

Starvation in Mulk Raj Anand's Novel *Coolie*

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Abstract:

Starvation may be defined as the state of not having enough food to eat, especially when this caused by illness or death. Starvation also can be defined as the feelings caused by a need to eat. Starvation is one of the major problems which are faced by many peoples of various countries due to this many children are dying everyday. Starvation does not affect any person by seeing whether he is friend or enemy. The present paper deals with the central character Munoo. This shows how Munoo suffers from no food to eat while the other children go to school. He sacrifices his life from his childhood to come out from starvation. Finally starvation makes a way to Munoo's death.

Key words: Starvation, sufferings, causes, disappointments

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. One of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction, he, together with R. K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an international readership. Anand is admired for his novels and short stories,

which have acquired the status of classics of modern Indian English literature; they are noted for their perceptive insight into the lives of the oppressed and for their analysis of impoverishment, exploitation and misfortune. He is also noted for being among the first writers to incorporate Punjabi and Hindustani idioms into English, and was a recipient of the civilian honour of the Padma Bhushan.

Mulk Raj Anand has studied the theme of starvation, poverty and sufferings of the Indian in numbers of novels and shortstories. In *Coolie* the sufferings of Munoo, the *Coolie* attains epic dimensions and a universal significance. Munoo, the central character in the novel is a boy of fourteen years when the play opens. Because of the ill treatment of his uncle and aunt, his life is one of idyllic happiness. He is happy as he plays with harrowing memories of starvation. “He had heard of how the landlord had seized his fathers five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had been scanty and the harvest bad, and he knew how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless beggar, to support young brother-in-law and the child in his arms” (Anand 3). After the death of Munoo’s father, his mother work for the growth of her child, but fate does not allow her to live a long life, so she passes away. After his mother’s death Munoo is taken care by his uncle.

The ill treatment which he receives at the hands of his uncle and aunt is nothing in comparison with the sufferings he is fated to endure in the near future. His uncle takes him to Sham Nayar when he is employed at rupees three per month as a boy servant in the home of Nathoo Ram, Sub accountant in the Imperial Bank of the town. His mistress is shrewish, quarrelsome woman and she ill-treats Munoo. She makes him work from morning till night and gives him only the poorest food to eat. He is practically starved and showers a torrent of abuse and curses on his head without rhyme or reason. When he complaints to his uncle, he instead of

showing any sympathy with the boy, beats him mercilessly. Unable to bear his cruel treatment he runs away from his uncle home.

In the next phase of his life, readers find Munoo is in Daultpur, Prabha Dayal and his wife are kind to him, but Prabha's partner Ganapathi ill-treats him, and it is by his villain that Prabha Dayal is reduced to beggary the pickle factory is sold out and Munoo has to work as a Coolie which means a mere beast of burden first in the grain market and then in the vegetable market. In the grain market, there is a cut throat competition between the naked, starving coolies each competing with the others for jobs at extremely low wages. The novelist gives a harrowing account of the suffering with the other coolies in the grain market. They are reduced to the level of beasts and are handled by them.

The rate of food items in that shop is very high when compared to the other shop. Due to starvation, Munoo has suffered a lot while working in the cotton mill. A sudden rain plays a major role in Munoo's life. He is suffering from disease and he is unable to work properly. It is also one of the major causes of Munoo's starvation.

Due to the riot between Hindus and Muslim the mill has released many of his workers. Munoo is one among them. Due to the loss of his job again starvation attaches him. So Munoo is in the condition to find a new job. So he walks towards Malabar Hill. Then suddenly he is crushed by a car, this incident takes him to Shimla. Mr. Main Waring is the man who takes Munoo to Shimla. Till he is all right and fully recovers from the injury he is taken care of by Mr. Main Waring.

After getting clear from the injured Munoo starts his last stage of his life as a rickshaw puller. Though he is a small boy he has to work a lot to earn money in that job. He selects that job to earn for his food, but soon Munoo becomes weak and suffers from a disease. All his

friends in Shimla think that he will recover soon from the disease. But cruel fate plays a role and Munoo passes away.

All right Munoo brother you are brave lad, Mohan assured him.

Munoo clutched at Mohan's hand and felt the warm blood in

his veins like a tide reach out to distance which it had never gone

efore. But in the early hours of one unreal's white night he passed

away the tide of his life reached back to the deeps. (Coolie 282)

In *Coolie* the central character who suffers from starvation has to sacrifice lots of things from his childhood to come out from the starvation. But in Munoo's life starvation acts as a part of life in day to day. As a boy he sacrifices his education when others go to school, he simply works and there is a stage in everyone's life where they want to enjoy but he passes away at the early stage of his life. The theme starvation which found in the novel *Coolie* is happening in the recent scenario. The current situation is many children suffer due to starvation and their life is spoiled.

Work Cited

Anand, Mulkraj. *Coolie*. Surjeet Books, 1936.