

**Munoo (in Anand's novel Coolie)****Proud**

**Character** Munoo begins the story as a high-spirited young boy, full of energy and playfulness. He loves the beauty of the hills around his native village and swings from trees with careless energy. But he is an orphan, who is forced to leave his beloved hills and seek employment from a series of exploitative masters and a mistress. He is deferential throughout, never openly opposing the system that oppresses him, but he does gradually gain an understanding of how it works. He is a proud and sensitive person, born in a middle-rank caste and given love by his relatives. For this reason, while he doesn't rebel, he does criticise anyone who mistreats him in a personal way. And when he is beaten or scolded, he feels it deeply. Still, he retains his self-respect no matter how cruel the treatment. He is also a loyal and sincere person, who will help anyone in need, even those who might have shown him disrespect. He has few personal needs, and even his introduction to sex is initiated by a woman who feels sorry for him. In the end, though, and as he himself is forced to admit, he is a coolie, a worker, who must earn his living.

**Activities** In his childhood, Munoo climbs trees and wanders about the countryside, enjoying the beauty and freedom of the hills. When he is forced to leave his relatives and seek employment, he works as a domestic servant, a porter and a factory worker. In between these jobs, he wanders, on trains, down streets and in rural landscapes.

**Illustrative moments**

*Acquiescent* Munoo is not a rebel. Instead, and understandably, he has accepted the system he lives within. This self-identification as a coolie is dramatically shown in an early scene when Munoo is sent on an errand to a bank. He is stopped at the entrance and asked his business. Smiling, Munoo draws himself up to his full (but not very tall) height and declares proudly, 'I am Munoo, Babu Nathoo Ram's servant.'

*Proud* Although servile, Munoo is proud and will not accept personal insults. Once, while eating in a roadside snack bar in Bombay, he was mocked by a waiter. Reflecting on this insult, he tells himself, 'I would have fought hard if he had dared to turn me out or abused me. I am not an untouchable. I am a Hindu Kshatriya, a Rajput, a warrior' and I will not 'take an insult lying down.'

*Caring* His fundamentally caring nature is displayed several times in the novel, when he helps others in distress. A good example occurs when his master, Prabha, is badly treated by the police, and Prabha's wife (who often scolds Munoo) huddles inside the house in shame. When he sees her doubled over with shame and hurt, Munoo instinctively goes and comforts her.

*Modest* Munoo has modest goals in life. The only time he expresses any ambition comes when he meets Ratan, the wrestler and labour union member. After a few days with him, Munoo says, 'I want to work, to work like this machine. I shall grow up to be a man, a strong man like the wrestler.' The misery of Munoo's life is compounded when he loses contact with this man, his hero.