



DEPICTION OF CLASS AND SOCIETY IN THE ‘UNTOUCHABLE’ OF MULK RAJ ANAND

NARASIMHA MURTHY S. G

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, SUNRISE UNIVERSITY, ALWAR RAJASTHAN

DR. ARTI MALIK

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, SUNRISE UNIVERSITY, ALWAR RAJASTHAN

ABSTRACT

Among the leading Indian writers Mulk Raj Anand is considered as one of the most outstanding writer. His writings interpret the joys and sorrows of common people of Indian society. All his writings are derived from his own real life experiences thus the reader can feel the anguish of the writer when he illustrates the exploitation of downtrodden segment of the society. Through his literary work he has provided insights in the Indian complex social structure. His satirical approach throws light on feudalism, casteism and prevalent social problems of Indian society. In his novel she portrays the lowest strata of society – the untouchables, coolies, etc. The present paper discusses the sociological analysis of Mulk Raj Anand’s literary work. The turn of the nineteenth century witnessed a rapid development in Indian Writings in English especially Indian novels in English. One of the trios of Indian novelists in English, Mulk Raj Anand emerged as a significant novelist who gained popularity worldwide. His six novels published between 193 to 1942 dealt with the different themes and present realistic picture of the urban proletariat and low caste people. Anand’s masterpiece Untouchable (1935) attracted attention of the readers and scholars towards the social evils, oppression of the low-class people, especially outcastes prevalent in the South Indian societies. The present study is an attempt to critically analyze Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable.

Keywords: - Class, Social, Society, Caste, Mulk Raj Anand.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian English novelist Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most incredible Indian English novelists whose writing career covers over a period of four decades. As a humanist and a socialist, Anand was against superstitions, casteism, capitalism, exploitation of poor, colonialism etc. He condemned the barriers that disturbed happiness and comfort of human life especially in the South Indian Society. Nandini Bhattacharya rightly opines, “The entire question of sanitation, disease and public health was further exacerbated with the rapid urbanization, sudden explosion of population, and creation/accumulation of unmanageable waste in the European as well as Indian spaces. All these concerns inform and enrich our understanding of *Untouchable*”.

Anand advocated that all the people must have liberty and equality for a happy, prosperous, peaceful, and healthy life. He iterated on the need for emancipation of lower class especially outcaste people from the clutches of untouchability, a social evil. For this, he played role of an educator, social reformer and crusader against such social evils that were prevalent in the South Indian Society and projected against the liberation of outcastes. He vied attention of readers, audience and the upper-class people against the exploitation, enslavement and ill-treatment of the downtrodden people.

He experienced that many individuals were confronted with the human rights problems such as torture, hunger, and socio-cultural discrimination. He propagated that the real humanness lies in the treatment of people with compassion and pity. As a writer, Mulk Raj Anand addressed the social problems in a realistic manner.

II. SOCIAL RESISTANCE IN MULK RAJ ANAND’S UNTOUCHABLE

The novels of social resistance in Indian writing in English began with the big three— Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao and still continue with the modern novelists. The novel of social protest is not new genre but it was one of the favorite genres of the twentieth century Indian English writers. Mulk Raj Anand depicted such realities, not to talk about Indian writers, even western theoretical models of attaining justice, such as Marxist models etc. would not be appropriate to depict the tragedy of Bakha. The present research article attempts to depict the miseries of untouchables and the inhuman treatment of upper castes towards untouchables as depicted in the novel.

The novelist has discussed very sensitive issue of the early twentieth century which is still relevant in the modern time. Whereas the Marathi word ‘Dalit’ was used by Mahatma Jotiba Phule in the late 1880s, for the untouchables and outcastes who were broken and exploited in the Hindu society but the real picture of the Dalits was depicted Mulk Raj Anand.

In the history of Indian writing in English, the social reformation began with one of the great social reformists and pioneer of English Education in India named Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He felt

that in the Indian society, there were many social evils like “Sati Pratha”, “child marriage” etc. which were prevalent in our society. He revolted against those problems and was able to solve the problems and the result was that ‘SathiPartha’ was abolished.

The reformation movement which began in the nineteenth century continued in the twentieth century and the result was that the novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao came on the scene and they did not idealize life like the previous writers but they omit nothing that is ugly or painful and idealized nothing. Their novels deal with actual social issues of the society and that deal with the absolute reality of the society and Mulk Raj Anand dared to present the reality that was earlier ignored and perhaps no one had the dare to depict the reality of the untouchables. Mulk Raj Anand depicted the caste system and the problem of untouchability in his writings that was previously ignored by the writers or did not have courage to raise the problem of untouchables.

The writer has depicted the true picture of untouchables especially the condition of the sweepers who are considered lowest in the hierarchy of untouchables. In our society, the caste plays an important role and it has become an important part of life of Indian social set up. Dr. B.R Ambedkar has well written about it:

“Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. Virtue has become caste ridden and morality has become caste bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious. There is no charity to the needy. There is no charity but it begins with the caste and ends with caste. There is sympathy but not for other caste.”

In this regard, the Hindi writer and critic Om PrakashValmiki outlines the basic conditions for “Dalit consciousness” that is crucial element for the development of Dalit literature. It talks about Ambedkarism, anticapitalism, anti- Brahmanism and traditionalism in the realm of literary world. After the deep observation, Valmiki also talks about Baba Sahab’s comments on village life in India. He boldly talks about it that there is no place of equality, independence and brotherhood in Indian village life. Indian villages are more than heaven for Brahmins and for Dalits; they are nothing short of hell.

Baba Sahab requested the fellow Dalits to leave Indian village life which is not less than hell for the untouchables. He requested the fellow Dalits, move to the cities, educate and agitate and that is heaven for them. Mulk Raj Anand has also made an attempt to show the untouchables’ condition to worldly platform so that the people of world can know the real condition of Dalits. Little before it, Baba Sahab has shown the heart touching condition of Dalits during the three Round Table Conferences and defines that the country which defines itself as a ‘Viswa Guru’ understands half of his population untouchables. Fellow man thinks other fellow man

untouchable. It is beyond understanding and the irony is that this foolish thing is lingering on with the little bit of reformation.

III. SOCIAL VALUES AND HUMANITY IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S UNTOUCHABLE

The beginning of heavenly happiness is the pinnacle of human growth. Where animality stops, humanity starts, and divinity begins where humanity terminates. The basis on which the cardinal human principles are founded is the meeting place of humanity's greatest accomplishment and divinity's flowering. Human ideals have never been genuinely upheld anywhere in the world. Worse still, no one has shown pity for mankind. Only those who ascended to higher echelons of society by serving their own self-interests were revered. Stepping down from a lofty position of illusory splendor to rub elbows with the poor is challenging. Humanity's disregard was more apparent towards the conclusion of each age of the social cycle. Our India was under British hands in 1930, and only the book "Untouchable" was published at the time. During the 1930s, Mulk Raj Anand began writing against our country's class and caste structures. He was the Grand Old Man of Indo-Anglican fiction, having been born on December 12, 1905, in Peshawar, India's capital city before the country's split. Mulk Raj Anand became a supporter of the underclass when the nation needs moral assistance and encouragement to end untouchability and superstition. With his first work *Untouchable*, published in 1935, he rose to the challenge. It was regarded as a minor masterpiece, and he was able to cement his reputation as an indestructible champion against the horrible practice of untouchability.

The depiction of Bakha, the principal character in the book *Untouchable*, by Mulk Raj Anand sparked controversy. Mulk Raj Anand was the genuine underdog's champion. He was the first person in the literary group to recognize the victimization of society's underclass. The writings of Mulk Raj Anand vindicate the injustices and inequalities that abound in our society. Mulk Raj Anand's biggest contribution to Indian literature is his realism, which has prepared the ground for societal reform. The film *Untouchable* paints a clear picture of our country's caste structure. Although India is recognized for its rich culture and tradition, the social evil of untouchability has shattered people's togetherness. His goal was to change the society's bad habits. He was well aware that the upper class was exploiting the ignorant people on the basis of caste and religion. His sympathies were always with the underdogs, and he did all he could to help them improve their living conditions. In *Untouchable*, the deplorable state of the subjugated element of the population is graphically represented.

IV. CONFLICT BETWEEN CASTE AND CLASS IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S UNTOUCHABLE

Mulk Raj Anand was a famous Indian English writer. He chose to write realistic and naturalistic novels and portrait the life of the lower caste and poorer people in traditional Indian society. He was an internationally famous widely-read writer in India. His work depicts casteism, capitalism, imperialism, inhumanity, discrimination, injustice, inequality etc. as barriers in society. Mulk Raj

Anand's important work *Untouchable* throws lights on the miserable life of the down-trodden section of poop-cleaners and sweepers. This novel condemned the social, economic, and cultural impact of India's own rigid caste system. Anand painted a portrait of the struggle to assert one's humanity and dignity.

Untouchable (1935) is a slim but powerful and most popular novel by Mulk Raj Anand, illustrate the life of underdog and downtrodden people. The novel deals old ideology of untouchability. The protagonist of this novel is Bakha, a sweeper boy. He is a victim of social discrimination caused by the deeply rooted Hindu hierarchy. Bakha is eighteen years old poor, sensitive and innocent boy who lived in the town of Bulanshahar.

His father named Lakha is Jamadar of sweepers of the town and cantonment. Bakha lives with his father Lakha, his younger brother Rakha and his sister Sohini in the dirty colony of sweepers were situated in public latrines and the ramparts of humans and animals refuse to lay on the outskirts of this little colony. The colony is surrounded full of dirt, ugliness, squalor and misery. The relation between father and son is unnatural because of Bakha's laziness and his attraction towards the English lifestyle. Lakha was a typical old Indian father abusing his children and place all his responsibilities on his eldest son.

Hence, from the age of eighteen, Bakha had burdened to work as a sweeper from early in the morning till late in the evening.

Bakha starts cleaning latrines at daybreak. Once he touches a caste Hindu accidentally, he was slapped by Lallawhich, makes him shout his approach, "Posh, posh, sweeper coming." In another incident, Sohini goes to fetch water for the village well. She is waiting in a queue behind the other outcasts. In a queue there is one of Bakha's friends' mother Gulabo waiting for water. She is always jealous of Sohini. Kalinath, the priest from the town temple helps Sohini to get water. He invites her to his house and tries to molest her. Sohini starts screaming, he shouts, "Polluted! Polluted!" These two incidences in the novel show the absorption of lower caste people by higher class people.

V. THE PORTRAYAL OF THE LOWER CLASS PEOPLE IN MULK RAJ ANAND

Mulk Raj Anand was born on 12th December 1905 in Peshawar. He graduated with honors from Khalsa College, Amritsar in 1924. He went to England and studied at University College London and Cambridge University. He completed his PhD in 1929. Mulk Raj Anand also studied and later lectured at League of Nations School of Intellectual Cooperation in Geneva. Between 1932 and 1945, he lectured intermittently at worker Educational Association in London.

Mulk Raj Anand was initiated into the literary career by a family tragedy, instigated by the rigidity by the caste system. Anand's first prose essay was a response to the suicide of an aunt, who had been excommunicated by his family for sharing a meal with a Muslim.

In 1930's and 1940's Mulk Raj Anand divided his time between London and India. He joined the struggle for independence, but also fought with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. After the war, Anand returned permanently to India and settled in Bombay.

In 1946, he founded the Fine-Arts Magazine Marg. He also became the director of Kutub publishers. From 1948 to 1966, Anand taught at Indian Universities. Mulk Raj Anand was the fine arts chairman at Lalit Kala Academy (National Academy of Arts) from 1965 to 1970. In 1970, he became President of Lokayuta Trust, for creating a community and cultural center in the village of HauzKhas, New Delhi.

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian novelist, and short story writer. He was among the first writers to incorporate Punjabi and Hindustani idioms into English. His stories depicted a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor in India. He was the first Indian novelist to make an untouchable, the hero of a novel.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the comparative study of both the novels *Oliver twist* by Charles dickens and *untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand there were a lot of similarities related to the poverty and oppression .Though the countries were different, traditions were different, culture changes but the poverty remains the same. Both the protagonists *Oliver Twist* and *Bakha* suffered throughout the novel because of poverty and oppression. There were many similarities in writings of both the authors.

To conclude the discussion about the voices of the marginalized in MulkRajAnand's novel *Untouchable*, one can express one's agreement with E. M. Forster that *untouchable* could have been written by an Indian writer only who observed untouchability from outside. After its publication, the novel was appreciated by a few people but criticized by many. Several newspapers in London criticized it and hailed it as 'a dirty work'. But this criticism was well responded by E. M. Forster in the "Preface" of the novel.

REFERENCE

1. Bhattacharya, Nandini. "Clean Book or Dirty Book? Reading Anand's *Untouchable* in the Light of Enlightenment Sanitary Discourse." *Mulk Raj Anand: Untouchable*. Edited by Nandini Bhattacharya. Pearson, 2007. pp. 188-204
2. Yadav, Shiv Kumar. "A Comparative Study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi*." *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand: A New Critical Spectrum*, Edited by T. M. J. Indra Mohan. Atlantic Publishers, 2005. pp. 9-18.
3. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. Penguin, 2001.
4. Amritsar, Ambedkar School of Thoughts, Katra, Ed, JamanWingh, 1945. Forster, E.M. Preface to *Untouchable*. Penguin India, 2001
5. Singh, P.K. *Major Indo-English Novelists & Novels*, Sublime Publication, Jaipur, 2001.

6. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. 1935. New Delhi: Penguin Books Pvt Ltd, 2001.
7. DrPranabanandaPatusi. "The Subaltern Speaks: A Comparative Study of Anand's *Untouchable* and ArundhatiRoy's *The God of Small Things*." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 8, Aug. 2016, pp. 272– 281.
8. DrKanakLataTiwari. "Untouchable by MulkrajAnand is a novel of Social Protest." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol. 3, no. 5, May 2015, pp. 8– 13., www.arcjournals.org/pdfs/ijSELL/v3-i5/2.pdf.
9. NarinderKaur. "Humanism in Mulk Raj Anand's novel "Untouchables"." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 4, June 2015, pp. 484–489., ijellh.com/papers/2015/June/54-484-489-June2015.pdf.
10. Ramteke, Pallavi T. "A Comparative Study Of Human And Societal Values In The Novels Of Aravindadiga, Richard Wright And Mulk Raj Anand." *International Journal of Advanced System and Social Engineering Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, Sept. 2013, pp. 68– 77., bipublication.com/files/ijaser-v3i3-2013-01.pdf.