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## THE MARGINALIZED LABOUR IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *COOLIE* AND KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

Dr. Siddarth Patil

Assistant Professor in English

Rani Laxmibai Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Sawargaon

Affiliated to R.T.M. Nagpur University

**Abstract:** The Indian writing in English widely focuses on marginality of caste, class and race. There are variations about marginality. It directly centers on the oppressed section of the society which is largely neglected and ignored purposefully. They are put to remain the underdogs to bear the brunt of suppression of the society. It reflects the social attitude of the prevailed time. The literary works highlight the reality of such sections which are commendable for their entire setup. Similarly, Mulk Raj Anand and Kiran Desai become the voice of the exploited in *Coolie* and *The Inheritance of Loss* respectively. Their recognized works help to understand the causes of marginality and also suggest the solutions for the problems. The eminent writers extensively criticize the prevailing methods through their works. The present research paper sincerely endeavors to study the marginalized labour bringing to light its effects on individual oppressed sections of the society.

**Keywords;** marginality, suppressed, exploited, humiliation, ecology

Mulk Raj Anand belongs to the colonial and post-colonial period whereas Kiran Desai represents a post-modern period. Their works resemble with each other despite their variations of time. The colonial time was a period where English dominant society's prevailed and they demean everything that is Indian. It's a colonial legacy; a crisis to devalue non-British. Mulk Raj Anand successfully captured this essence in his novels. Right from his first novel '*Untouchable*', he carries forward it in his third novel *Coolie*. Marginality is a term widely used for the underdogs in the dominant social structure. They are forbidden to come across the social, economical and political development. Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Coolie* talks about such life stories of people who are denied a chance to prosper themselves. Similarly, Kiran Desai's the Man Booker Prize winner novel *The inheritance of Loss* exhibits the devaluation of labour. The opportunities seem like a mirage; unreal and false hopes. The protagonists of these two novels Munoo and Biju try their hands to pluck chances of progression in the capitalistic world where labour and honour is denied. Mulk Raj Anand depicts the services of Munoo who gets harassment and humiliation despite his hard work at his masters' home. Munoo is ill-treated, abused and starved at his first master Babu Nathu Ram. His wife constantly refuses to offer equal status to the servants like Munoo. She demeans his laborious housework and never spares to use rod against him. According to her servants should be kept at bay. She opines, 'What right has he to join the laughter of his

superior?’ (Coolie, 22) Munoo is assigned to the unknown work which he master’s after getting used to it. The unskilled workers like Munoo try to impress their masters and aspires to achieve their faith in their work. But it is difficult to tempt evil masters driven by differences between caste, creed and race. The colonial impression makes it difficult for such masters to be kind with the servants cum slaves of their home. The impact of British colonialism results in the ill-treatment of fellow Indians. The people who are rich and have moderate lifestyle; they induce and pursue the same hate and abhorrence against the inferior rank. They omit the disgust with hate and anger to relieve them.

On the other hand, *The Inheritance of Loss* projects an illegal immigrant Biju’s life in New York’s Manhattan. The overcrowded mean labour is devalued and treated inhumanly. The illegal immigrants like Biju work on cheapest wages and lives in dire conditions. He arrives in America with lots of aspirations with lucrative opportunities but fails to get proper work. He constantly changes his job on account of Green Card. He is frightened to get caught by the immigration officers. Therefore, he keeps himself underground living ‘in the basement kitchens of New York, but Biju was ill-equipped.’ (TIOL, 22) He changes restaurants either he is unskilled to the work assigned to him or he is ill-paid. He is a victim of racism mainly. His hard work does not bring him equality. It is his nationality that causes harm in getting proper work in the hotel industry. Kiran Desai tells the story of the entire illegal immigrants who are harassed, humiliated and abused just due to lack of proper document. Despite their honest labour, they do not get equal opportunities as compare to their companions. She portrays the picture seriously to give voice these ill-treated people. They are no existence. They are exploited and suppressed in the name of law.

Kiran Desai brings to the fore the unemployment crisis in India. The people eagerly want to make their way into self development but the lacuna of employment fails their aspirations. Therefore, such aspirants want to enter into the world of employment by any means. They follow misadventures like getting visa on a tour travel for a week and stay back permanently in the hope of getting handsome job with handsome money. But they experience alienation, exploitation, and non-existent life by living constant fear of getting caught by the authorities. They need green card which enable their entry and exit in the land of opportunities as per their wish. Desai’s portrayal of Biju is a reminder for such people and also is an alarm for those who wish to join the loads of illegal immigrants. It is interesting to note the incident when Biju asks his Gandhi Café owner Harrish-Harry for his legs treatment. The owner scolds him and warns to throw him out of job. ‘Know how easily I can replace you?...I’ll snap my fingers and in one second hundreds of people will appear.’ (TIOL, 188) further Desai notes,

‘it was so hard and YET there were so many here. It was terribly, terribly hard. Millions risked death, were humiliated, hated, lost their families –YET there were so many here.’ (TIOL, 189)

Biju feels that he is ‘the luckiest boy in the whole world’ because the doors of opportunity to work for Americans are opened for him. He soon learns the difficulty in getting job as he steps into the city of his dreams. He is warned by his father’s friend and is asked to leave for India as soon as possible. Biju’s experiences are filled with racism, alienation, rootlessness and identity crisis. She also highlights the crisis of unemployed youth like Gyan. Gyan is a young graduate but unable to find a proper job to serve his family’s expectations. Despite his talent and intelligence, he is denied a sober employment due to his identity as Gorkha. He gets a job as a tutor to teach an old retired judge’s granddaughter Sai on mean wages. He is often warned to cut down his salary on account of absent. He sincerely endeavours in his attempt to teach Sai but he is demeaned and devalued by the cook of the judge. Sai too confirms the same. ‘He isn’t very intelligent...’ ‘Yes,’ said the cook sympathetically, having forecast the boy’s stupidity himself.’ (TIOL, 176)

Mulk Raj Anand's epic of misery *Coolie* engages such deliberations in the colonial era. The author's expressions on mean wages find place in his work. Munoo's shift from Kangra to Simla showcases the issue of marginalized labor. His journey begins from Shampur and ends abruptly with his death in Simla. The narrator leaves no stone untouched about the devalued hard work of Munoo. He works in a pickle factory tirelessly to please his benefactor without any complain because he survives and spends a contended life with the help of his benefactor Seth Prabha Dayal. He works only to get food and shelter only. 'They worked long hours, from dawn to past midnight so mechanically that they never noticed the movements of their own or each other's hands.' (*Coolie*, 92) The partner of Prabha, Ganpat is cruel to the workers who often abuse, humiliate and loathe the poor creatures. Daulatpur shows no mercy on coolies like Munoo. After getting bankrupt, Seth Prabha leaves for his hometown leaving Munoo alone. He joins the lot of coolies; poor men dying to get work from Lala's near their shops. It is a horrendous picture of coolies who thrive themselves to get work and earn a penny for living. The phrase such as 'the thronging tide of a clamorous crowd' suggests the necessity of the work for the coolies. They are abused and beaten by the merchants for making crowd for the work. However, Munoo leaves for Bombay with the help of a Circus man; an elephant rider. The life in Bombay also proves cruel more than his past life. The coolies are ill-paid for long working hours in cotton mills. The tiresome works without any rest wriggle the bodies of the workers including men, women and the children too because they 'will find no work elsewhere. There are hundreds of coolies in Bombay who can't find work at all.' (*Coolie*, 174)

The marginalizing labor is all about demeaning and devaluing the labor-force. The needy and the poor are helpless to get a chance of their survival. They want to fight with their destiny in the face of capitalistic world. They pour the hard work to arrange two times food and a shelter above to cover their head. The capitalistic world cashes this opportunity for their betterment and development. The GNLFF movement in *The Inheritance of Loss* covers the hardships and the rebellion of the local who are fed up being treated as minority in the place where they are in majority. They are 'kept at the level of servants' by engaging them 'on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads.' (*TIOL*, 158) Kiran Desai exhibits the bitter feelings of the Gorkha people in her novel. She becomes the mouthpiece of these oppressed locals. The GNLFF movement is an expression of the existence of these people. They strongly hold the opinion that they 'are treated like slaves...they are laborers working barefoot in all weather, thin as sticks.' (*TIOL*, 159) It is apt to note that the poor with no means of leaving are exploited and wriggled under the name of labor. Citing both works of the respective novelists, the capitalistic world exploits the labor on large just to satiate their capital. Mulk Raj Anand and Kiran Desai successfully make a point in delivering the justice to the marginalized labor.

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