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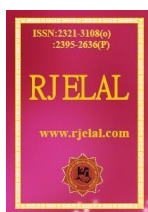
Vision of Viksit Bharat in Dalit Literature: A Study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

Dr. Shahzad Ahmad

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Gandhi Faiz-e-Aam College, Shahjahanpur,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Email: shahzadgfc123@gmail.com

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Abstract

Dalit literature is working in its own way to bring reform in society as it advocates the case of the untouchables and underdogs of society. Without falling between two stools, the writers of Dalit literature raise their voice against the injustice and inequality with marginalized communities. It can be noticed that Dalit literature has a clear vision of Viksit Bharat which is a dream of every Indian. Mulk Raj Anand whose very first novel entitled *Untouchable* deals with the suffering and tortures of the Dalits, is among the highest pillars in the history of Indian Writing in English.

Keywords: Untouchable, underdogs, marginalized, Injustice, Exploitation.

Dalit literature is the voice of voiceless as this literature is influenced by the great ideology of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Saheb, and it aims to expose the brutality of caste system. Casteism has been a black spot on the fare name of Mother India, and it does not let the people think freely about nation and its development. Dr. Ambedkar writes about this caste system, "Caste has killed public sprit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. Virtue 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 charity but it begins with caste and ends with

caste. There is sympathy but not for other caste. (37)"

It is well known that under the great leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Boss, all the Indians fought to get Swaraj unitedly, but they could not stand together against the evils prevailed in Indian society. M.B. Gaijan sets down his thought, "Social evils fully flowered during the time in the form of women exploitation, child marriage, infanticide, caste conflict, untouchability. Out of these vices, the monster of caste had clutched the Hindu society and fogged the future of the nation. (01)"

It can be found out that many eminent thinkers and social reformers thought about

these evils how to remove them from society. Mahatma Gandhi is a brand name who renamed untouchables as Harijans so that the society might accept them. M.B. Gaijan writes, "But it remained only a mockery of untouchables. Brutality on ex-untouchable does not stop, so they identify themselves as Dalit, the depressed community. (02)"

It is worth appreciating that Dalit literature is playing a key role in making of Viksit Bharat as it is available in all the genres of literature and it raises the banners of revolt against the injustice with the marginalized communities, challenging the caste system and demanding human rights. Mark : "He (Anand) aims at creating an awareness against the dehumanizing social evil and stirs tender feelings of love and pity in readers for the exploited. He envisages an era of social justice and equality of opportunities to all, which will has India into an egalitarian society. (41)"

It can be noted that originating from the untouchable communities, the major themes of this literature include solid exclusion, poverty, exploitation, violence and fight for human rights and equality. M.K. Naik rightly remarks, "The writer must go straight to the heart of the problem of our time, the problem of human sensitivity in the present complex, the tragedy of modern man. (15)"

In fact, the writers of Dalit literature do not suffer from any inhibitions when they write about inequality and discrimination with the Dalits in society. In this field, Mulk Raj Anand is among the most prolific writers in the history of Indian Writing who worked in his own way to the grand success of this literature. *Untouchable* is the very first novel of Anand, and it was published in 1935 in India. Anand tried to get it published by the British publishers, but all of them rejected to publish the novel. M.B. Gaijan writes, "Anand's realistic novel of Dalit community was earlier rejected by the nineteen British publishers..... Because only an Indian can understand what is untouchable and what

is untouchability? (02)"⁶. The most striking feature of the novel is the treatment of underdogs of society with a strict sense of realism. E.M. Forster, who wrote a preface of *Untouchable* remarks, "*Untouchable* could only have been written by an Indian and by an Indian who observed from the outside. No European, however sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha because he would not have known enough about his troubles. And no untouchable could have written the book, because he would have involved in indignation of self pity. (67)"

In this way, one finds that Dalit literature is a very powerful and transformative genre in Post-independence India as it advocates the case of the suppressed and down trodden of society. As a result, it has emerged as a literature of protest and resistance. So, Dalit literature is performing a key role in Viksit Bharat. Again the views of E.M. Forster are worth following, "No good is needed to rescue the untouchables, no vows of self-sacrifice and abnegation on the part of more fortunate Indians, but simply and solely the flush system (67)"

Mulk Raj Anand describes the story of a single day in the life of a toilet-cleaner in *Untouchable*. He is able to take a real photo copy of all the incidents which happened in the life of Bakha, and the people of his community. The novelist does not suffer from any hesitancy when he draws a realistic picture of filthy locality of Dalit community. Mark : "A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal-clear water, now sailed by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes... And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it made it "uncongenial" place to live in."

The people of marginalized communities were treated worse than animals. All right in society were reserved only for the upper caste people. Here, we are reminded about the sufferings, tortures, exploitation, poverty and degradation of a neglected section of Indian society depicted even by Rohinton Mistry in his famous novel *A Fine Balance*. Mark : "For walking on the upper-caste side of the street, Sita was stoned, though not to death-the stones had caused at first blood. Gambhir was less fortunate; he had molten lead poured into his ears because, he ventured within hearing range of the temple while prayers were in progress. Dharayam, reneging on an agreement to plough a landlord's field, had been forced to eat the landlord's excrement in the village square. Dhiraj tried to negotiate in advance with Pandit Ghanshyam to wages for chopping wood, instead of setting for few sticks he could expect at the end of the day, the Pandit got upset, accused Dhiraj of poisoning his cows and had him hanged. (108-109)"

In fact, a lot of ugly practices were prevailed in society to humiliate and exploit Dalits. Neither they could walk on the roads nor could they draw water from the well.

The readers witness the most pitiable condition of Bakha in the street of a North Indian Cant Town. He purchased Jalebis from a sweet shop but the owner threw it at him as if he were a street dog. While walking Bakha touched an upper caste Hindu who lost control over himself, and he announced that he was defiled by his touch. The novelist presents the pitiable condition of Bakha in its true colour. Mark : "He was deaf and dumb. His senses were paralyzed. Only fear gripped his soul, and feel with humility and servility. (64)"

There the incident of touching was like an earthquake. As a result, Bakha was beaten and abused mercilessly. A muslim-fellow saved him from the mob. He was ordered to announce, "Posh, keep away, posh, sweeper coming, posh,

posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh, sweeper coming!"

Like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Mulk Raj Anand could scane very clearly what was running in the stream of Bakha's consciousness. Anand suffers from no hysteria when he passes satire on the hypocrisy, bigotry and callousness of the upper caste Hindus who could be polluted by the touch of an untouchable but who like Pandit Kalinath, do not hesitate to molest a sweeper girl Sohini. M.K. Naik remarks, "to be ignored, or bullied or exploited as occasion demands. (29)"

The study of the novel shows that the Dalits were born to face the brutality of the upper caste people. It is well acknowledged that without water life is impossible. The denial of water to any living being by other human beings is the most inhuman. It is really shocking that the untouchables did not have sufficient water for drinking and cooking. As a result they had to spend hungry nights and thirsty days. M.B. Gaijan writes, "It was the untouchables' misery to wait for someone who will fetch water and pour it into their pots..... The orthodox Hindus believed that edible and drinkable things should not be touched by the untouchables otherwise that would be polluted. (03)"

Without taking a tea or brushing his teeth, Bakha was cleaning other's latrines. He was feeling cramp in his back due to remaining in the bent posture for a long time. He was awfully thirsty, but there was none to offer him even a glass of water or a cup of tea. E.M. Forster rightly observes : "The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion"

On that particular day, there was no drinking water in Bakha's house. So, his younger sister Sohini went to fetch it. It is very much surprising that Pandit Kalinath who

poured water into poor girl's pitcher, attempted to molest her. When the girl did not surrender before him, he immediately shouted, "Polluted Polluted." Sohini's molestation reminds us Roopa in *A Fine Balance*. Dukhi, her husband, was so helpless that he could not save his wife when she was being raped brutally. Mark: "Dukhi pretended to be asleep as she entered the hut. He heard her muffled sobs several times during the night, and knew, from her smell, what had happened to her while she was gone. He felt the urge to go to her, speak to her, comfort her. But he did not know what words to use, and he also felt afraid of learning too much. He wept silently, venting his shame, anger, humiliation in tears; he wished he would die that night. (99)"

To pull out the roots of untouchability and casteism from society is not an easy job. Among the people in Indian society caste superiority and inferiority can be considered by the following quote of Cox Oliver. Mark:

These low caste
 unnumbered
 generations, living in unrelieved
 grossness, have produced human beings
 in Brahminic India who can scarcely
 believe that a better state is possible for
 them. (16)"

It can be found out that Dalit literature is very powerful and transformative genre in post-independence India, as it advocates the case of the suppressed and down- trodden of society, and so it has emerged as a literature of protest and resistance. Therefore, Dalit literature has a clear vision of Viksit Bharat.

Anand has selected Bhaka, a sweeper boy as the central character in this novel. By doing so, he has started a new trend to give voice to the oppressed Dalits from many centuries. Bakha has not done any harm to any one, still he is badly treated. He wants to be recognized as a fellow human being by others. When he hears Mahatma Gandhi, he is deeply moved. Gandhiji

speaks on untouchability as, "I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and affronts leveled at them in order that my endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition. (62)"

Mahatma Gandhi renamed untouchables as Harijans so that the upper caste Hindus might accept them as fellow human beings. But it remained only a mockery a untouchables. Keer Dhananjay rightly observes, "They were not considered as human beings. Their misery was this. They were born in debt and perished in debt; they were born untouchable, they lived as untouchables and they died as untouchables. (2)"

At the summing up, it is observed that the novelist has depicted the untouchables at the centre of his literary work. He has portrayed the social, cultural and psychological reality of the Dalit community. The exploitation of scheduled castes begins with harassment, torturing, molestation and ultimately with their killings. Anand's attempt to give voice to the depressed is really worth appreciating because upto that time the untouchables were remained untouched by the writers.

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