

## **MULK RAJ ANAND'S *COOLIE*: A TRAGIC PORTRAIT OF THE PROTAGONIST**

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Mulk Raj Anand is one of the versatile Indo-Anglian writers who depicted the awful life of the marginalized people in the society. He always highlights certain crucial and appealing issues of the society and paves the ways to various hidden but crucial aspects of the so called diverse Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand tries his level best to deal with almost every aspect of the society and presents those aspects in his certain fiction in a very dynamic and realistic manner. It won't be wrong if it is stated that Mulk Raj Anand has presented the real plight of the oppressed people in the society and presented a very realistic picture of their lives. In his certain fiction he rightly presents the chaotic issues of the society and how so called superior people or the society present themselves and exploit the oppressed ones. It seems, Mulk Raj Anand tries to point out the various forces of the society which sometimes or in certain circumstances lead the people towards the destruction and they become the victim of the superior class of the society.

Mulk Raj Anand was born on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1905 in Peshawar. If Mulk Raj Anand is analysed from his biographical point of view then one may realize that there were so many incidents took place in his life which made him to develop certain approaches about the society and various elements of the society. As a result in his writing one can find the various faces of the society. It is seen that in his life there were certain traumas for him through that he started to ponder about the agony and pain of life. He started to ask various questions to himself and he might have developed such kind of psychology and approach of looking towards the society and that might be the reason his feelings and

emotions for the oppressed class seem rather touching and authentic in nature. He has been appropriately defined by Dr. H. S. Balarama Gupta who states, "He is a man of varied interest and achievements, and his life itself like an exciting romantic tale is full of struggle, quest and achievement" (Abidi,25).

He has written almost fifteen novels and about seventy short stories, there are number of essays and articles to his credits. One should not be surprised that in most of his fiction he deals with various social issues. His novels like *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Road*, etc. deal with the various realistic issues of the society and it somewhere makes the readers to think once again about the so called sound and democratic picture of the society in which the beings like us have been dwelling. He was one of the Indian writers who paved the way to the exploitation and harassment of the oppressed people in the society. He talks about the issues like the despotism of the caste structure, inequality, immorality, class conflicts, abuses, exploitation of the poor by the so called aristocratic people, search for individuality, liberty and contentment etc. in his novels and only because of it he could make a mark of his caliber, keenness and identity on the path of literature.

This novel, *Coolie* is one of the examples of such chaos which has been strongly rooted in the society. It depicts the story of the deprived, neglected, oppressed or marginalised people of the society and the character of Munoo is used to represent them. The entire picture of this fiction is presented by the narrator who highlights certain crucial aspects and events related to the psychology of the society as well.

Munoo is the protagonist of this novel whose journey of life portrays the various issues of the society which have been quite powerfully rooted in the society. In fact, it is a technique used by Mulk Raj Anand through which he presents various issues of the society and how society itself has been becoming the strong reason for the oppression and marginalisation of such people. It seems that Munoo's sufferings and misfortunes have no end in the novel and every time it seems that after this attempt of suffering the pains and troubles will be removed from his life. But he faces various obstacles one after another and ultimately surrenders himself before the so called destiny. He is quite innocent fourteen years orphan boy who is far away from the brutality and selfishness of some anti-social elements. Initially with the help of Daya Ram he

succeeds in getting job as a houseboy at the house of Babu Nathu Ram. As soon as he starts his job as a houseboy in the house of Babu Nathu Ram, his wife, Bibi Uttam Kaur, starts to scold him badly and it shows the egotism and superiority complex of that lady for whom Munoo is a mere piece of poor community in the society and he has nothing to appreciate. Once she scolds him in a very harsh tone. She states. "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! Brute! Wake up and serve the Babuji his dinner. Or at least you eat your food before you sleep, if sleep and die you must.' (Anand,*Coolie*,25)

It is not the only time she scolds him, in fact, she represents herself as one of the representatives of the so called superior structure of the society and for her Munoo is only the product of marginality and she does not have any existence on this Earth. The language she uses for him is also quite irritating and bold. Once she states, "Yay, shameless, shameless, vulgar, stupid hill-boy! May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you die!" (Anand,*Coolie*,08). One cannot bear this kind of language which seems quite harassing and insulting. Bibiji violates the threshold of humanity and also beats him for his trivial mistakes. Babu Nathu Ram also beats him a lot without knowing the fact and blames him for attempting sexual assault on his daughter. In fact, it seems that the suspicion is one of the prominent facets of such people who had already certain misconception in their mind about the low class and marginalised people. It rightly points out the superiority complex of the so called aristocratic people in the society and who always think that the laborers of such poor people have no any existence of self respect and they are born to be manipulated and exploited. It should be accepted that Mulk Raj Anand is one of the Indian novelist who successfully constructs the entire picture of such exploitation and harassment before the eyes of readers. He not only does so but also makes the readers to ponder over such social issues with great intensity.

Munoo has been exploited by the exterior as well as interior figures. He as tried a lot to come out of such chaos and exploitation where he was facing number of problem at the same time. After the tragic end of his parents he becomes completely helpless. He arrives in such a brutal world and the structures of the society where bread and butter has become everything for him

and his pains and troubles have been seeming quite faded before it. His search for roti has made him to roam here and there. He has become the abuse for kinship also. Once the torture and exploitation made by the other people is considered as a part of the society but his own uncle also treats him in the same manner. It shows the materialistic approach of the human beings and for them the money has everything. It would not be wrong if it is stated that Mulk Raj Anand tries to highlight the eradication of the kinship from the society and the place of kinship is being replaced by the materialistic approach.

He has been badly hurt by this incident and decides to leave the place called Sham Nagar and without knowing the destination he places himself in the train. But as it is frequently said that an orphan has the hands of the God, Prabha Dayal comes in his life. Prabha Dayal shows sympathy towards him and brings him at his home. His wife Parvati also welcomes him and treats him nicely because they did not have any child. Indeed, here in this fiction two different streams of the society have been depicted by Mulk Raj Anand which seems far away from each-other. One is applied to represent the superiority complex of the society whereas the other end shows the existence of humanity in the society and it might be the reason because of such existence still the people in the society have been surviving peacefully and those people who have been treated badly under the thread of low class and marginality it is the product of the other stream which is discussed above.

The misfortunes never leave him alone. He starts to work in the Pickle factory of Prabha Dayal and Ganpat. Even he has a great support of Prabha Dayal he has been tortured by Ganpat. Prabha Dayal tries to establish the comfort for him but he has always been trapped in certain mistakes along with Maharaj, Bhoga and Tulsi. Ganpat is a very cruel and selfish character who makes Prabha Dayal bankrupt and traps him in the economic fraud. Prabha Dayal is badly shocked by this trauma and falls seriously ill. He has been tortured by the police. In such pathetic circumstances also Munoo and Tulsi did not leave him and started to work as a coolie in the market. He starts to spend much time as a coolie at the Railway station. He becomes much depressed and there were many questions before him but the question of food was the major concern for him. He decides to go to the shrine of Bhagat Hari Das to take free food and accidentally comes in contact with the Yogi. His relationship with that

Yogi also did not go for long time and in between he realises the authentic nature and intention of him and flees away from that place. Everywhere he is manipulated by the people and for them he has become mere device for manipulation and achieving the personal ill intentions. He does not find a single place for contentment and proper treatment. Everywhere he receives abuse and torture from the people living in the society.

Munoo's pathetic journey does not stop here only and he leaves for Bombay with the help of a person working in the team of circus. He arrives in Bombay but he does not know anything about this strange city and his destination. He scares a lot. The ill treatment also does not leave his hand and as he has been feeling thirsty since long he goes in one hotel to fulfill his thirst again he has been treated badly by the hotel owner. It happens because of his appearance and profession as a coolie. This event of ill-treatment also teaches a lot to Munoo and indirectly to the readers. The psychology of the society seems rather ridiculous and partial. The way society welcomes the people who look quite modern and pompous is quite absurd. In fact, it does not have any concern with their morality and humanity. They just believe in the pretentious nature of the people who have already forgotten the humanity and kindness.

Munoo's experience with Hari and his family is also another example and height of the exploitation. They both have got the job in one of the Mills called Sir George White Cotton Mills on the salary of rupees twenty five rupees each. They also have been given a hut by Nadir Khan on rental basis and they have to pay five rupees per month for a small hut. In this way Munoo begins his life in Bombay but again destiny plays with his life and does not leave him alone to change his pathetic plight into happy one. Their small hut is destroyed by the heavy rain fall and they join Ratan to live in his small hut. But it is not liked by Chimta Saheb and ultimately Jimmy Thomas also gets angry with Hari and deducts the twenty rupees from his salary. In fact, on the other hand Munoo also becoming furious but he did not have any option except bearing all the happening calmly. His stay with Mrs. Mainwaring also does not bring any unusual change in his pains and agony. In fact, he has got certain ill-behaved experiences during his stay at Mrs. Mainwaring's house. He starts to perform his job as a rikshaw coolie and it leads towards the serious fever which takes certain days to be recovered from the same. But it was his last attempt from

which also he could not escape himself and it ends up his life.

To conclude, No doubt, it is quite appreciable that Mulk Raj Anand has taken much effort to depict the picture of Munoo who has been suffered a lot in the entire novel. His journey of life is also quite pathetic and it is presented by Mulk Raj Anand with various colours of the realistic society. It is the novel which deals with the unsympathetic and cruel psychology of the society and such structure of the psychology makes various figures of the society victims like Munoo and finally they force them to end their journey of life and the same has been happened with Munoo. Mulk Raj Anand constructs the picture of the journey of the protagonist called Munoo before his readers and tries to make them realise the dark side of the society which has been becoming the reason of many people's death like Munoo. Being the figure of the structure called middle class everyone might also experience such pathetic plight of various oppressed and marginalised figures in the society like Munoo.

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