daultapur where Munoo is fed well on arrival and Mulk Raj Anand compares the feeding with the ironical remarks;

"It was the most sumptuous meal he had eaten since the feast on the death anniversary of his father and mother, which his aunt had given three months before he left the hills."³

On some occasion, Munoo was well fed. Anand has ironically remarked that he was given full belly good meal on death anniversary of his father and mother. It becomes a festival for Munoo or a poor worker whenever he gets full belly eatables for some reason.

In *Coolie*, Munoo was running a Marathon in life, but is crushed away under the heavy burden of colonized mind. The relationship between the colonialist and colonized is in the form of master servant relationship. Munoo's sufferings are mostly due to such established social order. All the above is clearly expressed when Daya Ram, Munoo's uncle said to his master Babu Nathu Mal. "I bow my forehead to you, Babuji, he said, joining his hands and dusting his feet as he entered. He also ordered to Munoo; Join your hands to the Babuji, you rustic."⁴

This relationship between servant and master is degrading for the servant, because it makes the rulers proud and arrogant. "Come here, you fool", shouted the Doctor, laughing. "The wound will become septic with those filthy ashes. Come and show in to me". Munoo submitted to the diagnosis. The doctor

found that it was a dangerous out, reaching almost to the skull."⁵

Munoo passes very hard days with Babu Nathu Ram. It's very common that he was ill treated and sometimes beaten also. In the above text Anand describes the realistic picture of what happens with Munoo there. Munoo got hurt at his head. He is bewildered. Anand calls him for fear of wound being septic and he wanted to treat properly. In this unfortunate condition what Munoo had felt mentally is a thing of imagination. Here Anand, besides Munoo tells us about Sheila an innocent girl who is deliberately exploited by her mother (Bibiji). Anand is concerned with all type of child exploitation even if that is done by her mother. We can well compare this incident with Katherine Mansfield in her story, *The Doll's house*. In doll's house the innocent children were beaten up for mixing with lower class families. Anand very vividly writes in the following quoted passage how Sheila's mother forbids her to play with lower class families. The child wanted to play but her mother advices her against it.

"Oh, go away, cried Kausalya timidly, We don't want you to play with us, said Sheila, Mother said we are not to play with you. She really liked him and was amused by his funny dance. She wanted him to play with her, but her mother's advice had sunk into her and set up a barrier. She liked to touch him. She came towards him and, catching him by the ear, dragged him about."⁶

Munoo's life passes through many incidents before he gets some solace. Munoo wishes for survival but he hardly gets it. M.K. Naik has rightly observed in the following text; "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."⁷

Munoo came down to plains to survival. This simple landless peasant teenager tragically denied the fundamental right to happiness. He was a victim of exploitation and he could not in the end bear it.

Munoo is not exploited by industrialism and Capitalism alone but some other forces like communalism also lends its evil hand in his exploitation. The fires of communal forces are fanned by politicians. Munoo moves against the social panorama prevalent there. He gives the novelist a good opportunity to deal with the issues such as relationship between the Indian and the British in pre-independence days. E.M. Forster wrote a complete novel *A Passage to India* to explain the whole situation. Mulk Raj Anand took this topic as Indian writer at the same time with Forster.

It is to be noted that the misery and exploitation go hand in hand as the moments of joy and happiness do. Munoo gets some tolerable treatment, by Seth Prabha Dayal and his high soul wife. Here Munoo develops a good friendship with kindhearted Hari. He also gets the same treatment by Mrs. Mainwaring when he is ill. These are the moments of silver lining in the dark clouds of his otherwise sad life. Anand has presented the theme of exploitation of the under privileged in great depth and the picture is drawn with vividness. The scene shifts from Kangra hill to down to the plains of Bombay and

it again goes back to Himachal hills with its crowded canvas. Thus, the novel covers all the classes of society from the landless peasant to the aristocratic Anglo-Indian and British. The novel has almost an epic quality covering this wide and varied spectacle of human suffering.

During the course of working in the factory, Munoo, Hari and other coolies continue to face all exploitations and atrocities committed by their employers. However the crowded dwellings, dirty latrines, regular cuttings made from the low pay given to them, on one pretext or another and the dismissal of Ratan a member of the trade union Compel the leaders of trade union to be active for the cause of labours. Sauda a leader of Red Flag Union gives a forceful speech on this occasion and Munoo hears it patiently and digest to the core.

Anand in his novel gives the following about the speech; "There are only two kinds of people in the world; the rich and the poor, and between the two there is no connection. The rich and the powerful, the magnificent and the glorious, whose opulence is built on robbery and theft and open warfare, are honoured and admired by the whole world and by themselves. You, the meek and the gentle, wretches that you are, swindled out of your rights, and broken in body and soul, you are respected by no one, and you do not respect yourselves."⁸

Hearing the speech of Sauda, Munoo is reminded that long ago at Shamnagar, he too had similar thought about the poor, the rich and the poor. Hearing the fire brand speeches of leaders of Red Flag Union the situation turns dangerous for the factory owners. So the owners very cleverly converted the labour meeting into a Hindu-Muslim communal riot. Munoo realizes the danger and flees from there. As he runs up Malabar hills to escape the hectic police action, he is knocked down by the motor car of an anglo-indian lady, Mrs. Mainwaring. Here finally Munoo's tragedy begins. She takes him to Simla as a servant. At Simla Munoo has; "a deep-rooted feeling of inferiority to the superior people who lived in bungalows and wore Angrezi clothes."⁹

Mrs. Mainwaring feels sympathy for the wounded boy and she takes him to Simla. Where she intends to go. Anand narrates that this woman has a vast pretentious nature without any morals. In Simla, Munoo is employed as a servant to house. He also uses to pull her in a rickshaw up and down due to these laborious duties, Munoo gradually grows weaker and catches tuberculoses. The result is that; "in the early hours of one unreal, white night he passed away."¹⁰

In this regard the observations of Pramila Paul are worth noting. She says; "But inspite of the tragic ending 'Coolie' is not a pessimistic novel. The hope of humanity lies in people like Prabha, Ratan, and Mohan."¹¹

Anand has written about the life of Munoo so realistically that *Coolie* has become an affirmation of life in its fullness, expressed through the Zest for life and human communion which characterizes its child protagonist; "Essential loneliness of the soul, that apartness which he had succeeded in shattering by his zest and enthusiasm for work and entering the lives of others, by the natural love he felt others."¹²

From the above passage of *Coolie*, we find that Anand was unconsciously considering the organic force of society to be behind the miseries of Munoo. In the beginning Munoo was enthusiastic had zest for life and came down from hills as a budding young man to be flourished down the hills as a young gentleman but his enthusiasm lost, Zest evaporated influenced by combined forces of organic society. Here we can see that society as an organic force had a vital role to play in the life of Munoo.

Conclusion

Thus, Anand has given us ample examples of how society works on the individual as the organic force. In the case of Munoo in *Coolie*, the organic force of society compelled him to leave his birth place; comedown at Simla to work in the pickle factory then again forced him to go to Bombay. Here again while working in a factory the whole situation is converted into Hindu-Muslim riots near the factory where he was working and he was forced to run away from there. Again forced by the circumstances he was knocked down by the car of Mrs. Mainwaring, who took him to Simla as a servant. It was the organic force of society which again worked, against him and he had to pull Rickshaw for his mistress which gave him unconquerable tuberculoses which ultimately took him away from this sordid world.

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