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Exploitation of Child Labour in 'Collie' By Mulk Raj Anand

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Abstract:-

Mulk Raj Anand is a socially committed novelist. He has firsthand experience of pre and post independent India. He presents a real picture of a society. He looked deep into the human consciousness. He explored the lives of the poor sensitive mind of child labour and inhuman treatment given by society to these innocents. His most famous novel 'Coolie' depicts very sensitive issue in the society. Child labour is the worst kind of social abuse. Mulk Raj Anand depicts crisis of these innocents in a very sensitive way. The present article focuses on crises faced by child labour.

The novel *Coolie* (1935) was published after his first novel *Untouchable* (1935). The novel was widely praised by the readers and critics also. Thus novel has been translated into thirty eight languages. The novel is about child labour. Munoo is the representative of the children who become earning members at the very innocent stage of life and whose childhood is crushed because of poverty. The novel is not about any caste or religion. It is cash that makes them poor class.

Munoo is the protagonist of the novel. He is an orphan and hardly about fourteen years old. His father died because of feudal exploitation and mother died of poverty and hunger. He lives with his uncle and aunt, but they do not support him, instead, he has to earn for them and for his own living. His aunt always tortures him. His uncle is a 'Chaparasi' in the bank which is situated in the town. Munoo is sent to work as a house servant in a well to do family. But he is very ill-treated, and exploited by this family. He is treated as a dumb-driven cattle. This family uses him as an instrument of entertainment and frequently compels him to do monkey show.

One day, while acting the role of a monkey, he suddenly and unintentionally bites the daughter of his master. His master Nathoo Ram beats him in a very cruel manner because he thinks it in a very wrong way, as if it is a sexual assault on his daughter. This incident hurts Munoo and he decides to leave the house.

Further Munoo gets acquainted with Prabha Dayal who is the owner of the pickle factory in the neighbouring town. He is kind-hearted, and feels sympathy for this parentless child and thus takes him to his home. His wife also treats him in a very good way. But Prabha Dayal's partner Ganpat treats him mercilessly. Even he betrays his partner Prabha Dayal and spends money lavishly in gambling, drinking and whoring. Prabha Dayal is ruined by him. Now Munoo becomes coolie. He works hard to get his livelihood and with his meagre income he helps his master Prabha Dayal also.

One day Prabha Dayal returns back to his native place. Munoo is left alone. Now Munoo decides to search any job and thus while wandering he gets acquainted with an elephant driver. He goes with him to Bombay. Here he meets one mill worker. He helps him to get job in the mill and thus he get shelter also. At that time Munoo is only Fourteen years old. He has to work for eleven hours a day but he is not paid proper wages of his work. Here also he become victim of the exploitation by the head foreman called Jimmie. Ratan his co-worker tries to protect him but Jimmie terminated his service in the factory. So all the workers go on strike but the management gives them the notice of reducing working hours. Even to control the strike they spread rumor of kidnapping a

Hindu Child by the Muslim. All the workers get injured in it. Next morning he meets with an accident. A car knocks him down. The owner of the car takes him to Simla.

Soon Munoo recovers. Now he starts working as a domestic servant and Riksha-puller for Mr. Mainwaring. Due to such exhausting work at an early stage of life he becomes seriously ill. He suffers from tuberculosis. One day he dies on the lap of his friend.

Munoo a small boy, parentless, lives with his uncle and aunt. Instead of sending him to school, they send to do domestic work. His mistress frequently shows anger at him. The central theme of the novel is exploitation of child labour and how society is indifferent towards the suffering of child labour. Munoo is the only central character in the novel and other minor characters are placed around him. The root cause of Munoo's tragedy is poverty. He becomes parentless because his father and other became victim of poverty. They died of hunger and left their child as orphan in this cruel world, where nobody feels sympathy for this innocent. Even his nearest relatives uncle and aunt also cannot serve food for him. He has to earn his livelihood by working for more than eleven hours as a labour *coolie* and *Riksha Puller*. Munoo represents all the children who are victim of social class system for no fault in their own. As S.A.Khan explain pitiful condition of the poor especially coolies in India. It is quoted by S.K.Rawat in his book. **Mulk Raj Anand: A critical Study:**

He is one among the millions of coolies tested and formulated by myriad forces of class distention exploitation and dehumanization.... The story of Munoo is quintessentially the story of every exploited individual in India and the pattern of his life is intended to show the pitilessness that lies imbedded in the lives of millions of people who are condemned to lead a life of an unending saga of social depredation".

(Rawat S.K. 2013 : 45)

Munoo is a child labour and child's voice is silent, nobody can hear his sound, nobody can see his agony. Mulk Raj Anand does not make him his protagonist who is child labour to rebel against the capitalist exploitation but he makes him victim of a social system. He is so innocent that, he cannot understand the nature of his exploitation. He works in the factory and works for more than eleven hours a day but never speaks against his exploitation. The negative effect on child labour is submissiveness. Munoo accepts the situation; he accepts that he is labour, servant. He is unaware of his rights as a human being, a child who has birth right to get good food, caring, and good education. He thinks of himself, a servant. He asks himself "What am I-Munoo?---- I am Munoo Babu Nathuram's servant. He never raises voice against his miserable condition but accepts his identity as a labour.

Innocent childhood dreams of beautiful things, delicious food, and toys. Munoo also dreams of delicious food to eat, toys to play and beautiful clothes which he never gets throughout his very limited life span. At the very early stage that is in the innocent childhood days Munoo is made aware of social discrimination. Mulk Raj Anand shows, how child labour has to suffer from mental and physical torture. Munoo works hard but he working at the very early stage brings more suffering in his life, he becomes victim of tuberculosis.

Childhood is very important period in human life. Every child needs love, affection, good caring and good education. Unfortunate children who lose their parents, those who are born in a very poor family and those who are victim of hopeless exploitation by this society, such children need sympathy and love and mental support but they get very cruel treatment by the society. Munoo expects sympathy from his uncle and aunt but they send him to earn his livelihood when he meets Prabha Dayal, and he shows sympathy and affection. Munoo works for him. Munoo is emotionally starved child who is always in search of affection. Prabha Dayal also leaves him alone. At the end Munoo meets Mrs. Mainwaring, who feels guilty for injuring Munoo by her car. She takes him to Simla with her. Munoo again starts working for Mr.and Mrs. Mainwaring. He works hard even he

become rickshaw puller for Mr. Mainwaring. All this strenuous work spoils his health. He dies of tuberculosis. He loves this family so intensely, because they gave him support, showed sympathy, but it was for their benefits, Munoo never thinks rationally because of his innocent age and because he needs affection and support and for this, he sacrifices himself.

Society is always ruthless, emotionless towards any child labour. Otherwise child labour would not have been existed in the society. In this sense every adult citizens should be held responsible, because child labour are found everywhere in the hotels, on the streets, in the industries and every human being definitely sees miserable plight of child labour, very few people are fighting against this abuse. Actually every adult should be sensitive towards this abuse. Working condition as well as the owners are always ruthless and cruel towards child labour.

Mulk Raj Anand writes about cruelty of the owners or the employers. Munoo always lives under pressure or fear of his masters in his every phase of life. At the beginning when he is living with his uncle and aunt his life becomes miserable. In the second phase, he works as a domestic Servant. His master's wife makes his life similar to hell, further when he is working in the factory his masters partner tortures him. In Mumbai also his life becomes miserable and at the end his master Mrs.Mainwaring's exploitation makes him die. Munoo is an example of spiritual and physical death of any child labour. Childhood is like a bud which is crushed before it blooms in the air. Childhood period is full of spirit and energy and zest for life. Child labours potentialities go waste before its fulfillment. Munoo lost all his dreams and energy when he started working at the very early stage but before he begins this wretched journey of life ends.

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