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EXPLOITATION UNDER CAPITALIST SYSTEM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *COOLIE*

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand, despite a genius writer, is a critic, an educationist and a social worker. He is interested in human beings despite his critics described him a Marxist, a propagandist. His fiction revolves around the human being. Humanitarian ground becomes the nucleus of all his thinking and writing. He does not believe in 'art for art's sake' but he believes in 'art for the sake of man'. His main attempt in his work has been to expose the values of a man in a society by which he may gain real foundations for moral behavior and realize a just social order. His novels divulge a realistic sensibility which is capable to measure the depth of human personality and social structure. His commitment to his humanistic dogma and obsession with the downtrodden could be well explained inter alia his fictional experimentation. This paper presents a teenage boy who is the role model of all teenage coolies who suffer by the capitalism of the society.

**Key Words:** Exploitation, suffering, migration, teenage, capitalism, death, eradication, government.

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**Suppressed Munoo: A Teenaged Migrant**

Anand wrote the novel, *Coolie*, before independence after *Untouchable* in 1936. The novel is the best example of exploitation on the basis of classes. It depicts very big differences between the rich and the poor. The novel describes the cross section of the people, the rich and the poor, the exploited and the exploiters, the haves and the have-nots which represent the entire Indian social life. Munoo, the protagonist of the novel, is one among the thousands of coolies. Fourteen years orphan boy lives with his aunt in a village of Himachal Pradesh and is studying in class V. He remembers his parents how they suffered. He came to know how his father's land had been seized by the landlord and exploited his parents. In spite of his tragedy he is happy with his aunt and uncle but it ends when his uncle and aunt left him in Sham Nagar for doing some work.

Driven by the dire necessity of independent livelihood, Munoo works as a domestic servant in the house of Babu Nath Ram in Sham Nagar. But because of his bad fortune he cannot live there for long because he is unable to tolerate harsh treatment of Bibi Uttam Kaur, wife of Babu Nath Ram and escapes from the hour.

Now he comes to contact with Prabha, a Seth and owner of a Pickle Factory at Daulatpur. In fact, he also was once a coolie like Munoo. Prabha feels pity on him and provides him a job in his factory. It's Munoo's

good fortune that he meets Prabha. He lives with his family. He and his wife treat him kindly and give him a wholesome meal. Munoo works very hard from early morning to late in night. Though Prabha Dayal is very kind, Ganpat, partner of the factory is very cruel with his employees. Ganpat is a man who may not lose any chance to abuse him.

Munoo again feels disappointed and he cannot live with his (Ganpat) ill-treatment and exploitation. So, he decides to run away and finds place in vegetable market. Now he often spends whole nights on the boards of closed shops and early in the morning he goes to the railway station to work as a coolie. But he is exploited there too by the policeman and is not allowed to work there because he has no license. Munoo leaves the station and comes to contact with an elephant driver of the circus who helps him in going to Bombay with the circus team.

Marlene Fisher observes:

“The two picaresque images that dominate *Coolie* are the road and the railway. Munoo uses both to escape from the situations that have become more painful or intolerable than he can bear. A sense of movement and all its attendant color and restlessness- not only of Munoo, but of all India- makes itself felt throughout the novel. The restlessness, however, is more than just superficial and it tied to the social, economic and human themes that are Anand’s concerns in *Coolie*.”(Marlene, 38-39)

Munoo reaches Bombay and feels it very fear and panic. He has been already told by elephant driver about the metropolitan city. He comes face to face with the truth of his words: “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.”(Anand, 177) Munoo is confused and chaotic about the city. He gets humiliations in the city. Once has quenchless thirst and cannot find a public tap around him. He enters in a restaurant and sits on a chair without looking around as he is blind. Anand describes his feelings inside the restaurant: “He felt he was floating in the air, so rapidly did his brain wheel round and round with confusion and embarrassment. He brushed his arm across his forehead to calm himself into self assurance and glanced at people pouring hot tea from their cups into saucers and slipping it with spattering sips.”(Ibid.,181) The waiter comes to him asks if he is a coolie. Munoo hesitates and answers the question and now is asked to sit on the floor away from the other customers. He obeys the cruel and inhumane command of the waiter and asks for a bottle of soda water. Although he has right to sit on a chair as a customer yet he is exploited by the waiter and forced to sit on the floor and violates the human right. “Munoo felt wild with rage, but tried to still his mind by acknowledging the superiority of the clean-clothed rich people, whom he had always been told to respect.” (Ibid.,181)

Munoo comes to contact with Hari-Har, his wife and his family. Now Munoo gets a job with the help of Hari-Har in Sir George White Cotton Mills. In the factory he meets Chimta Sahib whose real name is Jimmie Jhones. He is a great exploiter and cruel. He is the head foreman of the mill. He demands every job-holder in the factory a gift of a job, because it’s he who provides jobs to the people. In one side we can say he is a god but on the other side he is a monster who eats the coolies from every month.

In one evening when Hari-Har and Munoo go for shopping and they see that Shambu, a cock seller, sells two cocks to Chimta Sahib at a very low rather. But they are asked to pay more. Shambu says the two cocks are as gifts to Chimta Sahib so that he may allow him to trade there. This makes great distinctions between haves and have-nots: “You are both rich and can afford to give gifts. I would like to make you the gift of a fowl later on. But these cocks, Sardarji, they are only the things I had in the world. I am in debt. All my pay has been confiscated for damaged cloth and for debts I own.” (Ibid.,205-206)

Being a job-holder in the factory, Munoo still leads a very distasteful life. He works hard and mixes his blood with sweat but yet he leads a life of semi-human conditions. His life becomes very complicated and difficult by his damp and dirty house. But with full vigor and fortitude, he still tolerates everything. He feels himself an unlucky by whose contacts also bring misfortune to those who come in contact with him. He feels it is good that Hari-Har and his wife do not come to know about his orphanage, otherwise they would sure to think that he is unlucky and ominous person. He asks himself, “Am I really ominous? My father died when I

was born, and then my mother and I brought misfortune to Prabha, and it seems, I have brought misfortune to Hari now. If I am ominous, why don't I die? My death would rid the world of an unlucky person. I would like to die. It was better to be dead. Yet, better to be dead because this town has turned out wrong." (Ibid.,217)

Saros Cowasjee observes about the life of Munoo:

"Munoo in Sham Nagar and Daulatpur is in individual who maintains his innocence and identity, though there is evidence that these are being gradually eroded away. But once he is in Bombay, Munoo becomes a part of the toiling, struggling, starving masses and we see the world through the distorted eyes of the masses. In the Bombay Chapter (chapter IV) the centre of interest is not Munoo but the millions of sufferings workers; Munoo is no more than a speck of this reason that the author does not conclude his tale here but .....sends him to Simla where he regains his identity."(Cowasjee, 8)

At last Munoo meets Mrs. Mainwaring accidentally who takes him to Simla. At the very time Munoo is totally fractured and mentally disturbed. When he remembers all his past life with Hari-Har, Laxmi and Ratan he feels shocked, sad and destroyed. Munoo, 15 years old boy feels himself an old but before Mrs. Mainwaring he is a boy, otherwise he is of no use to her and perhaps she would have left him. "He was just the boy for her, just the right servant."(Anand, 285) Munoo gets a job of rickshaw driving in the house Mrs. Mainwaring in which she goes around. She is very sympathetic to him. He cannot compare her love and sympathy with passionate love of Laxmi, wife of Hari-Har. He feels Mrs. Mainwaring arouses in him. "Munoo smiled with the quivering ripples of affection that the contact of her (Mrs. Mainwaring) hands produced in him. He felt dizzy with the intoxicating warmth that her coquettish movements had aroused in him." (Ibid.,295)

Munoo works here with satisfaction and happiness. In his heartedly service to this woman, he dies of tuberculosis and his sufferings end with the end of his life.

He is born in hills and returns back to die here after lot of sufferings he has faced. It is his life which revolves him around poverty, misery, injustice, exploitation and cruelty. He becomes a role model for exploitation and sufferings. And after his death he becomes a symbol for those evil capitalists who do not care for poor people. Through his Anand wants to expose evil of exploitation of the poor people and describes their hardships and sufferings. Anand wants to reveal, through Munoo, to stand up against the ruthless exploitation of the under-dogs of our society. Munoo becomes a victim of the greed, arrogance and cruelty of the rich.

The charm of the novel lies in the "cosmic painting of the lives of thousands of orphans, coolies, boy-servants, factory workers, and rickshaw pullers, their health running down through the hour glass of time. The novel is treatise on the social level at its sundry levels and phases."(Karmandham,78) The novel emerges as "an anguished cry, an indictment of the cruelty of the system, and a declaration of pity for the hero, the betrayed and the depraved Munoo. It is more than a social documentary, more than a tract for the times."(Williams, 34)

Munoo is denied his fundamental rights to life and happiness and is exploited and made to suffer, till he dies of consumption. The Novelist makes it quite clear that Munoo is not the only victim of such exploitation. He represents millions of those for whom such exploitation is the lot of everyday life.

### **Conclusion and Treatment**

The novel is the powerful condemnation of modern capitalistic Indian society and feudal system with the shameless and tragic exploitation of the underdog and poor class who face the difficulties without protest. Anand has based Munoo's character on his childhood playmates who were working in a pickle factory and who accepted their lot with fatalism peculiar to the Indian downtrodden. Munoo represents all the children subjected to tyrannies of social class system for no fault of their own. He is a symbol of child labour victimized by the exploitative capitalist system. He also symbolizes all those coolies who are victims of industrialization, beaten from pillar to post.

The protagonist desires to live but society does not allow him to live. He dies of exploitation, poverty and hunger. Thus, only a single problem that has attracted the attention of most of the writers, philosophers and administrators is the only exploitation of children which can be possible to eradicate of this planet only

through application of more possible improvements that can be beneficial for the teenagers. One of the helpful components is education which can help in relieving this major evil in the society.

The most important component of eliminating of the exploitation of teenagers is the socio-economic and anti-poverty programmes meant for the families socially and economically handicapped ready to sacrifice their children only for monetary significance. However, the elimination or eradication of the poverty in India has not reached to a definite estimated level because of indifference of Central Government of India towards the reality of poverty. Such programmes related to poverty must be organized nationally to bend each state in these activities. Central Government of India totally failed to be conscious of the severe conditions of poverty. Present central Government need to be sensitized the administration so that such programmes can get a start to lead actives and inspiration which have already started in a single state or two. In short, the schemes or programmes for reducing poverty as considered the first and primary source exploitation should be introduced and updated time to time by the central Government. On one side children and teenagers are considered to be the power and strength of the near future. On the other side, this social evil of exploitation is increasing day by day and taking its magnitude form. The day will come when half population of the children and teenagers will be exploited in India and these situations will create a great obstacle in the development of the nation. Therefore everyone should admit this harsh reality which cannot be cast off from its root unless and until the government is awake and show seriousness regarding the burning issue of the whole Indian society.

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