

Double Marginalization in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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Research Article

Double Marginalization in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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Mulk Raj Anand (12 December 1905 – 28 September 2004) was an Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. He became known for his protest novel *Untouchable* (1935), followed by other works on the Indian poor such as *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937). Mulk Raj Anand was the first to insulate Dalit literature through his novels like 'Untouchable', 'Coolie' in English and there are simultaneously translated in English and different languages.

Untouchable introduces the caste system of rural India as the setting, and portrays a series of significant images that make up a comprehensive composite of the life of an Untouchable. It deals with many issues of social, political, economic and regional concerns. But its dealing with the question of rampant violence and prejudiced treatment against women of Dalit community is significance. Dalit women are generally projected to be detestable figures for their placement at the lower social rung.

The problem of Dalit women is distinct and unique in many ways. Because they suffer from the triple burden of economic deprivation, patriarchy, and caste-and untouchability – based discrimination. The Dalit women are sexually exploited much against their will for the sake of their earning livelihood. Sometimes when the Dalit girls or a woman screams because of the touch of an upper caste man, the upper caste man imposes the fault on the girl or a woman. Dalit women not only have to face sexual exploitation but also suffer from the mental torture.

Sohini the main female character in the novel is the sister of protagonist Bakha. She is a victim of double marginalization. She is marginalied in the society for her lower cast and her "second sex". She is thrust aside by the forces of patriarchy and caste hierarchy

Sohini not only plays a role of sister, daughter but also plays a mother role to entire family. Sohini faces many problems in her life but her father, Lakha does not try to understand her issues. When she fail to mae tea in time due o lac of sufficien water her father shouts from his bed angrily as:

“I thought you were dead or something

You daughter of a pig!

No tea, no piece of bread,

and I am dying of hunger!

Put the tea on, and call those sons of pig,

Bakha and Rakha to me!”

Actually Lakha has lots of love for his daughter but he wants to show some authority on her. Sohini acts according to her father’s advice. His depicts the pure chaunistic attitude of Laka and Sohini’s subjugation to men.

Sohini wants to prepare tea for her father and brother in time. But she realizes there is no water in pitchers to prepare tea and goes to bring water from the well. When Sohini goes to well, Gulabo the washer woman abuses her very badly. She was so jealous of her. Gulabo was also beautiful in her youth and she compares her beauty with Sohini. She asks Sohini to go back home because there are number of people waiting for the water. When Sohini can’t respond the words of Gulabo, She irritates and starts abusing Sohini as:

“Think of it! Think of it! You bitch! You prostitute! Wanton! And your mother hardly dead. Think of laughing in my face, laughing at me who am old enough to be your mother. Bitch!.”

‘You annoy me with your silence, you illegally begotten! You eater of dung and drinker of urine! You bitch of a sweeper women! I will show you how to insult one old enough to be your mother.’

Water taking scene depicts the notion of untouchability in its extreme. There were separate wells for the upper caste people and the low caste people are not allowed to touch the bucket. They had to wait for some upper caste person to come and pull water for them. They beg the upper caste people to help them in getting water.

“Oh Maharaj! Maharaj! Won’t you draw us some water, please? We beg you. We have been waiting here for a long time, We will be grateful, shouted the chorus of voices.’

It is so sad that that there was no person on the well who could help them. A person comes but he denies. Then Pandit Kali Nath comes and he agrees to pull water for them. In fact, he does not do it by having pity on the low-caste women; instead he does so hoping that it will help him cure his chronic constipation.

There pandit Kali Nath couldn’t take his eyes from Sohini’s beauty. His lust full eyes move on Sohini’s body bit by bit.

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“The fresh young form whose full breasts
With their dark beads of nipples stood out
So conspicuously under her muslin shirt.”

Sohini was too innocent to understand why Pandit Kali Nath was helping her. Pandit tells her to come to his temple to clean his latrines. When she was doing her work, Pandit comes from behind and catches her from the back. Sohini immediately understands that Pandit's intentions are not good and she starts crying loudly. Bakha was also working nearby the temple at that time. He comes running to see what is happening there. Bakha becomes angry to know everything. He was about to hit Pandit Kali Nath. On the other hand, Pandit Kali Nath was prepared for this. He blamed her immediately shouting that she was trying to defile him. All the upper caste people were in favour of Pandit. They blamed Sohini for polluting the priest. Nobody tries to understand the problem of Bakha and his sister. When she recognizes the situation is out of control, she convinces her brother to leave. Bakha also knew that if he reacts the high caste crowd won't spare him. So they go to their home.

On the way, Bakha thinks about the beauty of his sister Sohini. He was so proud of her being so beautiful and lovely. But now he recognises that her beauty has become a curse to her. He realizes anything positive can only be associated with upper caste people.

Besides the house hold duties, Sohini does the duties of cleaning the latrine of the upper caste Hindus. Sohini invokes her sympathy and appreciation in the same way as Bakha, the central character. She is very sentimental and has a great deal of love for her brother Bakha. She is intelligent even sensitive with a sort of dignity that is not belong to the common scavengers. Her role in the novel as prominent as that of a heroine. She exposes the hypocrisy of the upper caste Hindu's. On the one hand thus caste Hindu people say that they are polluted by a touch of a sweeper and on the other hand they do not hesitate to impress a beautiful sweeper girl to satisfy their lust. She serves as a symbol as she shows the reject condition scavengers and illustrate the social exploitation and tyranny and injustices in the Hindu's caste system.

Untouchable portrays the image of a marginalized Dalit woman who is the victim of the patriarchal system of society. This shows how suddenly the clouds of caste, gender and patriarchy are in the sky to partially cover the Sun of the human life and its

sustainability. This creates a problem as the down-trodden people get a deteriorated place in the social system of hierarchy

because of that. Society became a hell for the women like Sohini as they are marginalized because of caste, gender and patriarchy and its consequences.

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