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FOURTH WORLD LITERATURE: AN EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVE VOICES

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Abstract

To study and contemplate over fourth world literature is a necessity today because, it may allow us to understand the damaging effect of modernization. The feeling of superiority leads to the tendency of discrimination, consequently leading the individuals and the society to look down upon others. Casteism in India was practiced for centuries and exists in some form or the other even today. However, it has never been logical or reasonable or justifiable. Subaltern's voice always remained unheard hence they constitute the domain of the fourth world where the marginal may raise its voices. Dalit Literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of Negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary. Dalits were always on the marginalized 'Other' side of the Indian society. So when they started voicing after centuries of silence, about themselves, we have the literature depicting assertion of human rights, self-pride, revolt against social injustice, chronicles of personal and collective suffering, and hopes and aspiration for a new society devoid of discrimination. The

present paper may make an attempt of exploring the uncanny and suppressed voices of marginal.

Keywords: Dalit, Untouchability, Marginalization

Introduction:

Literature as a mode of discursive articulation always endeavours to give voice to the marginal and it gives birth to the concept of Fourth World Literature. To study and contemplate over fourth world literature is a necessity today because it may allow us to understand the damaging effects of modernization. Marginalization is when a person is pushed to the edge of society. This is deliberate effect of discrimination because a person is made to stand out therefore feel like all alone and alienated from the rest of the society. Marginalization is a process of domination and subordination. The voice of the marginalized is mostly muted. Thus the subaltern literature, unlike Marxist literature, does not talk about the class struggle but the struggle between castes, seen from the point of view of the lower caste, the minority, the marginal, the subaltern. The entire ideology of subaltern

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literature revolves around this. The term “Subaltern” and “Dalit” are used as synonyms in general by many scholars and theologians in their writings but “Dalit” is the term much popularized in the India. ‘Dalit’ is the Hindi term often used for depressed classes was first used by Sami Shardashananda. According to Babasahab Ambedkar, Dalit hood is a kind of condition that characterizes the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalit people by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of upper class. The term Dalit encompasses the hapless segment of India: the untouchable communities, Adivasi, nomadic tribes and the masses who were made to lead dehumanized, degraded lives and were denied the basic fundamental rights by the hegemony of the stratified, rigid caste system of Hinduism. The frustration, humiliation, suppression, anguish and revolt felt by this ill-starred, marginalized section of Indian society constitutes the dialogic of Dalit literature. In an age where the awareness of human rights is a major issue, the literary depiction of marginalized groups of people becomes very significant. Dalit literature attempts to emphasize the experience of discrimination, violence and poverty of Dalit. Primarily the aim of Dalit Literature is to highlight the disabilities and difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment meted out to Dalits and Dalitness is essentially a means toward achieving a sense of cultural

identity. The constant growth in Dalit writings is a part of growing need off the Dalits themselves to articulate their experiences.it is the way to produce social awakening among downtrodden In Indian writing in in English, Dalits have been represented to their core by many writers in pre and post independent era. The first novel exposed and satirized the hollow hypocrisy and heartlessness of the upper class Hindu society is Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* which was published in 1935. He was the first writer who represented the victimization of the Dalits in different strata of society.

Analysis:

The novel *Untouchable* was so relevant in that pre independent India and it directly addressed the social evil. The novel was written with a specific purpose which was to create public opinion against the evil of untouchability. Anand’s novel is called the creative manifesto of Dalits in India. It is a powerful record of the life of an untouchable who becomes the victim of society which denies him all the possibilities of redemptive options only because he is ‘low born’. The hero of *Untouchable* is a sweeper boy, named Bakha, around whom the whole gamut of action moves. Bakha represents the disposed of the earth; the archetype of an expensive hero in a closed world, struggling to achieve perfection amidst chaotic world of perversion. The novel opens with the

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spiritual crisis in the life of its protagonist Bakha, sweeper boy of eighteen years old who is sound in mind and body, his reutilized life begins with the horrendous abuses which he receives from his father and the diurnal cleansing of a row of filthy latrines and garbage. The spool of the story slowly unwinds itself through a series of denouements which occur in the life of a hero. There is an incident in the novel in which he is slapped by Hindu for polluting him. He fails to announce himself as usual and pollutes a caste Hindu unconsciously and in return receives the torrent of abuses. This wounds him psychologically and makes him ponder over the humiliating segregation of man from man by restrictive social order. He has the potential to hit back, but his anger gets subsumed into an indifference and passivity as he becomes conscious of the fact that a vast majority of outcaste too are subjected to the same kind of dehumanization as he is. Anand describes the effect of the outburst on Bakha in one the most moving passage of the novel.

Bakha stood amazed, embarrassed. He was half deaf and dumb. His senses were paralyzed. Only fear gripped his soul, fear and humility and servility. He was used to being spoken to roughly. But he had seldom been taken so unawares. He lifted his face to the man though his eyes were bent down the fellows eyes were flaming and red hot. (*Untouchable* 46)

Bakha is very much aware of the discord between two worlds. He is condemned to inhabit, the new world of his undying aspirations. Bakha being an untouchable, avoid polluting others by touch, the confectioner throws the packet of jalebies, like a cricket ball, for Bakha to catch. He catches it. Bakha attacks the packet again with great excitement and continues to walk along the road, munching and looking at all the sights. This makes him forget to call out, “posh, posh, sweeper coming” (*Untouchable* 20) and he suddenly hears someone shouting at him: “keep to the side of the road, one low cast vermin...why don’t you call, you swine and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched me and defiled me (*Untouchable* 22)

The other incident, which provokes Bakha’s mind, happened when a little child of higher caste was wounded with a stone in the match. Bakha being an intelligent boy has already forbidden the child to the play. Bakha himself took the child in his arms with profound sense of love and sympathy and went to his house. When Bakha carries the child to his house, the mother of child gets very much angry with him for vehemently. If there had been another person of higher caste, in the place of Bakha, he would have been admired for this act of kindness. Bakha recognizes with a shock his social positions. It illuminates the inner walls of his mind. He realizes that though he possesses like any human being,

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head and heart, and flesh and blood, he is in the eyes of the world an untouchable. He realizes the wickedness of the society in which he is placed, which considers touching a human being like him as a malediction and touching a dirty bull like the one he has seen just then a benediction. When he reaches the temple courtyard, he begins to sweep the area. He becomes suddenly curious to see what is happening inside the temple. His inner impulse leads him through the temple steps through the temple steps towards the entrance door of the temple just then he hears a thundering sound. "Get off the steps, scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our temple, Now you will have to pay for the purification ceremony. Get down, get Away dog" It is a moment of self-revelation for Bakha "for them I am a sweeper, sweeper, untouchable! Untouchable that is the word untouchable!"(*Untouchable*58).

What Bakha finds humiliating is neither his poverty nor the dirty work as such, but the utter denial of his humanity and his being reduced to a subhuman creature that can contaminate humans. The Hindu social organization is based on the concepts of purity and pollution, contact or freedom from contact with dirt in occupational activity or otherwise determining the status of a class. In Indian culture there is no exit to freedom for Bakha. The only avenue which provides him with some means of escape from his closed world is contact with the English soldiers and their

culturally liberated Indian counterparts in the army.

Treated by them without any fixation about pollution and purity, he becomes aware of his self-dignity as a human being. He comes to consider the sahib, the white man, as more advanced in civilization than the orthodox Indian wishing to be like them. He wears second hand army clothes and avoids Indian style garments, a quilt to which he prefer an army blanket, even it does not keep him warm. Bakha's possible embracing of Christianity, Gandhi's solution of eradication of untouchability and the introduction of the flush system may seem chemical, if not impartible. Anand could have suggested a radical transformation in the entire set up of the Indian society. As Mulk Raj Anand observed elsewhere:

In *Untouchable* the lines of the mission of the untouchable are presented through a single

Person, only one incident i.e. the slap on the face evolved all the human relations, of the sixty five millions of people whom the hero represent against the millions of caste Hindu.

Thus in *Untouchable* Mulk Raj Anand gives his message of humanism, socialism, brotherhood, economic freedom and equality. His humanism in this novel had made him look an optimist his realism has also been relieved of its harshness by the deep colours of humanism that is central to

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untouchable. The creation of *Untouchable* is the rejection of casteism as a heinous practice involving man's inhumanity to man. The novel is a crusade not only against the evil effects of caste system, but the doctrine of karma also. Anand believes in this mundane existence, it is sin to deny any man the pleasure it accords. Bakha is a perfect individual whose excellence is flawed by his low caste for which he is definitely not responsible. All the episodes of Bakha's humiliation reveal how unjustly the untouchables are treated by upper classes. Anand hits at the evils of the society and the same time he shows the great concern for social justice. As Prof K. S. Iyengar sums up the novel:

Untouchable strikes us as the picture of the place of society and the certain person not easily to be forgotten; a picture that is also an

Indictment of the evils of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy.

As a novelist addressing himself to the task of expressing certain evils, Anand has been as effective as Dickens himself'

Anand has highlighted the realistic colony of untouchables and other out caste people. He observes and presents the real picture. The realistic picture is on one hand appreciated for Anand's art of narration and on the other hand makes us compassionate for the ill treatment with untouchables. Thus Anand dramatized in his novel the evils of poverty, exploitation and cruelty

that crush their aspirations and mute their voices. Bakha's tragedy seems to be Anand's plea for reform. He presents Bakha as victim of the world which is attractive in human sufferings and presents the human will to survive in sufferings. Dr. K.R. Rao observes:

Anand is merciless in his exposure of the evil elements in the social and his

Sociological indictment has disturbingly logical which admits no timid caveats of

gradualist liberalism. Bakha's quest for identity in a world which refused to recognize

him, has been traced by the novelist with a touch of sympathy. He shows the utter futility of attaching a tag and wants us to recognize the fact that the untouchable is primarily a human being, who is the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood.

Conclusion:

Thus Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* evinces keen interest in the tradition of social evils and attempts to arouse the slumbering conscience of the people. Anand was inspired by Gandhian principles to fight the menace of caste system in our country. In India which is land of unity in diversity, a lot of disparities in the name of class, caste and creed exist within the country. People are divided on the basis of caste so as to cause divisions in the society.

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The primary goal of such kind of caste and class system is to provide cheap labour in the society. Anand has raised his voice for the emancipation of untouchables in India. Novel is both a representational figure and an individual trying to grapple with the forces of orthodoxy and regimentation. The protagonist is universalized representing all downtrodden. He is simultaneously a rebel and a victim. His anguish becomes our anguish, his sorrow our sorrow.

Thus, Anand through his novel *Untouchable* brings out the portrait of the miserable untouchables who are struggling to get their place and identity in society and this chaotic world. Anand suggests that they can be freed from the shackles of destructive orthodoxy and tradition and

hopes for the indiscriminate society where every human being has right to raise his or her voice.

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