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SOCIAL IMAGE OF EXPLOITATION AND SUFFERING IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S
UNTOUCHABLE AND COOLIE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper gives us a realistic image of the exploitation and suffering of the deprived. It is an effort to bring out some constituent of social image of exploitation and suffering in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. The novels, *Untouchable* and *Coolie* within their multipart of thematic formation and methodology invite huge possibilities of insights and investigations. Both the novels also deal with socio-economic aspects of life. Bakha, the protagonist in *Untouchable* represents the exploitation and subjugation which has been the destiny of untouchables like him. The untouchable belongs to the scavenger caste, commonly identified as 'bhangi' in various Indian languages. Thus, *untouchable* deals with dissimilar kinds of exploitations such as social, political, economic and sexual exploitation, as exploitation and suffering are its major theme but social exploitation is at the origin of all other exploitations. Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* is epic in sweep up and views in purview, images of the effects that the enveloping evil of class-system has a poor hill-boy, Munoo. Munoo is the central character or protagonist of the novel, *Coolie*. The novelist depicts the turn down and upturns in the life of Munoo through his story of repression. The novel *Coolie* is a painful story of human suffering. It discusses the problems of coolies in a class-ridden society. In Bombay hunger and poverty are to be witness on an even bigger dimension. This paper also recommends some solution to root out exploitation of deprived. It explores that everybody should be conscious and aware and depicts seriousness concerning the burning question of the entire Indian society.

Key Words: Exploitation, Untouchability, Disagreement, Deprived, Mud-walled

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Mulk Raj Anand was one of the first India-based writers in English literature to gain a global readership. He was an Indian writer in English and prominent for his representation of the lives of the poorer castes in conventional Indian society. He is appreciated for his novels and short stories, which have obtained the position of being classic works of contemporary Indian English literature, noted for their sensitive insight into the lives of the subjugated and their analyses of poverty, exploitation and hardship. Life of this great writer is filled with immense happenings. Certainly some of them are very critical and some are unbelievable. He was born in Peshawar (India), in a complete Hindu family of Kshatriya who were conventional

coppersmiths. His father name is Lal Chand who served as a head clerk in British Indian Army. His Mother Ishwar Kaur was a Sikh from the strong peasant's family. Anand is the third among five brothers. Anand was dissatisfied with his father's hotchpotch life style. His father joined Arya Samaj and become reformist of a Hindu organization. So he discarded his father's method of life which meant to him a denial of the pressures and imbalances which he observed in himself and in his surroundings. When the First World War broke out, Anand was 9 years old. Then his family moved to Amritsar in Punjab and he lived there from 1914 to 1925. The incident of his cousin Kausalya's death in 1916 brought an emotional transform in his life.

Separately from the innumerable number of studies undertaken on Mulk Raj Anand, the societal aspects of his novels, even in their customary categorization offer manifold explanations and insights. Anand is a novelist of vital social concerns and worries, and the social desire is at the heart of his works. He is considered the God of the subjugated, the unloved and the unwanted. Society and man form a multicoloured structure of life. Within the difficult structure of society lie the happiness and sadness of man. Anand with his experience to a variety of social theories and philosophies has constantly tried to explore a just and honourable vision of life. Mulk Raj Anand envisions a world of human concern and love. And, as a progressive writer he sympathy with the underprivileged group/class of society. He focuses various social, economic and cultural issues in his works particularly in novels. he has written about 15 novels; some of them his famous novels are *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953). He has written also two collections namely *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946) and *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961). In addition to this, he has created more than 6 collections of short stories. Anand's first three novels – *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* deal with the social issues in Pre-independent India. Anand focuses the lot of class of the deprived, the oppressed and the exiles.

In an arbitrary reading of Anand's novels, the reader becomes instantly conscious of such issues as the social, moral and economic consequences of caste system and its injustice, exploitation of several types of the poor by the rich, class conflicts, quest for liberty, search for individuality, etc. A number of economic and social transforms took place under colonial rule and as a consequence a traditional society was progressively changed into a capitalistic society. The class system in India has converted to be a new type of caste system. It has made a society much more complex and deceitful, and in some respects more inflexible than the one made by caste. So, it has become a very influential disruptive power, far more destroying to social consistency than caste, as it has tended to separate people into the poor and rich.

The present paper is an effort to bring out some constituent of social image of exploitation and suffering in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. The novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand within their multipart of thematic formation and methodology invite huge possibilities of insights and investigations. Both the novels also deal with socio-economic aspects of life.

The novel, *Untouchable* is Mulk Raj Anand's first novel and it provided to him vast recognition and stature. The novel is a sociological manuscript that focus concentration on a number of traditions, social troubles etc. of Hindu society during 1930's. This novel depicts the pragmatic and realistic image of society. This is fundamentally an epic of unhappiness of the human being trapped in the net of the long-standing caste system. But at the same time, the novel has a tragic attractiveness of its own. For Anand dirt and mud is as much a part of life as attractiveness, hygiene and graciousness. It means not that he loves viciousness but pragmatism demands it, if it is that in real life. In this novel, the novelist has described an image of a sweeper boy, who is untouchable. The protagonist of the novel is the representative of all oppressed society in pre-independence of India. The protagonist, Bakha is the figure of agony just because of his caste. There are other characters who also suffer because of their lower caste. They live in a huddled colony in their mud-walled cottages. The theme of the novel - untouchability itself is very practical. *Untouchable* is a practical novel of socially and generally crushed protagonist Bakha. It is a slice from a life without any transform or alteration. The novel starts with a realistic image of the outcastes' colony. Anand illustrates:

The outcastes' colony was a group of mud

walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. (Untouchable, 11)

Bakha represents the exploitation and subjugation which has been the destiny of untouchables like him. The untouchable belongs to the scavenger caste, commonly identified as 'bhangi' in various Indian languages. The work of this caste was to clean latrines and streets for the upper castes. The living circumstances of the untouchables were tremendously squalid and they were enforced to live in mud-walled and single-roomed cottages. There was foul smell all over the place and there was not appropriate system of drainage. Almost each page of the novel is saturated in Bakha's invisible tears who patiently tolerate the most embarrassing and disheartening days of his young life in this story. From morning to evening he is forced to deal with detestation, discrimination and insincerity. Bakha starts his every day routine work with his father's cascade of mistreatments:

"Get up, ohe, you Bakhya, Ohe son of pig!Are you up? Get up, you illegally begotten". (Untouchable, 5)

There is no question that Mulk Raj Anand has created with *Untouchable*, a novel that articulates the maltreatments of an exploited class. He is certainly the 'Burning Voice' of those people who form the untouchable caste, and fulfils the objective of the novelist to change words into forecast.

The novel describes a day in the life of Bakha, a Sweeper-boy, and brings out the effect on him of the several events which take place, by providing us his 'flow of awareness', in the manner of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Bakha, the protagonist is 18 years old son of Lakha, who is Jamadar and gets a pair of breeches from an English soldier. But as the day starts, his work of toilet cleaning also starts. He is honest and competent in his work. Bakha's sister Sohini goes to village-well to bring water; Kalinath, the village pastor of the temple out of the special favor draws water to fill Sohini bucket, and feels attracted to her beauty, and driving away the others recommends her to go to his home later in the day to clean the courtyard. And, when Sohini goes to his residence, he makes indecent suggestions to her. She begins screaming. This duality and double standards is vibrantly depicted by Mulk Raj Anand in the novel. He then shouts:

"Polluted, Polluted, Polluted!" shouted the Brahmin below.....Get off the steps, scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service! You have defiled our temple! Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony." (Untouchable, 69)

Untouchables were also used to be subjected to big adversities by the heartless caste Hindus. They couldn't take water from the well of village. Gulabo, Sohini and other females had to wait for many hours for a pitcher of water, that also by the caste Hindus out of kindness. They had to depend upon them for their every day food. When Bakha goes to gather food, a slice of bread is thrown at him as if he were a dog. According to tradition, when Bakha or any other untouchable walked through the market, he had to cry around 'posh, posh, sweeper coming'. Even the shadow of an untouchable shouldn't fall on Hindu cast.

Thus, *untouchable* deals with dissimilar kinds of exploitations such as social, political, economic and sexual exploitation, as exploitation and suffering are its major theme but social exploitation is at the origin of all other exploitations. It refers to the class discrimination on the birth basis, which gives some castes unnecessary benefit over other castes. It is an internal disagreement of a human being who is caught in the trap of a traditional caste system.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* is epical in sweep up and views in purview, images of the effects that the enveloping evil of class-system has a poor hill-boy, Munoo. Munoo and his fellow coolie are exploited by the force of capitalism, industrialization, colonialism and communalism. Mulk Raj Anand makes it very clear, that

such exploitation and rejection of life and gladness is the lot of the poor all over the place in India, whether in village like Billaspur or small town like Sham Nagar or big cities like Bombay and Daulatpur. The novel, *Coolie* exposes the monster of private enterprise or capitalism, the haughty English colonialists and cross-section of Indian society from the lowest section to the rich businessmen.

Munoo is the central character or protagonist of the novel *Coolie*. Generally the protagonists of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand are from dust and dirt; they are too humble to report against the malevolence powers which lean to repress them and their like. The meticulousness, cleverness and sensitiveness of these characters are terribly suppressed that they can never increase self-confidence to wage a fight for their reason. However, they feel the torture of the unjust practices sensitively, but the response is inadequate just to their acknowledgement of the social position which they are destined to admit without a wish for liberation. The awareness of their defencelessness against the establishment, social set-up, taboos, customs and traditions makes them writhe with sensitive psychological pain. They can do not anything but admit their conviction.

The summary lines of *Coolie* describe a bohemian life story of a young hill boy Munoo. A peaceful life in the Kangra hill with friends and relations seemed to be short lived as Munoo's uncle Dayaram, at the instigation of his incensed wife, drags the orphan to town to spin out his living. The novel is amazing for the largeness of its work of art, the variety of its characters, and the multiplicity of its episodes. *Coolie* is the pathetic odyssey of Munoo, who sets out in a search of employment and livelihood. His various roles including those of a home servant, a factory-worker, a coolie and a rickshaw-puller take him to several places from Bombay to Simla, until speedy tuberculosis brings his struggle to a premature demise.

The orphan boy Munoo runs to avoid every place of unkindness in quest of contentment and everywhere he is suppressed. He is fifteen years old and he does many jobs at Bombay, Daulatpur and Simla. His disease has become incurable because of poverty. In the end he dies because of tuberculosis. Munoo is exploited very much by one person or another and in one way or another. Munoo commonly represents the misery and agony of the exploited persons. Repression or suppression plays key role in *Coolie* to demonstrate that how pitiable the lives of the Indian people are under the exploitive forces.

The novelist depicts the turn down and upturns in the life of Munoo through his story of repression. Uncle and aunt of Munoo consider him as a machine for getting money. Munoo agrees to go to town with his uncle and willingly accepts his role as a slave. At the age of fourteen years, Munoo is pressurised to work in the house of Babu Nathoo Ram who is a worker in Imperial Bank of Sham Nagar. The romantic views of Munoo are ruined by Babu Nathoo Ram's wife. This lady always abuses and curses Munoo without any reason because she is not good-natured. Munoo is deprived of happiness. He is disgraced for relieving outside the wall and abuse is showered on him. Munoo bears physical and psychological torture and this represents repression in the form of child labour. Even he is not provided with the basic requirements at the affectionate age of fourteen years. Therefore, Munoo reached on the conclusion that there are only two types of people lives on the earth, the poor and the rich.

Munoo steals away from Sham Nagar and he is come in the contact of Prabha Dayal who takes him to Daulatpur. There he works in a pickle factory – miserable, muggy like a firestorm, that is lighted up only by the friendliness of Prabha. There he finds dimness enveloping by the malicious presence of the despicable, Ganpat. Due to Ganpat's dishonest the factory is dissolved. Poverty and suffering are added by villainy and evil. Munoo is thrown on roads and factory partner Prabha Dayal is reduced to a coolie. Munoo finds it hard even to find work a doorkeeper of coolie. Munoo's experiences as a coolie in the vegetable market and grain market are most disappointing and depressing. Further, Munoo reaches Bombay with the help of an elephant driver, with a piece of advice. Bombay, far from Munoo's thoughts proves dreadful. He is thoroughly disappointed at the first contact with actuality.

“The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam. You have to pay even for the breath that you breathe”. (*Coolie*, 13)

Munoo becomes very upset when he sees a coolie lying huddled at the corner of a footpath in Bombay:

“pillowing his head on his arm,
shrinking into himself, as if he
were afraid to occupy too much
space” (Coolie, 14)

In Bombay the labour mistreatment is quite noticeable. Munoo gets a job after much trouble under Jimmy Thomas (Chimta Sahib), who would take commission out of wages of laborers. Then, Sikh-merchant and Pathan are some other vultures of the society. The street in which Munoo and Hari have taken a room on rent in a Chawl is full of horrible smell of urine. There are 7 latrines for 200 persons. There owners of factory play politics by dividing the labourers and there are rival groups in the trade-unions. Further, Munoo is taken to Simla from Bombay in a car by an Anglo-Indian lady Mrs. Mainwaring. Mulk Raj Anand is apprehensive to show his protagonist in the noble set up also to complete his social image of exploitation and suffering. Munoo sees in Simla that there are two types of people first is ‘Sahib Log’ and the second is ‘Coolies’.

In the novel, coolie is Anand’s humanistic belief that class-awareness born of money or social position can have humiliating impacts on those that are at the lower rungs. We can see in *Coolie* how the harms of poverty and unkindness compress a bud of youth before it could blossom to any level. Mr. and Mrs. Nathoo Ram, Jimmy Thomas (Chimta Sahib), Daya Ram, Ganpat and Mrs. Mainwaring also, have only disrespect for Munoo. They kick him, slap him and abuse him. More or less at each stage he comes crossway merely tenderness and unkindness which make his life a painful story of agony. He is forced to become a sort of an aimless vagabond with apparently no control on his fate.

Munoo’s troubles and travails are sharp pointers to man’s cruel enjoyment in torturing child domestics. Munoo represents those countless children whose childhood is lost in continuous physical labour. Affection, concern and support are odd words for them. Mulk Raj Anand explores the subject of human pain repeatedly.

The novel *Coolie* is a painful story of human suffering. It discusses the problems of coolies in a class-ridden society. In Bombay hunger and poverty are to be witness on an even bigger dimension. At cotton mills of Sir George White – the instinctive working circumstances the depraved creditors the dictatorial foreman treat the Indian laborers like animals. The novel, *Coolie* takes us a guided tour of India where we come into contact with the people who have abundance of hunger but no food to eat as well as people who have abundance of food who have no hunger. On the other hand, the rich who are impatient and restless on their luxury beds as well as the wretched ones who take pleasure in peaceful sleep on the bed of stone slap, causing distress to innocents like Munoo. The novelist has best given his motto of all man to transform in human prototype of society.

Thus it can be concluded that this research paper gives us a realistic image of the exploitation and suffering of the deprived. This paper depicts that the sufferings and exploitation of Munoo and Bakha are the suffering and exploitation of millions of Munooos and Bakhas in India. They are the universal figure, larger than life character, and is shows the starving and suffering millions of the country. This paper also recommends some solution to root out exploitation of deprived. It explores that everybody should conscious and aware and depicts seriousness concerning the burning question of the entire Indian society.

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