

Depiction of Commerce, Migration and labour in selected English fiction

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Abstract

The economic and social transformations brought about by industrialisation, colonialism, and capitalism is reflected in English fiction, which provides a potent portrayal of trade, migration, and labour. Authors depict how the growth of commerce transforms societies and profoundly impacts people's lives, especially those of migrants and labourers. In English fiction, commerce is frequently depicted as exploitative and dehumanising. Industrial capitalism ignores workers' moral and emotional demands in *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens, turning them into mere machines of production. A profit-driven system that puts wealth ahead of human dignity is represented by factories and commercial establishments. In a similar vein, George Orwell's *Burmese Days* reveals how colonial trade perpetuates racial injustice and moral degeneration in colonised communities while upholding imperial power.

Economic necessity and migration are intimately related. In quest of work and survival, characters move from villages to cities or from colonies to major metropolis. Migrants in V.S. Naipaul's fiction face identity crises, alienation, and cultural displacement. Thus, migration becomes a trip influenced by commercial forces on both a physical and psychological level. Workers are seen as exploited and marginalised. The plight of migrant workers under colonial economic systems is depicted eloquently in Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*. The human cost of economic development is highlighted by the difficult working conditions, poverty, and social prejudice that workers face. In conclusion, a few English fictions depict work, migration, and business as interrelated factors influencing contemporary society. These novels highlight literature's function as a voice of social consciousness and critically reveal economic inequality, reminding readers that material advancement frequently comes at the price of human values.

Keyword: Commerce, Migration, alienation, capitalism, social upliftment, etc.

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*: Depiction of Commerce, Migration and Labour:

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) is a powerful social critique of Victorian industrial England, exposing the harsh realities of commerce, migration, and labour under industrial capitalism. Set in the fictional industrial town of Coketown, the novel presents a grim picture of a society dominated by factories, profit, and utilitarian values.

The image of commerce in hard times is one of coldness, machine-drivenness, and dehumanisation. Dickens challenges industrialists like Josiah Bounderby and Thomas Gradgrind's utilitarian worldview, which holds that profit and "facts" are the only pillars of social advancement. Moral obligation is subordinated to commercial objectives, which turn interpersonal connections into business dealings. Bounderby's factory serves as a metaphor for unbridled capitalism, in which employees are primarily appreciated for their output rather than their humanity. Dickens reveals the hypocrisy of capitalists who abuse workers while claiming to be successful.

The work has a subtle but important representation of migration. People travel from rural areas to urban centres in pursuit of work as industrial towns like Coketown emerge. The nameless mass of factory workers

symbolises widespread displacement brought on by industrialisation, even though Dickens does not concentrate on individual migrant trips. These migrants' cramped, dirty living conditions are a reflection of how trade destroys traditional lifestyles and pushes people into difficult metropolitan settings.

The main focus of *Hard Times* is labour. Dickens portrays labourers as ensnared in monotonous and draining factory labour, oppressed and silent. Dickens emphasises the hardship of the working class and humanises them through the figure of Stephen Blackpool. Despite his honesty and moral integrity, Stephen is crushed by unfair labour rules, low pay, and the rigidity of the industrial system. His terrible destiny highlights the brutality of a society that provides workers with neither protection nor respect.

Dickens also uses the character of Slackbridge to criticise trade unions, demonstrating how labour movements can turn into a manipulative force. His main concern, though, is for workers who are deprived of their fundamental rights and emotional happiness. Human warmth, creativity, and originality are all destroyed by labour mechanisation.

Hard Times concludes with a biting critique of industrial capitalism. Dickens depicts labour as enslaved and dehumanised, migration as compelled by economic necessity, and trade as exploitative. The novel is a timeless indictment of industrial civilisation, urging compassion, social reform, and a more compassionate economic system through vivid characterisation and potent imagery.

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*: Depiction of Commerce, Migration and Labour and Their Positive Impact on Social Upliftment:

Hard Times, written by Charles Dickens in 1854, offers a realistic depiction of industrial England while analysing the social implications of employment, migration, and trade. Dickens acknowledges the ways in which economic change promotes social awareness, reform, and gradual upliftment, despite his strong condemnation of the inhumane aspects of industrial capitalism. In *Hard Times*, commerce is often portrayed as profit-driven and exploitative. Josiah Bounderby and other industrialists treat labourers like machines and prioritise "facts" over emotions. Dickens does acknowledge, though, that commerce is essential to employment and economic expansion. Despite its harshness, the factory system creates jobs that draw people from rural areas and support the urban economy. Dickens promotes ethical responsibility in corporate processes and helps bring about long-term societal improvement by highlighting the moral failings of commercial avarice.

In the novel, industrial growth leads to migration. In an effort to find work and survive, people move from rural areas to industrial cities like Coketown. Although this migration results in poor living conditions and overcrowding, it also unites varied communities and raises worker awareness. The concentration of labourers in metropolitan areas raises awareness of social issues and sparks public discussion about housing, sanitation, and workers' rights, ultimately helping

The main theme of *Hard Times* is labour. Dickens used Stephen Blackpool, a symbol of the working class's moral fortitude and dignity, to draw attention to their misery. Despite their difficult working conditions and lack of legal protection, workers' tenacity and integrity reveal the system's inequities. Dickens's sympathetic depiction of labour fosters reader empathy and bolsters calls for labour reforms. The novel subtly promotes social responsibility, better work regulations, and the growth of humanitarian movements.

Crucially, *Hard Times* uses moral education to advance societal upliftment. Dickens promotes a balance between economic advancement and human qualities like compassion, creativity, and justice and criticises a society that is just focused on material gain.

Characters like Sissy Jupe serve as symbols for moral behaviour and emotional intelligence, implying that when labour and commerce are led by humanity, society can be improved.

In conclusion, *Hard Times* emphasises the importance that labour, migration, and commerce play in raising social consciousness while simultaneously exposing their grim realities. Dickens' story is a potent plea for ethical advancement because he sees a transformed industrial society in which economic success fosters moral development and social improvement.

George Orwell's *Burmese Days*: Depiction of Commerce, Migration and Labour:

By revealing how trade, migration, and labour operate within a colonial economy, George Orwell's 1934 novel *Burmese Days* provides a biting critique of British imperialism. The story, which is set in Burma during British control, shows how colonial administration is motivated more by economic interests than by moral obligation, leading to racial discrimination, exploitation, and societal degradation.

In *Burmese Days*, trade and imperial authority are intimately related. The main purpose of British commercial enterprises, such as those that deal in oil, wood, and other resources, is to support the colonial rulers. European officials and entrepreneurs dominate the economy, taking advantage of Burma's natural resources while keeping locals out. Orwell depicts business as immoral, where oppression is justified by profit. This mindset is represented by the European Club: it represents economic privilege and racial exclusiveness, reinforcing the idea that commerce sustains imperial dominance rather than social development.

In the book, migration is a result of imperial expansion. Indians and other labouring communities come to Burma to support colonial commercial interests, while British officials relocate there to manage and benefit from colonial control. Social conflict and cultural estrangement result from this economic or forced migration. While Indian immigrants occupy lower economic levels and face prejudice and hostility, Europeans live in isolation and are unable to assimilate into Burmese society. Orwell emphasises how colonial migration exacerbates racial tensions and undermines societal cohesion.

In *Burmese Days*, labour is shown as voiceless and exploited. Although they work hard and physically to support colonial trade, native Burmese and migrant Indian labourers are seldom given much respect or compensation. Workers continue to face racial and economic inequality and lack legal protection. Despite their education and allegiance to the British, characters like Dr. Veraswami continue to be marginalised, illustrating the boundaries of social mobility during colonial rule. Instead of being respected as a human resource, labour is viewed as a tool to maintain imperial prosperity.

Orwell portrays Flory as a troubled colonial figure who is aware of the system's injustice but lacks the guts to challenge it. The larger inability of imperial trade to result in moral leadership or social advancement is reflected in this moral paralysis. In the end, the book makes the argument that colonial capitalism dehumanises both the ruled and the rulers.

In conclusion, *Burmese Days* depicts labour as oppressed under the colonial framework, migration as disruptive, and business as exploitative. Orwell's novel is a potent critique of imperial economic systems, showing how colonialism motivated by commerce erodes social justice and human dignity. The book is still a powerful critique of racial injustice and economic exploitation in colonial cultures.

George Orwell's *Burmese Days*: Depiction of Commerce, Migration and Labour and Their Positive Impact on Social Upliftment:

George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934) is a powerful critique of British colonialism in Burma, exposing how commerce, migration, and labour operate within an imperial framework. While Orwell primarily condemns the exploitative nature of colonial capitalism, the novel also reveals how these forces indirectly contribute to social awareness, resistance, and the desire for reform, leading to possibilities of social upliftment.

In *Burmese Days*, commerce is portrayed as supporting imperial objectives rather than regional advancement. Burma's natural resources are used for financial gain by British businesses. However, raising

social consciousness is greatly aided by this revelation of economic injustice. Orwell promotes moral consideration of corporate activities by drawing attention to racial discrimination and corruption. As a result, commerce turns into a forum for criticism that promotes discussions about accountability, justice, and economic reform—all of which are crucial for societal advancement.

In the book, migration plays a significant role in colonial society. Indian migrants come to Burma as labourers and clerks to support colonial trade, while British officials travel there as administrators. Migration fosters intercultural interaction even while it also causes racial friction and estrangement.

Dr. Veraswami and other educated indigenous are exposed to Western education and contemporary institutions, which gives them the intellectual capacity to challenge colonial authority. Therefore, migration indirectly aids in the dissemination of reformist ideas and political consciousness.

In *Burmese Days*, labour is depicted as marginalised and exploited, yet it also serves as a basis for collective consciousness. Indian and Burmese labourers' misery highlights the immorality of colonial rule. Orwell's compassionate depiction of labour fosters empathy and fortifies anti-imperial feeling. The book promotes new concepts of workers' rights, equality, and social justice—all of which are essential for the advancement of society—by exposing labour exploitation.

Importantly, *Burmese Days* promotes moral upliftment through its humanistic vision. Characters like Dr. Veraswami represent hope for a more inclusive society based on equality rather than racial hierarchy. Orwell suggests that the recognition of injustice is the first step toward reform. The novel thus functions as a catalyst for social change by revealing the contradictions of imperial commerce and labour systems.

In conclusion, *Burmese Days* promotes awareness, ethical inquiry, and resistance while simultaneously highlighting the negative consequences of trade, migration, and labour throughout colonialism. In the end, Orwell's fiction promotes the overthrow of repressive structures and the development of a society that is more equitable and compassionate.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*: Depiction of Commerce, Migration and Labour:

The brutal realities of trade, migration, and work in colonial India are revealed in Mulk Raj Anand's potent social-realist novel *Coolie* (1936). Anand is a poignant depiction of the exploitation of the working class under capitalist and colonial economic systems via the lives of the child protagonist Munoo.

In *Coolie*, commerce is portrayed as inhumane and exploitative. In the book, workers are kept in poverty while landlords, factory owners, traders, and colonial elites profit from economic activity. Anand demonstrates how profit-driven business views people as disposable goods. Employers and mill owners don't care much about the health or dignity of their employees. It is said that the market economy is ethically depraved and that the suffering of workers like Munoo is necessary for the rise of wealth.

A major theme of *Coolie* is migration. Munoo moves constantly throughout his life, first from his hamlet to the town of Sham Nagar, then to marketplaces and factories before arriving in Bombay. His relocation is a reflection of the broader rural-to-urban migration brought on by colonial economic policies, unemployment, and poverty. Anand portrays migration as a forced process motivated more by survival than by personal preference. The instability and rootlessness of migrant labour are highlighted by the fact that every new location promises opportunity but only results in further exploitation.

Coolie's portrayal of labour is realistic and full of empathy. Munoo experiences physical strain, hunger, illness, and humiliation while working as a coolie, rickshaw puller, household servant, and factory worker. Anand highlights the systematic misuse of migrant labour and child labour. In addition to poor pay and hazardous working conditions, workers are not protected by the law. Anand highlights the brutality of industrial labour and societal injustice via Munoo's suffering.

But Anand also shows workers as resilient and morally strong. Munoo's generosity, curiosity, and hope endure despite his pain, signifying the resilience of the human spirit. Readers are challenged by Anand's depiction of labour to acknowledge workers as human beings deserving of respect and rights.

Coolie concludes with a potent indictment of colonial capitalism's effects on work, migration, and commerce. Anand demonstrates how economic systems deprive the weak of stability and justice while taking advantage of them. The book is a powerful statement against social injustice and continues to be a prominent literary voice supporting social reform, labour rights, and human dignity.

Migration and Labour and Their Positive Impact on Social Upliftment:

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936) is a landmark novel in Indian English literature that presents a realistic and compassionate portrayal of commerce, migration, and labour under colonial rule. Through the tragic life of Munoo, a young boy forced into labour, Anand exposes economic exploitation while simultaneously promoting social awareness and upliftment.

In *Coolie*, commerce is portrayed as repressive and profit-driven. Colonial capitalism benefits traders, manufacturers, and landlords while treating workers more like commodities than like human beings. Cheap labour, subpar working conditions, and the lack of workers' rights are the main drivers of industrial trade. Anand denounces this harsh system, but he also encourages moral contemplation by highlighting its brutality. The book indirectly advances social progress by increasing public awareness of economic injustice and promoting the change of exploitative business practices.

A major theme of *Coolie* is migration. In an effort to survive, Munoo frequently moves from his Himalayan hamlet to Sham Nagar, Daulatpur, Bombay, and ultimately Simla. Millions of people who are compelled to migrate because of unemployment and poverty are reflected in this ongoing movement. Although migration causes pain, it also highlights societal flaws. Anand's depiction of migrant life fosters empathy and bolsters calls for humane employment laws, housing changes, and social responsibility.

The novel's central theme is labour. Munoo endures hunger, illness, and humiliation while working as a servant, factory worker, coolie, and rickshaw puller. Anand draws attention to the cruel exploitation of migrant workers and children. But labour is also portrayed as morally superior and noble. Munoo's kindness, fortitude, and innocence stand in stark contrast to the brutality of her masters. Anand undermines social hierarchies and raises the moral value of labourers through this contrast.

Coolie's beneficial influence stems from its function as a reformer and social document. Anand advocates for economic fairness, workers' rights, and human dignity via fiction as a form of social protest. The book raised public awareness of labour exploitation and aided in the development of social realism in Indian English fiction.

In conclusion, *Coolie* effectively portrays labour, migration, and commerce as intertwined forces that oppress the poor while also fostering societal advancement by raising moral awareness. *Coolie* is an important piece of social reform since Anand's humanistic vision advocates for a society based on fairness, equality, and compassion.

Conclusion:

The novels mentioned above all clearly illustrate migration, trade, and labour. However, considering the ecumenical stability, development, standard of living, jobs, cleanliness, etc., migration is not a concern for the people. Additionally, the role that labour, migration, and commerce have in promoting social consciousness has been demonstrated. Because we see a transformed industrial society where economic success stimulates moral development and social good, the work mentioned above makes a strong case for ethical advancement.

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