

Dominance of The Minority Narratives – A Study of Mulk Raj Anand’s “Untouchable” Chinua Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” and Arundhati Roy’s “The God of Small Things

Ravi Prakash S. J.¹, Dr. Sambaiah M²

¹Lecturer in English, Govt. College for Men, Kurnool

²Assistant Professor & HOD, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, JNTUA College of Engineering, Pullivendula, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract: *The purpose of Dalit writers was to portray the exploitive, helpless, enslaved, subalterns/Dalits under the hegemony of the upper and middle class Hindu and bring about improvement of the Indian society and the enhancement of its people's well-being. The Dalit writer questioned the Hindu practices of orthodox sects and the practice of caste system and Caste identity,” in Indian society. One critic said, “It is the duty of the Indian writer to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and assist the spirit of the progress in the country”. In other words Dalit writers portrayed changing social reality, which constituted socialist realism. Anand had pioneered the writing of Indian literature to demonstrate his keen desire for political change and social transformation. My research paper finds these inequalities, faults in the existing social and political institutions within the post-colonial readings merged as a strong force in the narratives of Arundhati Roy, Chinua Achebe and Mulk Raj Anand. Addressing these serious societal problems which are prerequisites for peace, Achebe, Arundhati Roy and Mulk Raj Anand handle different categories namely the relationship between the onset of conflict, crime, theft, damage, violence and conflict environments.*

Keywords: minority narratives, atrocities, maltreatment, empowering ideology, consciousness

1. Introduction

The biggest change that is happening in the world writing is that many subaltern leaders are adding their presence to the international discourse. With the rise of atrocities, rape and witch-hunting and murder of Dalits, Dalit literature is occupying a dominant place as minority narratives. And also the sentiment of “inclusiveness” is across the country which is replacing the Brahmin hegemony to the vocalization of the minorities. Minority discourse is aimed at empowering the ideology and practices of the non-Brahmins to create a much wider consciousness among the people. Many self-voiced narratives after the 1960s appeared in all vernacular languages through different literary genres. Kamla Markandaya in ‘Nectar in a Sieve’, Arundhati Roy’s ‘God of Small Things’, Vijay Tendulkar’s ‘Kanyadaan’, Premchand’s ‘Godan’ and Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Untouchable’ are remarkable for pointing out the Conditions of the subjugated sections of society. While caste was operating on religious and psychological levels depriving Dalits of their basic rights, the powerful and realistic reflections by the writers of the oppressed classes were already making people to sit and think. India in an attempt to bring Dalit literature to the forefront received its first impetus through Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Untouchable’.

Mulk Raj Anand was the first Indian writer in English to protect Dalit literature through his novels ‘Untouchable’, ‘Coolie’ which generated an awareness of social situation of the Dalits in the society. Dalit writings were founded on the Gandhian ideology, anti-black ideology and ideals of non-violence. Dalit literature is based on the status of Dalits and their sensibility which gave a new dimension to literature. It started as literature of protest in the late nineteenth century

in western India to overthrow the dehumanizing character of traditional Indian culture and values and bring humanity together.

The purpose of Dalit writers was to portray the exploitive, helpless, enslaved, subalterns/Dalits under the hegemony of the upper and middle class Hindu and bring about improvement of the Indian society and the enhancement of its people's well-being. The Dalit writer questioned the Hindu practices of orthodox sects and the practice of caste system and Caste identity,” in Indian society. One critic said, “It is the duty of the Indian writer to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and assist the spirit of the progress in the country”.^[IPWA, Coppola,] In other words Dalit writers portrayed changing social reality, which constituted socialist realism. Anand had pioneered the writing of Indian literature to demonstrate his keen desire for political change and social transformation

According to Anand, Dalit Literature has a distinct ideological purpose. Seeing the people suffering from poverty and squalor around him, Anand devoted to the cause of the “poor and disadvantaged” through creative narratives of those people who never entered into the realms of literature. He wanted to write “an epic” of their “suffering”. Going beyond politics and social reforms he developed art in ideology, a truly humanist art, to help raise the “, the serfs, the coolies and other members of society to human dignity and self-awareness”² [Apology, 97]

Bakha is a humble scavenger, who is seeking his freedom in a hypocritical, cruel, deceptive and inhuman caste ridden Indian society. He hopes for a change of attitude in the large segment of Indian society but is doomed to suffering. The

Volume 5 Issue 10, October 2016

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

novel is an effective protest against the stigma attached to. To Anand, the problem of Bakha is social problem of national importance and as a writer he is committed to eradicate the evils of society. For Anand, novel is a powerful literary medium of artistic integrity and human relationships that can bring about social change and bring people together. This paper will investigate social, political and cultural processes as minority narrative.

“Untouchable” is a story based on the life of the downtrodden, despised and oppressed section of Indian society, the outcastes – those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. This story is based on a single day in the life of Bakha, a latrine cleaner and sweeper boy. We follow him round on his daily chores cleaning up the shift of the rich and powerful, who despise him because of strict social rules governing ideas of purity and pollution. When he walks down the streets he has to signal an alarm with his voice as he approaches so that the ‘pure’ are forewarned to avoid even allowing his shadow to be cast upon them. On one occasion he does ‘pollute’ a caste Hindu and is chased, abused and attacked all day long for this defilement. (Interview with Anand, 8 March 2004.)

There is a comprehensive classificatory scheme of the ‘varna’ system in the classical Hindu Vedic literature that underlies the concepts of caste which continues to exert a powerful and pervasive influence over Indian life. Within the greater scheme of Hindu society, Bakha endures enormously and appropriates himself within his own culture in search for an identity. He attempts to adopt the “fashun” of the Tommies, (and becomes) “possessed with an overwhelming desire to live their life”. The novel ends in the hope that some sort of resolution, or at the very least, some emergence of social change will occur.

The protagonist suffers morally, socially and economically. The exploitation of simple and ignorant people, the blood sucking high castes especially custodians of religion, in the form of priest etc. is really heart-melting. The Dalits, who are brutally tortured by the upper class considered to belong to the lowest among them. In that society, sweeper caste is counted neither in Hindus nor in Muslims. Bakha reveals: 'They think we are dirt, because we clean dirt (page 7) The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties 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 where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others, when he touches them. They have to purify themselves. Thus he is a disgusting object to orthodox as he walks along to public roads and it is his duty to call out and warn that he is coming. No wonders that the dirt enters into his soul and he feels himself at moment to be what he is supposed to be. . The sensitive Bakha realizes his position and subsequent humiliation created by this episode. The coin of an untouchable can carry the seed of cancer disease. This seems to be the belief of the high-caste society. In another incident, Bakha buys jalebis and when he was busy in enjoying his jalebis, unknowingly he hits Lalaji, that was deadly sin. And the reaction was, a big crowd gathered and shower of abuses

and Lalaji gives him a slap. Bakha reviews his own life and realizes that a person who touches dung and cleans latrines has no right to touch others.

Achebe was the first Nigerian writer who successfully attempts to transform the European novel form into African literature. Achebe is best known for its first novel. “THINGS FALL APART” which is the most widely read book in modern African literature. “The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like any one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart”.

Chinua Achebe’s THINGS FALL APART is a powerful novel about the social changes that occur when the white man first arrived on the African continent. In attempting to understand the behavior of individuals and groups in different settings, the novel depicts the effects of marginalization and compartmentalization. Africa as a result of colonization and slavery is in need for evolution. Evolution is the solution to colonization. While the colonizers destroyed the poor masses of Nigeria via inhuman policies, Novel became a global medium of national awareness. As a literary genre it invokes an apocalyptic genre of slave narrative on the racial problems faced by the native Africans. Embracing the ideology of social correctness, this Ibo writer critically examines the historical reality of colonization. Literature enriches our understanding of colonial issues. Achebe feels that Literature should reach a broader audience/ readership and bring about one society.

THINGS FALL APART published in 1928 is about the impact of western man on the African society. In a lucid and memorable narrative, Chinua Achebe foregrounds the impositions of western society on the native communities. Here the native African is judged by the western standard of living. Chinua Achebe’s attempt in this novel has been to uncover not only the social and economic life of African community but also to see how the community is interpreted by the other. (Other here is the Western thinking) Roger Richard Rorty, postmodern thinker and philosopher labels these communities as “interpretative communities”. The immediate questions that arise are how does this other see the native community in which he or ‘she does not have structures of the native community? Is an impartial interpretation possible? And what entails the interpretation that this of other carry about these native communities Chinua Achebe, with a precise analytical critical eye, examines the above questions in relation to the community he presenting in his novel” THINGS FALL APART.

It appears that Chinua Achebe’s THINGS FALL APART; Mulk Raj Anand’s UNTOUCHABLE and Arundhati Roy’s THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS encompass a literary relationship in understanding the changing social structure. The process of change comes overtly from social and political institutions. To a large extent social structure and institutions shape the behavior of individual and society. These structural changes trap people in a particular social situation and leads to inequality of power and denial of basic human rights.

Unjust structural forces result in discrimination, inadequate opportunities to education and employment, sometimes even basic human needs go unmet. Examples of this sort of hostility and its effects on minority and working-class communities can be seen in the novels; "THINGS FALL APART", "UNTOUCHABLE" and "THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS". They share the same concern of marginalization and compartmentalization as established standard by the other.

Great literature has fundamental impact on the development of culture. According to Chinua Achebe, Mulk Raj Anand and Arundhati Roy, slavery and minority can be replaced by a formidable ideology which both wished to accomplish.

Arundhati Roy's Booker prize winning novel "The God of Small Things" deals with the devastating effects of caste system in south Indian state, Kerala. Roy presents the miserable and pathetic plight and also the struggle of a woman for identity in a patriarchal society. Velutha, The God of Small Things transgresses the established norms of society by maintaining an affair with a woman of high caste that leads to the tragic death of an "untouchable" by the Touchable boots of the state police.

The superfluous and malice behaviour summoned out to the untouchables in India has been an issue of enormous concern. They have been undergoing the inexorable humiliation at the hands of the so called higher classes of Indian society. Concurrence of political independence has not improved their social status.

Arundhati Roy, a social activist has delved deep into the problem of Untouchability pervading the Indian society in her booker winner novel, *The THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*. This novel explores and exposes the caste system, gender difference and the police-politician relation that have existence in the country even after virtually six decades of independence. The novel discloses the cavernous gap between the touchables and the untouchables, the exploiters and the exploited, and the powerful and the powerless. It is all about how the human values of the children, youth, women and the untouchable have been impinged upon, and how they have been deceived. This paper deals with maltreatment convened out to Velutha, one of the characters in Arundhati Roy's *The THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*.

Hindus and untouchables, it's between Syrian Christians and. It shows that are not only suffering torturing and harassment from Hindus but also from other religious communities. Arundhati Roy has negotiated with the crisis of Untouchability beleaguering the Indian society in *The THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*. She is dismayed at the barbarous behaviour meted out to the lower section of the society, even in this postcolonial age. In this regard, she says that: "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the cultural insult (and) We are still caught up in the business of "disproving" the white world's definition of us"(Roy, 73-74). In this novel, *The THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*, the laws of India's caste system are conked out by the characters of Ammu and Velutha, an untouchable or Paravan. Velutha works at the Paradise Pickles and preserves factory owned

by Ammu's family. Yet, because he is an untouchable, the other workers rail against him and he is remunerated less money for his work. Velutha's occurrence is disquieting to many who believe he proceeds above his station. His own father comments this problem:

"Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation an unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel" (Roy, 73).

The inspiration of Untouchability is investigated at two levels in the novel. Firstly, we have socially or Parvan, who are not at all, permitted fundamental human rights. Secondly, we have emblematic in high castes. Here prejudice articulates itself in marginalizing the women in their personal and public life. In this novel, the rules of India's caste system are wrecked by the characters of Ammu and Velutha, an untouchable or Paravan. The whole episode in *The THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS* takes place in the southern Indian state of Kerala, and circles around an outlawed relationship between a Syrian Christian divorcee and mother of two children, Ammu, and a low caste carpenter, Velutha. A divorced woman is not entitled any right to pursue for happiness in life. The only itinerary open to her is to squander a static life, waiting for death. Any effort on her part to see life autonomously intimidates the existing order. She is at loggerheads with the society at large because she married outside her community and a divorcee to. Ammu's expedition for emotional support ends in Velutha, a low caste or 'untouchable' carpenter; whose family has been serving in Ammu's house since a long time.

The novel is stuffed with illustrations of caste politics. The dizygotic twins are let known by their grandmother Mammachi that Paravans are anticipated "to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away the footprints so that Brahmins or Syrians Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprints"⁴ (Roy, 73- 74). This amply reveals how a sensation of abhorrence and dominance is installed in children who are rather naive to comprehend all these racial myths.

The discrimination is perpetrated by a group of the characters who are themselves the sufferers of injustice. Mammachi, Ammu's mother, who tolerated her husband's obnoxious attitude, overlooks Chako's sexual exploitation of the female workers, but she can't bear her daughter's love affair with a Parvan. Baby Kochamma, the guardian of the system, would go to any limit to hoard the so-called family honour. The novel demonstrates the course of creating and cataloging Parvans within the high class families -- the people who go ahead of the unwritten laws of society in pursuit of happiness. Even though Velutha is a highly talented person with proven expertise of carpentry, yet he what he gets in life is the social exclusion. He fails to realize why his father VellyaPaapen scolds him for his love-affair with Ammu, a high status woman; and is against this social discrimination. Consequently, his audacity in carrying on this constrained love-affair proves a deadly peril for him. On hearing about this love-affair, Baby Kochamma connives

with the Inspector and Velutha is put behind the prison by Inspector Matthew, where he is severely beaten to death. Velutha was viciously tormented in the police station:

He (Velutha) was semi-conscious, but was not moving. His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheek bones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered; one had pierced his left lung which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The blood on his breathes bright red, fresh and fresh and frothy. His lower intestine was ruptured and haemorrhaged, the blood collected in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and return. Both his knee caps were shattered (Roy, 310).

Velutha falls a victim to the police cruelty and dies in the night. Roy describes his death, "The God of Loss. THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS. He left no foot prints in sand, no ripples in water, No image in mirrors" (Roy. 265). Velutha's dead body was discarded in a pauper's pit where the police dump their dead. Ammu realizes that she has been responsible for the death of her lover Velutha-an untouchable low-caste Paravan. Ammu dies helplessly, sick and alone in the lodge. The church declines to bury on several counts. Chacko takes her to crematorium where nobody except beggars, derelicts and the police-custody dead were cremated. It is a warning to the transgressors of the laws laid down by traditional, caste-ridden conservative and oppressive patriarchal society. Both of them suffer tragically for ignoring the love laws and die at its altar. After the death of Ammu, Rachel and Estha's struggle for existence in the society has become miserable. They were unsure of their identity. The characters in *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS* have a large universal appeal. They presents struggle between the community and individual on the timeless cause. Roy attacks the society ridden with Untouchability, orthodoxy and outworn taboos that frustrate us. She throws light on the exploitation of the labour, oppressed people and their pitiable, social and economic conditions. The novel ends with a 'tomorrow'.

We can conclude that in *The Good of Small Things*, Roy presents an altercation between the big man and the small man as compared with the Laltain and Mombatti. Both 'Laltain' and 'Mombati' give us light but the former is well fed and well protected and can bravely face the blowing winds while 'Mombati' has no glass, no protection and no support and it can easily be blown out by a surge of wind. This novel shows maladjustment between the God of Big things in terms of Pappachi, Kochamma, Chacto and Comrad Pillai and *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS* in the terms of Ammu, Veplutha and Estha. Thus we see that Untouchability is still being practiced in the world in some form or the other.

Seriously, Velutha's relationship with Ammu shows us the way he chooses to disregard societal rules in favor of love, and how this decision, however much we think it is the right one for him, is ultimately his downfall. Velutha, by our standards, doesn't do anything wrong by loving Ammu, and

vice versa. Still, we see how his low social standing allows him to become an easy scapegoat. The police feel little remorse for brutally beating him. The narrator doesn't just show us, but also tells us that Velutha doesn't deserve what he gets. His death is shaped by his social class, just as his life was.

My research paper finds these inequalities, faults in the existing social and political institutions within the post-colonial readings merged as a strong force in the narratives of Arundhati Roy, Chinua Achebe and Mulk Raj Anand. Addressing these serious societal problems which are prerequisites for peace, Achebe, Arundhati Roy and Mulk Raj Anand handle different categories namely the relationship between the onset of conflict, crime, theft, damage, violence and conflict environments. They understand that until there are changes made to these basic social structures, social conflicts will not end. Identifying these community problems, this paper reveals critically and systematically the various components of social change and the aspirations and concerns of civil society.

References

- [1] IPWA, Coppola, 6
- [2] Mulk Raj Anand, Apology for Heroism, op. cit., p. 1 72. 8. Mulk Raj Anand, "The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie," Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English, ed., M.K. Naik et al. (The Macmillan Co., of India Ltd., 1976),
- [3] Achebe, Chinua Things Fall Apart, New York: First Anchor Books
- [4] Chinua Achebe's Encyclopaedia
- [5] Caste Today (1962) by Taya Zinkin
- [6] Caste, Class and Occupation by G.S. Ghurye
- [7] Anand, Conversations in Bloomsbury (OUP, 1995)
- [8] SarosCawasjee, Author to Critic: The Letters of Mulk Raj Anand (Writers Workshop Publications, 1973), P1.
- [9] Anand, Mulk Raj. Untouchable. London: Penguin 1940.
- [10] Dhawan, R.K., ed, The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand. New York: Prestige, 1992.
- [11] SarosCawasjee. "Anand's Literary Creed." 13-18.
- [12] "Caste." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*. Wikimedia. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.
- [13] Roy, Arundhati. *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1997. Print.
- [14] "UNTOUCHABLE." *The Oxford Learner Dictionary*. 8th ed. 2010. Print
- [15] R.T. Roberston. "UNTOUCHABLE as an Archetypal Novel."
- [16] Narasimhaiah, C.D. The Swan and the Eagle. Delhi: Motilal, 1987.
- [17] Some leading Journals, articles and papers on Chinua Achebe and Mulk Raj Anand.
- [18] Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things, Penguin books, India, 2002
- [19] Arundhati Roy. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved 12 may 2013
- [20] Roy, Amitabh (2005). The God of Small Things: A Novel of Social Commitment From Norman Maier to Arundhati Roy. Hamish Hamilton. Retrieved Dec 13, 2015

- [21] Moffit, Michael; An Untouchable Community in South India. Princeton, N.J: Princeton up, 1979
- [22] Roy: "Necessary but wrong"-The Economist. July 30, 2009

