



UNVEILING THE ISSUES OF CLASS CONFLICT IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *COOLIE* AND CHARLES DICKENS' *OLIVER TWIST*

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Abstract: The research paper studies the issues of class struggle as they are presented in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*. It investigates how, in the context of globalisation, these literary works reveal the relationships between caste, class, and culture. The paper also offers a comparison between the two novels and contrasts the struggles of marginalised people with repressive social institutions. This paper examines the ways in which class strife is portrayed in Indian and Victorian society, highlighting the parallels and variations between the two works' characters, settings, and themes. Additionally, it aims to broaden the understanding of the complicated issues of social injustice and inequality that these influential literary masterpieces portray.

Index Terms- Caste, Class, Social hierarchy, Marxism, Globalisation, Industrial Revolution.

Introduction

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” (Orwell, 1945)

The above mentioned quote is from the classic novel *Animal Farm* by American author George Orwell. This satirical statement encapsulates the dangers which have been affecting everyone since time immemorial- the perversion of revolutionary ideals and the inevitability of tyranny when those in power prioritize their own interests over the common good. It supports the notion that any sort of social hierarchy (caste, class, etc.) will always lead to discrimination by forming binary opposites. People at the apex will always oppress the ones at the bottom of the hierarchy. The examination of class conflict in the larger framework of caste and culture has been a recurrent issue in the field of international literature. This paper is based on two classic novels: Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*. Both novels which are set in the very different socio-cultural contexts of Victorian England and colonial India, respectively, provide light on the struggles of the oppressed against deep-rooted societal systems. It is crucial to comprehend how these writers negotiate the intricacies of class, caste, and culture in light of globalisation, which has sped cultural interaction and blurred geographical borders.

Indian author Mulk Raj Anand captures the brutal realities of colonial India in his work *Coolie* in a very realistic manner. He exposes the connection of caste, class, and culture against the backdrop of British imperialism through evocative storytelling. Anand's story deals with the issue of caste system in India. It throws light on the complex network of social hierarchies established by centuries-old caste systems in addition to exposing the exploitation and dehumanisation that the lower classes endure. On the other hand, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens offers an insight into the dark side of Victorian England, where exploitation and poverty was prevalent in the middle of the rapidly developing industrial revolution. As described by critics, Dickens is a sharp observer of societal inequalities and he poignantly captures the difficulties of the urban poor. He draws attention to the plight of orphaned children and the structural inequalities through the character of Oliver Twist.

1. Interplay among Caste, Class and Culture in the Context of Globalisation

1.1 Globalisation

Over the years, multiple theorists have offered many viewpoints on globalisation, each concentrating on various sides of this intricate topic. The idea of "scapes" as proposed by Arjun Appadurai, an Indian-American anthropologist, emphasises how interwoven international cultural currents are. He contends that cultural hybridization results from the ease with which ideas, commodities, and images can travel across national boundaries thanks to contemporary technology and media. He challenges the idea of a homogenised global culture by highlighting the diversity and complexity of cross-cultural interactions through his work. He opines, “One man's imagined community is another man's prison.” (Appadurai, 2006). Anthony Giddens, an English sociologist, focuses on how institutions and social structures are changing as a result of globalisation. He argues that new dynamics, such as greater mobility and interconnection, have been brought about by globalisation, which has also altered conventional forms of social organisation. Giddens places emphasis on the rise of a "globalised" modernity marked by the disintegration of conventional borders and the expansion of international networks. According to Giddens, globalisation is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant

localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” (Giddens, 1990: 64). David Harvey, a British Marxist geographer, focuses his criticism of globalisation on its effects on the economy. He contends that as a result of globalisation, capitalist processes have become more intense, escalating inequality and consolidating power and wealth in the hands of multinational elites and corporations. Harvey's theory calls for alternative forms of economic organisation and resource redistribution by highlighting the tensions and inequities present in the global capitalism system. He explains, “The freedom of the market is not freedom at all. It is a fetishistic illusion. Under capitalism, individuals surrender to the discipline of abstract forces (such as the hidden hand of the market made much of by Adam Smith) that effectively govern their relations and choices. I can make something beautiful and take it to market, but if I don't manage to exchange it then it has no value. Furthermore, I won't have enough money to buy commodities to live. Market forces, which none of us individually control, regulate us.” (Harvey, 2008). The hazards and uncertainties brought about by globalisation are examined in Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist's idea of "reflexive modernization". He draws attention to the unforeseen effects of the world's interconnectedness, namely the deterioration of the environment and the deterioration of established social ties. In order to overcome these obstacles, Beck makes the case for more democratic governance and international cooperation. He also supports a more reflective approach to policymaking that takes into consideration the intricacies and uncertainties of the globalised world. He states, “Accordingly, globalization is not only something that will concern and threaten us in the future, but something that is taking place in the present and to which we must first open our eyes.”

1.2 Key Concepts of Class, Caste and Culture in Globalisation

As conventional social hierarchies collide with international economic pressures and cultural interaction, the relationship between class, caste, and culture becomes more intricate in the setting of globalisation. As stated by the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.” (Marx, 1848). The conventional economic status-based class divisions are changing in the globalisation era. Global capitalism worsens income disparity inside and between nations by producing winners and losers. Global financial markets and transnational firms have enormous power that affects labour markets and wealth redistribution globally. Because of unstable employment and exploitation, marginalised populations frequently bear the burden of economic globalisation, resulting in a widening divide between the wealthy elite and the working class.

As explained by the American journalist and author Isabel Wilkerson, “A caste system is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups.” (Wilkerson, 2020). Caste, which is engrained in many nations' social structures, has important interactions with globalisation. Globalisation has the potential to simultaneously undermine and strengthen caste systems, as seen in nations like India where discrimination based on caste endures despite legislative reforms. Economic liberalisation has, on the one hand, created avenues for upward mobility, allowing some members of lower castes to get jobs and education that were previously unattainable. However, prejudice still exists in a number of areas of life, such as politics, work, and education, and caste still influences social relationships and resource access. The solution to the issue lies in the words of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar: “Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind.” (Ambedkar, 1936).

In the context of globalisation, culture is a major factor in determining the dynamics of both caste and class. Global cultural exchange brought about by migration, technology, and the media promotes cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity. However, because Western standards and values frequently predominate in global cultural narratives, cultural globalisation also raises worries about the destruction of local traditions and identities. This cultural hegemony has the potential to uphold current power systems, marginalising indigenous cultures and feeding prejudices against particular racial, class, or ethnic groupings. Globalisation has also spurred discussions about cultural appropriation and authenticity, especially in the fields of fashion, music, and art. Cultural exchange can promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, but it can also result in the exploitation and commercialization of marginalised cultures for financial gain. Because dominant cultural forces frequently abuse the cultural capital of marginalised groups without fairly paying them or honouring their cultural history, this dynamic serves as a stark reminder of the unequal power relations that are a fundamental feature of globalisation. In conclusion, the dynamics of class, caste, and culture are altered by globalisation, which both blurs established boundaries and strengthens already-existing inequities. Comprehending these intricate relationships is crucial in tackling the obstacles posed by globalisation and advocating for social equity and cultural multiplicity worldwide.

2. Mulk Raj Anand

In his essay “Why I Write?” Anand says, “**Truth alone should matter to a writer.**” He further elaborates, “This truth should become imaginative truth without losing sincerity. The novel should interpret the truth of life, felt from experience, and not from books.” (Anand, 1977: 251)

Mulk Raj Anand was a pioneer amongst Indians writing in English. He was a novelist, short story writer as well as an art critic. His works mainly focused on social issues like caste and social hierarchy in Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand's body of work of creative fiction is sufficiently large and of high quality to earn him the status of a pioneering novelist. Aside from books and short stories, he has penned several texts on art, painting and literature. With the publication of his debut novel *Untouchable* (1935), Anand rose to prominence. In 1936, *Coolie* and in 1937, *Leaves and a Bud* (1937), he established the innovative practice of social realism and protest in Indian English in fiction. In his works, he represents the tragic lives of the subaltern.

Anand received the World Peace Council's 1952 International Peace Prize in recognition of his literary contributions to international peace. The Indian President bestowed upon him the Padma Bhushan in 1967 in recognition of his exceptional contributions to literature and the arts. His novel *Confessions of a Lover*, which was judged the best work of creative fiction in the English language, brought him the Rs. 3,000 E.M. Forster prize in 1978. This was M/s. Arnold Heinemann's inaugural annual award.

He was amongst the few writers who framed and finalised the manifesto of Progressive Writers Association. Progressive writers held that literature should serve as a vehicle for reflecting and expressing the basic issues and aspirations of the working class in order to contribute to the establishment of a socialist society. The concepts of political independence and a fundamental social revolution were held by even non-Marxists. There is a discernible shift in literary material that not only suggests a fundamentally revolutionary nature but also provides a largely new justification for the transition. The mystical and retrograde art of the 1920s is then reacted against by the Progressive Movement. It happened at the same time while Anand was penning his book *Coolie*. In essence, he adhered to the left-wing thinkers' social and political beliefs.

Mulk Raj Anand had a significant influence on Indian literature, and his life and literary works bear witness to his persistent devotion to social justice. Anand, who was up in a culture characterised by socioeconomic inequality and colonial domination, became a well-known author who bravely tackled the problems that the poor faced. He expertly wove narratives that revealed the brutal reality of caste prejudice, colonial exploitation, and the changing socio-political landscape of India via a number of significant works, such as *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, and *The Village*. Social realism, compassion for the underprivileged and simple language is characteristics of Anand's writing that not only made his books readable by a wide range of readers but also added to their lasting significance.

3. Charles Dickens

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” (Dickens, 1859)

The above lines from Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities* aptly paints the picture of the Victorian Era before us. The era witnessed a rise in publication of novels and Charles Dickens was its leading hero. The realities of Victorian England were painstakingly documented by Charles Dickens, who is best known for his fourteen novels and voluminous nonfiction writing. Although his reporting was based on accurate information, it went beyond statistics to represent his role as an ardent reformer. As evidenced by his later essays, he changed from being an initially idealistic amalgam of social critique and art to a restless, metaphorical observer. His carefully kept letters show a guy of limitless energy and a dedication to artistic consistency. Dickens's writing is a testament to his keen observations and deft artistry, and it provides insights into his views and interests as well as standing alone. His most celebrated novels include *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield*.

Dickens, the literary hero of nineteenth century England, actually had a very difficult childhood. A cursory look into this inadequate biography provides us with some insightful insights regarding Dickens's entire body of work. His heartbreaking images of children, which have moved so many people to unexpected tears, were first inspired by his own experiences as a poor youngster who yearned for affection and acceptance from society. Second, he learned about a completely different aspect of human existence while working as a clerk in a lawyer's office and the courts. It was here that he gained an understanding of both society's antagonists and victims, between whom the harsh rules of that often made little distinction. Third, he picked up the skill of writing and deftly gauging what would appeal to the readership while working as a reporter and later as a manager of several newspapers. Fourth, as an actor, he eagerly seized every dramatic moment, every tight situation, every distinctive gesture and voice in the people he met, and he amplified these aspects to suit the tastes of his readers by reproducing them in his novels.

Upon examining his internal tendencies instead of just his external training, we discover several really distinct components. First, there is his overactive imagination, which took ordinary events and turned them into captivating tales. He also described everyday objects like streets, shops, fog, lampposts, and stagecoaches in great detail and with romantic suggestion, making many of his descriptions sound like lyric poems. His intense sensitivity, which is only eased by laughter and tears, is the second component. These, like darkness and sunlight, are inextricably linked in all of his books.

“It is Dickens's art to give his heroes sufficient reality to make them suggest certain types of men and women whom we know; but in him we find ourselves often in the mental state of a man who is watching through a microscope the swarming life of a water drop. Here are lively, bustling, extraordinary creatures, some beau some grotesque, but all far apart from the life that we know in experience. It is certainly not the reality of these characters rather the genius of the author in managing them, which interests us and holds our attention.” (Long, 2015: 511)

4. *Oliver Twist or, The Parish Boy's Progress*

The timeless literary classic *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens skillfully combines themes of injustice, poverty, and the search for identity. The story follows Oliver, the book's title character, as he makes his way through the difficult circumstances of Victorian-era London. Oliver, who was abandoned at a young age and born into poverty, is pushed into a world full of violence and exploitation. Dickens skillfully illustrates the glaring gap between the affluent elite and the underprivileged masses, underscoring the structural inequalities that society as a whole upholds. Dickens highlights the struggle of the oppressed and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of hardship via Oliver's adventures. From the cunning Fagin to the kind Mr. Brownlow, the book is full of unforgettable characters that represent the wide range of human nature. Oliver's naiveté and fortitude serve as a moving reminder of people's innate kindness, even under the most trying situations.

Because *Oliver Twist* vividly depicts the inequalities and disparities of Victorian society, it is an ideal literature to study and analyse in order to better grasp Marxist principles. The novel portrays Victorian England, when the wealthy and upper class oppressed and took advantage of the proletariat for their own interests and personal gain. The society was severely split along class lines. It is a potent critique of societal injustices and a convincing example of the continuing force of compassion and hope. Dickens' classic story has captivated readers for generations, providing deep understanding of the human condition and the quest for justice and atonement.

4.1 Oliver as the Embodiment of Proletariat Struggle

At the heart of the novel, is the titular character Oliver Twist, a poor orphan who becomes a victim of various forms of abuse and exploitation. Starting from the mistreatment at the workhouse he was born in, to the exploitation at the hands of Fagin and his gang of thieves, Oliver's experiences act as a strong critique of the capitalist system of Victorian England. About his birth the author states, "Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them." (Dickens, 1838: 10) The line describes the difficult situation in which Oliver is born. He calls him "a parish child" who is "the orphan of a workhouse- the humble, half-starved drudge- to be cuffed and buffeted through the world- despised by all and pitied by none." (Dickens, 1838: 11) These powerful lines describe how difficult Oliver's life is going to be just because he is not born in a wealthy or elite class. The conditions of his birth are now going to decide how the path of his life will move forward. Thus, the novel's alignment with Marxist principles is supported by the life and journey of the central character.

Oliver embodies the harsh realities faced by poor and impoverished orphans. Hungry and destitute, he is "contrived to exist upon the smallest portion of the weakest food possible." (Dickens, 1838: 12). In the workhouse, he receives mistreatment and Mr. Gamfield even goes on the lengths to call him a "naughty orphan which nobody can't love." (Dickens, 1838: 28) When he is forced to leave the workshop and work under Mr. Sowerberry, the poor boy is made to sleep among the coffins. He cries, "So lonely, sir! So very lonely! Everybody hates me." (Dickens, 1838: 38). Tormented by his experiences, Oliver wishes it were his coffin that he was sleeping among. The author says, "The boy had no friends to care for, or to care for him. The regret of no recent separation was fresh in his mind; the absence of no loved and well-remembered face sank heavily into his heart." (Dickens, 1838: 40) Thus, Dickens uses this character to provide a vivid description of the lives of working-class people in Victorian England.

4.2 The Backdrop as a Metaphor

The fictionalised setting of the parish workhouse where Oliver's life begins serves as a both symbol and metaphor for Marxist ideology. It is used by the author to illustrate the notion that once someone has fallen into poverty, it becomes extremely difficult for them to improve their social status because of social issues like extensive exploitation, oppression and victimisation. These issues confine them to the chains of poverty. Supporting the notion, the author calls Oliver a "victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception." (Dickens, 1838: 12)

The backdrop realistically captures the sense of alienation and estrangement experienced by workers in Victorian society which operated under a capitalist system. Under this system, the poor and less fortunate were treated as mere commodities and exploited to generate revenue for industries and factories. Their identities and labour were undervalued. The compensation which they got paid was nothing in front of the wealth they generated for their capitalist masters. Critics may view this as a compelling illustration of how *Oliver Twist* aligns with Marxist principles, echoing Marx's critique of British economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo, who oversaw the exploitation of the proletariat during that era. Oliver and the other orphans symbolize these exploited workers, regarded as expendable assets in the pursuit of profit.

4.3 Social Hierarchy

Fagin, the gang leader of adolescent thieves, is one of the main characters in Oliver's trip. Fagin is a prime example of how capitalism exploits its weaker members, such as Oliver, in order to further his own financial interests. He embodies the stereotypical image of the avaricious capitalist who uses other people's labour to further his own wealth while showing little concern for the welfare of the people he exploits. Marx's idea of false consciousness—the process by which the downtrodden come to tolerate and even perpetuate their own exploitation—is reflected in Fagin's seduction and indoctrination of young boys into a life of crime.

The governing class's role in maintaining socioeconomic inequality is also examined in the book. Figures such as the self-righteous beadle Mr. Bumble and the ruthless undertaker Mr. Sowerberry symbolise the bourgeoisie who profit from the toil of the underclass. These individuals use their positions to uphold the status quo and protect their own privilege, giving them power and influence over the underprivileged. Oliver and the other orphans in his care are treated callously by Mr. Bumble, demonstrating the ruling class's apathy to the plight of the underprivileged.

Oliver Twist presents moments of resistance and unity among the oppressed despite the widespread injustice and exploitation it portrays. Characters that exemplify the possibility of empathy and camaraderie beyond class boundaries are Nancy, a prostitute who ultimately gives her life to defend Oliver, and Mr. Brownlow, who takes Oliver in and provides him with warmth and support. By challenging the idea that social inequality is inevitable or natural, these people give hope for a society that is more equitable.

5. Coolie

The awful circumstances encountered by countless landless labourers who left their homes owing to hunger and destitution are depicted in the literary work *Coolie*. These people are forced by their destitute situation to turn into coolies and fall prey to social injustice. Munoo's quest for a better future lies at the centre of the story. The word "coolie" describes unskilled labourers. Coolie's innate charm knows no geographical boundaries; it has been translated into more than 38 languages globally. It highlights the problems and exploitation brought on by caste-based society as well as communal strife. Anand uses the themes of industrialism, communalism, capitalism, and imperialism to highlight how these ideologies affect the weak and downtrodden in society.

The novel delves into the struggles of Munoo, a young protagonist navigating the harsh realities of poverty and exploitation in colonial India. Munoo, born into destitution, embarks on a journey marked by adversity and oppression as he seeks to break free from the constraints of his social circumstances. Through Munoo's experiences, Anand sheds light on the pervasive influence of caste and class hierarchies, illustrating the intersecting forces that shape the lives of the marginalized. The novel exposes the systemic injustices perpetuated by colonialism and capitalism, as Munoo grapples with exploitation and mistreatment at the hands of his employers. Despite the bleakness of his circumstances, Munoo's resilience and determination to find dignity and self-worth serve as a testament to the indomitable human spirit. *Coolie* stands as a poignant exploration of the complexities of Indian society and the enduring struggle for social justice and equality.

5.1 Munoo

Munoo, the central character in *Coolie*, is born into poverty and endeavours to find opportunities for advancement, yet he remains entrenched in destitution. Driven by indebtedness and unemployment, Munoo ventures to the city in search of employment. He secures a job at the residence of Babu Nathoo Ram, where Bibiji consistently keeps him occupied. Despite the modest financial status of Babu Nathoo Ram and the routine tasks assigned to Munoo, he receives meagre compensation for his labour. Enduring verbal abuse and curses from Bibiji for minor errors, Munoo, as a servant, acquiesces to the strenuous workload and mistreatment. He adopts the identity of a servant, embracing the master-servant dynamic and resigning himself to his circumstances. Gradually, he internalizes the hierarchical nature of society, likening the master-servant relationship to an inevitable and unquestionable aspect of life. Munoo discerns the universality of servitude irrespective of caste distinctions, recognizing the pervasive influence of economic status. He viewed the master-servant relationship "like sunshine and sunset, inevitable, and unquestionable" (Anand, 1936: 50). Observing Babu Nathoo Ram's subordinate position to his superior, Mr. England, who in turn serves the British Government, Munoo acknowledges the hierarchical class system. Despite the theoretical possibility for upward mobility, Munoo realizes that systemic obstacles perpetuate the plight of the impoverished, ensuring their continued subjugation to preserve the privileged status of the wealthy.

One day, Sheila, the daughter of Nathoo Ram, played with her friends. Munoo also joined them and playfully bit her. In response, he was ruthlessly kicked and beaten by Babuji. Unable to endure the hurt and humiliation, Munoo fled from Baboo's house. Unaware of his next move, he unintentionally boarded a train. There, he was discovered by a passenger named Seth Prabh Dyal, who took him to Daulatpur. Prabh Dyal and his wife showed kindness to Munoo. However, he faced mistreatment from Ganpat, Prabh's partner in the Pickle Factory. Munoo's brief happiness vanished when Ganpat cheated Prabh Dayal, leaving him bankrupt. Back on the streets, Munoo reverted to being a Coolie. Securing a job was challenging due to fierce competition. Despite his efforts, the larger the city, the harsher it was for him. Munoo believed he could find work in Bombay, aided by an elephant-driver's warning about the city's challenges. However, Munoo faced discrimination as a Coolie, feeling treated like a social outcast. He eventually found employment at George White Cotton Mills in Bombay but struggled with capitalist exploitation and colonial oppression. Feeling trapped and powerless, Munoo lacked economic freedom and succumbed to oppression. The Trade Union President, Sauda, emphasized their humanity amidst exploitation. He asserts, "**We are human beings and not soulless machines.**" (Anand, 1936: 284) The coolies at the Sir George White factory endured inhumane treatment, working as machines without recognition of their rights. Despite low wages and poor living conditions, they lacked job security. When the Trade Union demanded better conditions, the threat of starvation loomed over the workers, highlighting the precarious nature of their livelihoods.

Munoo and Hari, along with his family, look for refuge on Bombay's congested pavements for the night. There was a woman who lamented her recently deceased husband. Hari comforted the woman, telling her that her husband had achieved relief from the suffering on earth. After Mrs. Main Waring's car unintentionally ran Munoo over, she transported him to Simla as a servant. He worked for her as her boy servant and as a rickshaw puller. She occasionally takes advantage of him sexually as well. Munoo grew weakened from exhaustion from hard labour. He was sixteen when he passed away from tuberculosis because of not having a suitable place to sleep and the cold weather. Thus, all other social phenomena, including social relationships, political institutions, legal frameworks, cultural systems, aesthetics, and ideologies, are subordinate to the economic system.

5.2 Realism in Coolie

The novel *Coolie* embodies realism, with Mulk Raj Anand vividly portraying the authentic, impoverished India within its pages. While rooted in the social concerns of the 1930s, the issues depicted in the novel remain pertinent in contemporary India. Marxist critic Georg Lukacs scrutinized the novel's ability to accurately reflect the historical and material conditions of society, considering this criterion essential for assessing its realism. Marxist critics delve into characters, examining their portrayal within the broader context of social and historical forces. Munoo, representing the proletariat, is a product of the societal conditions and historical influences depicted in *Coolie*. His plight mirrors the suffering experienced by disadvantaged individuals globally, who are exploited by capitalists. Capitalism perpetuates their poverty, contributing to the societal division between the affluent and the impoverished. Despite the hard work of the working class, they remain impoverished due to low wages and the capitalist's desire to maintain their labour force for profit. Any attempt by labourers to improve their conditions is seen as a threat by capitalists, who rely entirely on their labour. Consequently, the working class is silenced and marginalized, unable to rise above their circumstances.

The colonizers inflicted both mental and physical anguish upon the populace. Hari's family epitomizes the countless laboring coolies in India, subjected to mistreatment and inadequate sustenance until their demise. Colonizers viewed the unfortunate Indians as mere animals. Capitalists compel the proletariat to toil relentlessly until their demise.

5.3 Conflict between Class and Caste

One of the main topics in Mulk Raj Anand's book *Coolie* is the struggle between caste and class, which represents the complex social dynamics that are present in Indian society. Anand deftly negotiates the overlapping domains of class- and caste-based oppression throughout the story, illuminating the many challenges encountered by the oppressed. Munoo's journey illustrates how caste and class hierarchies are ubiquitous, as he struggles to overcome structural obstacles that impede his ability to advance in society. Munoo's humble origins as a "coolie" highlight the interconnectedness of caste and class oppression right from the start. Munoo is subjected to mistreatment and exploitation by his employers as a member of the labouring class, which is indicative of broader cultural attitudes on manual labourers.

From the outset, Munoo's lowly status as a "coolie" underscores the intersectionality of caste and class oppression. As a member of the laboring class, Munoo faces exploitation and mistreatment at the hands of his employers, reflecting broader societal attitudes toward manual labourers. Additionally, Munoo's caste identity further worsens his marginalization, as he is subjected to discrimination and prejudice based on entrenched social hierarchies. The statement- "I am a kshatriya and I am poor, and Varma, Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because his is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the Sahib logs, and all servants look alike: there must only be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor." (Anand, 1936: 75) depicts the conflict between caste and class in 20th century Indian society.

Throughout the novel, Anand juxtaposes Munoo's experiences with those of other characters, highlighting the complex interplay between caste and class dynamics. The character of Babu Nathoo Ram, for instance, embodies the privileged upper-caste elite, whose social status affords him power and authority over Munoo and others like him. Babu Nathoo Ram's condescending treatment of Munoo serves as a stark reminder of the entrenched caste-based prejudices that permeate Indian society. Furthermore, Anand explores the implications of caste and class oppression on familial relationships, particularly through the lens of Hari's family. Hari and his family represent the millions of marginalized coolies in India, trapped in a cycle of poverty and exploitation. Their struggles epitomize the intersecting forces of caste-based discrimination and class-based inequality, as they endure hardships exacerbated by their low social standing. Moreover, Anand delves into the role of religion and tradition in perpetuating caste-based discrimination, as seen in Munoo's interactions with Bibiji. Bibiji's adherence to traditional norms and customs reinforces the caste hierarchy, reinforcing Munoo's subordinate position within society.

Ultimately, *Coolie* serves as a poignant exploration of the conflict between caste and class in Indian society, illuminating the intersecting forces that shape the lives of the marginalized. Through Munoo's journey and the experiences of other characters, Anand offers a nuanced portrayal of the complex web of social hierarchies and systemic injustices that continue to define contemporary India.

6. Comparison

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens and *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand, though set in different times and places, both explore the plight of the marginalized and the injustices they face in society. While *Oliver Twist* is set in Victorian-era England and *Coolie* is set in colonial India, both novels delve into themes of poverty, exploitation, and the struggle for survival. Despite their differences in setting and cultural context, there are several similarities and differences between the two works.

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens and *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand both explore the injustices and suffering of the underprivileged in society, despite their different times and places of setting. While *Oliver Twist* is set in Victorian-era England and *Coolie* is set in colonial India, both novels examine issues of exploitation, poverty, and the struggle for survival. Despite the differences in place and cultural context, there are a lot of similarities and differences between the two works.

The brutal realities of poverty and the exploitation of the weak are shown in both novels in striking detail. Dickens depicts the deplorable conditions of the London slums and workhouses in *Oliver Twist*, where Oliver and other orphans suffer from malnutrition, violence, and neglect. Similar to this, Munoo and other labourers in *Coolie* experience abuse and exploitation at the hands of their employers, underscoring the systemic oppression and poverty that characterised colonial India.

The social inequities and disparities that exist in each of the countries in which the novels are set are critiqued. Dickens denounces in *Oliver Twist* the callousness of the affluent and the corruption of establishments like the workhouse and the court system that prolong the misery of the underprivileged. Similar to this, Anand shows in *Coolie* the systematic injustices that maintain the oppressed in a state of constant poverty and oppression by exposing the exploitation of labourers by capitalists and colonial authority. Sharp criticisms of capitalism and colonialism's exploitative structures may be found in both books. Dickens portrays the moral depravity and avarice of capitalists in *Oliver Twist*, as well as the dehumanising consequences of industrialization on the underprivileged. Similarly, in *Coolie*, Anand highlights the economic exploitation and cultural imperialism perpetuated by colonial powers, revealing the devastating impact of colonialism on the lives of the oppressed.

The cultural and historical backgrounds of the two works differ greatly from one another. The Victorian age England of *Oliver Twist* saw a great deal of poverty and social unrest as a result of industrialization and urbanisation. *Coolie*, on the other hand, takes place in British Raj colonial India, where exploitation and poverty were made worse by the harsh laws of the colonial government. While social injustice and inequality are themes in both books, *Coolie* goes more extensively into the particular problems of caste and colonialism. Although socioeconomic status is a major factor in determining the experiences of the characters in *Oliver Twist*, caste and colonialism are not specifically discussed in the book. In *Coolie*, however, caste-based discrimination and the impact of British colonial rule are central themes that drive the narrative and shape the characters' lives.

In conclusion, despite the differences in their cultural settings, storytelling philosophies, and approaches to particular subjects, *Oliver Twist* and *Coolie* both present compelling arguments against exploitation and social injustice. Both books highlight the hardships endured by the underprivileged and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of misfortune via the experiences of their heroes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comparison between Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* reveals important new information on the intricate relationships between caste and culture and class strife. Both Victorian England and colonial India share fundamental themes of human suffering, resiliency, and the pursuit of social justice, despite their differences in geography and time.

Anand's *Coolie* illustrates the lasting effects of caste-based prejudice and cultural exploitation by providing a moving depiction of the hardships of the lower classes in colonial India. Anand emphasises the dehumanising impacts of colonial oppression and the human spirit's resiliency in the face of hardship through the character of Munoo. Comparably, Dickens' *Oliver Twist* highlights the misery of Victorian England's urban poor as well as the inequities of industrial capitalism. Dickens sheds light on the hard reality experienced by orphaned children and the structural inequities upheld by the ruling class through the figure of the same name. The book is both a harsh indictment of society's disregard for the suffering of the underprivileged and a rallying cry for social change.

Ultimately, *Coolie* and *Oliver Twist* remain timeless masterpieces that appeal to readers all around the world, irrespective of their location or cultural background. These books provide deep insights into the ongoing fight for social justice and the human potential for resilience in the face of injustice through their gripping stories and endearing characters. Upon contemplating these literary gems, we are prompted to acknowledge the significance of literature in illustrating the intricacies of the human condition and motivating communal endeavours towards a fairer and more impartial community. We must find determination and courage to do so in the words of Karl Marx: **"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."** (Marx, 1859)

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