

Voicing the Subalterns:
A Study of Anand's *Coolie* and
Desai's *A Village by the Sea*

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A range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the affective experience of social marginality . . . transforms our critical strategies.

Homi Bhabha

It is through the mode of the post-colonialist theories by the 90s that a need was greatly felt to foreground in literature identities, voices and situations of the dispossessed and the peripheral, that were not granted by the colonial power, but are perceived and defined by us. Hence the existence of the marginalized “other” evolves in the post colonialist texts, making possible the “operation of hearing oneself speak”. In the given light what become interesting case studies are two novels: one a 1936 novel by Mulk Raj Anand (*Coolie*) and the other a 1982 novel by Anita Desai (*A Village by the Sea*). Separated by almost 5 decades, the two novels have an uncanny semblance: the oppressed and the forces of oppression continue to be the structure of the society forcing children like Munoo (*Coolie*) Hari and Lila (*A Village*