

THE DISCOURSE OF MARXISM, BUDDHISM AND DALITISM AS THE SPECTRUM OF UTOPIAN NOTION: A STUDY THROUGH MULK RAJ ANAND'S *UNTOUCHABLE*

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Abstract:

The word 'Utopia' has been derived from the Greek word 'Outopos' which means an ideal imaginary society in which everything is well maintained and equally distributed. Human beings, since the very beginning of their existence, are crazy for power, knowledge and wealth. Therefore, whoever is more powerful he or she begins to dominate others and sets up a dystopian society through his/her authoritarian exploitative state of psyche for the cause of his/her mundane glory which refers to their bottomless internal darkness. Karl Marx, the founder of the ideology of Marxism inspired by Hegel's 'Dialectic,' started with his followers to dismantle the dystopian notion of exploitation and paved the possible path of progress in which mankind are geared towards their actual freedom, monarchs of their own kingdoms. Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), the founder of Buddhism and B. R Ambedkar, the founder of Dalit Buddhist movement (also called Neo-Buddhist movement) had given the similar wings of utopian reverie. Looking at the real situation we find their craving for liberty still remains a far-fetched dream. There is an immense abyss between their ambitions and the actual realization of their desires. This paper looks at select samples about present plight and pangs, pathos and anguishes of dalits and marginalized masses and correlates them with the utopian vision of Marxism, Buddhism and the discourse of Dalit.

Keywords: utopia, dominate, authoritarian exploitative, mundane, Marxism, dialectic, Buddhism, Dalit Buddhist movement, far-fetched dream, pangs, anguishes.

Among the early Indian English novelists, Mulk Raj Anand is a morning star of renaissance of Dalit literature in India. His versatile personality, delineation and keen empirical view regarding class oppression and the pathetic reality of proletarians have stirred the consciousness of the globe. In this context, a renowned critic G. S. Balrama Gupta says about him: "... a strong believer in the dignity of man of equality of all men, Anand is naturally shocked by the inhuman way the untouchables are treated by those that belong to Superior caste-especially the Brahmins of the so-called 'twice born' (15). But his tireless ink has become invisible into the ocean of inequality and hypocrisy capitalist society which is still a value giver on the basis of caste, race, colour, power, mundane materialistic fame, and so on and so forth in the advanced technological era. Therefore, his lifelong endeavor and dream of new world have converted into an ideological utopian reverie similar to Rabindranath Tagore:

"Where the world has not been broken up

into fragments by narrow domestic walls". (Gitanjali, 35, 2-4)

Bakha, the central character in Mulk Raj Anand's debut novel *Untouchable*, is a representative of lower class community. Through the single day activities of the sweeper (Bakha), the novelist has penned down the pangs of marginalized downtrodden and culturally subjugated people who are far from the mythic notion of 'equal opportunity' (article 16) 'equal protection' (article 14) 'right to equality' (article 14), 'equal opportunity' (article 16), and 'eradication of untouchability' (article 17). In spite of cleaning the gutter and toilet, he becomes the victim of dehumanistic treatment at the hands of the so called exploitative capitalists. The upper class people throw leftover food at him because he is untouchable whose shadow contaminates the Brahmin footprints. In this context, he becomes more animal than the animal itself who, cannot mingle with the mainstream of Brahmin centric humanity where dalits are born to be abused in creator's creation. His own words point out the darkness:

...all of them abused, abused, abused why are we always abused? The sanitary Inspector that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers, because we touch. They hate dung. I hate it too. That's why, I came here. I was tired of working on the latrines every day. That's why they don't touch us, the high caste... I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable I am an untouchable! (Untouchable 58-59)

If we look back at the prehistoric time, we come to realize that the plight of only the Dalit men but also the Dalit women, from this time to the present time is quite miserable. Since then, their beauty has been used as a hot cake for male hunger. One might come across various examples in Ancient epics and Puranas where lower class women were used as Dasi (maid), sweeper, cleaner, and well massager of male body. They have to believe that God has made them for the purpose of fulfilling the wishes of elite class and Dalit men. In this context, their condition is more elegiac than the Dalit men because they have been tortured and dehumanized from the mainstream of humanity by not only elite class but also their own community.

After noticing the pangs, pathos, anguishes, psychological traumas and alienation from the common human flow of untouchables, since ages, Babasaheb Ambedkar burst into fury, found the peace and prosperity for all human beings under Buddha's umbrella, he converted to Buddhism on 14 October 1956 and decided to revolt against Brahmin centric Hinduism. He began spurring the Dalits to cast off Hinduism through his words and ink which brought a revolutionary change in the Dalits' consciousness and as a consequence, the discussion of Dalit literature initiated during the time from 2 March 1958 to 11 March 1960, although, the seed of it began to germinate from the early period of time.

Marxist literature and Dalit literature are the two sides of a same coin. Their ideologies and notions are same, even though they have transited on their own independent paths. Their dream is to build an ideal society where humanity is the center for everything through which goodness and greatness of the masses will be flourished and liberated them from the cage of exploitation. In this context, Maxim Gorky points out:

“we must realize that it is the masses’ labour that is the chief organizer of culture and the creator of all ideas, those that have for ages detracted from the decisive significance of labour- that source of all our knowledge, as well as the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, which are instilling a revolutionary consciousness of their rights in proletarians of all lands, and in our country are elevating labour to a force that is the basis of creativeness in Science and art” (Gorky 1982, 332).

Arts, literature, and movies are very much integrated to life, invoke the commoners to revolt against injustice, inhuman treatment and senseless exploitation. Therefore, most of the 90^s movies of Amitav Bachchan were shown the conflict between masses and exploitative capitalists where at last common man became the centre of society after demolishing the boundary of exploitation. Even the love scenes had been delineated in such a way where most of the time heroines belonged to capitalist society, who had fallen in love with a ordinary lower class people in which the hero belonged to, for his art of value in life and honest. But in real world; the scenario is totally distinct where they always maintain their class. Even they abandon the value based pastoral life and settle down with the capitalist section. In this context their utopian filmy world is contradicted with the dystopian real world where the voice of the marginalized ‘is not properly heard and interpreted’ (Spivak 272). Similar concept of art and life has been highlighted by the Dalit critic and writer Yashwant Manohar when he says: “The literature that achieves a unique unification of the finest values of life and of art will in future be recognized as Dalit literature. The radical view of art thus created will be the highest glory of Marathi literary history” (Manohar 1978, 69).

The pillar, on which the foundation of Marxism stands, is the ideologies of Karl Marx which are used as a tool to bring the change of bourgeoisie system through raising the proletarians against the exploitation of the bloody upper-class capitalist. But the thought, on which the discourse of dalit stands, is the ideologies of B. R. Ambedkar, a fascinators by Buddhism, who was agitated by caste system in India where lower caste people had been alienated from the mainstream of humanity and treated them more brutally than the cattle itself. Therefore he remarks, ‘If Lenin had been born in Hinduism, he would have first destroyed caste discrimination

and untouchability completely; and he would not even have imagined a revolution without this' (Ambedkar 1929b). Hence, motivated by the pangs and pathos of untouchables, he burst with anguish, invoke the marginalized to dismantle the Brahmin systematization of caste based society through his metaphorical poetic ink. In this context, if we scrutinize this novel deeply we find Bakha and the novelist himself in their own ways are endeavored to collapse the 'narrow domestic walls' (Gitanjali 35, 4) of caste system where marginalized had been meta-colonized. In this context, Bakha's initial materialistic taste to British dress refers to not only his heinous attitude to the exploitation but also his desire to be superior which the Marxist theorist Georg Lukacs called 'materialist dialectic' (Class-Consciousness 5). His intoxication for historical materialistic objects has given the full shape of 'historical materialism' (Class consciousness 21). Later through his historical awareness, he realizes his foolishness: "How foolish my thoughts are (*Untouchable* 104). The narrator remarks: "He was slightly ashamed of his predilection in favour of the English dress, but he derived consolation from the fact that he had never made such a foolish of himself as Ram Charan did by wearing a hat and shorts at his sister's marriage" (*Untouchable* 104).

The ideologies and principles of Buddhism, since decades have been a shelter for the untouchables because in its umbrella there is no place for castism, racism, classism, colourism and so on and so forth. So he had dreamt to build the egalitarian society through deconstructing the human consciousness in which all entities are treated equally and be fitted under the umbrella of equal rights and opportunities. Therefore Babasaheb Ambedkar and others embraced Buddhism for the hope of new light which would illuminate the horizon of humanity. To them, untouchables are the center of suffering and deprivation. That's why, in this context, the agonies and pains of Bakha and Sohini in the novel *Untouchable* have been ceaseless representatives of universal suffering of Dalits which has begun from their mother's womb. The narrator's own words about the outcastes are really conspicuous:

The outcastes were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were never ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the nearby brook as their use of it would contaminate the stream... so the outcastes had to wait for a chance to bring some caste Hindu

to the well, for luck to decide that he was kind, for Fate to ordain that he had time-to get their

Pitchers filled with water (*Untouchable* 26).

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation had persuaded to build a just society where human beings are led by the principles of non-violence, significant ideology of Gandhi. He considered non-violence as the path of self-purification where there is no place for violence, victory and defeat which ultimately leads to self-esteem, righteousness and blissfulness. His utopian ideology has no doubtly elevated the consciousness of human horizon but in real ground, defrayed the hollow space. Due to this, at first Gandhi's lecture at the end of the novel resuscitates Bakha but at last, he sinks into enigma. The narrator pens the inner consciousness of Bakha down through these lines:

'If there any untouchables he here,' he heard the Mahatma say, 'they should realize that they are cleaning Hindu society.' (He felt like shouting to say that he, an untouchable, was there, but he did not know what the Mahatma meant by 'cleaning Hindu society.')

He gave ear to the words with beating heart and heard: 'They have, therefore, to purify their lives. They should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one shall point his finger at them. Some of them are addicted to habits of drinking and gambling of which they must get rid... but now, now the Mahatma is blaming us, Bakha felt. 'That is not fair!' He wanted to forget the last passages that he had heard.

Even, Gandhi was an unorthodox supporter of Hinduism. He himself said: "I believe that caste system has saved Hinduism from disintegration. But like every other institution, it has suffered from excrescences. I consider the four divisions (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra also known as various divisions) alone to be fundamental, natural, and essential". (M. Gandhi 258). Now the simple questions are, if the Brahmin centric caste based division is essential, how can the dream of equality, equal rights and equal opportunities come to be flourished? How can one dream to liberate him/herself from the cage of caste and mingle with the flow of humanity? How can, in this context, the ideology of non-violence sing the utopian fairy song in the dystopian

divisional society? The answers of all these questions are quite ambiguous and oracular which points out to the utopian baseless foundation.

It is true that untouchables are poor and even economically deprived from the rest of the section of society. But it is not only the cause for their proletarian condition. C. Fuller in his book *Serpent of the Goddess: the Priest of a South Indian Temple* says that many of Brahmins are poorer than the untouchables in spite of that they lead a fairly precarious life. Therefore, Sohini is not only victimized for her proletarian condition and beauty but also for lower caste than Gulabo even though, she is also a dalit. In this context, she becomes the epitome of meta-dalit who is victimized not only by the upper caste but also by her own caste when Gulabo scolds her by harsh words: “Bitch, why don’t you speak! Prostitute why don’t you answer me? (Untouchable 25) In the preface of the novel *Untouchable* E. M. Forster Says:

The sweepers 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 can’t escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself he pollutes other when he touches them. They have to purify themselves, and to rearrange their plans for the day. This he is disgusting as well as disquieting object to the orthodox as she walks along the public roads, and it is his duty to call out and warn them that he is coming ... (*Untouchable* Preface 8).

On the basis of above samplings it is quite clear to us that the ideologies and principles of Marxism, Buddhism, Ambedkarian and even Gandhian bring no doubt, rapid transformation in society. But in real ground, their faith of foundation is not able to illuminate the peak of human consciousness and attempt to build an empire of equality on the sand which stands still on the dominated pillar of upper caste capitalist society. Their lifelong struggling through their sword of ink for the marginalized proletarian motivates them and encourages them to fight for their rights. But their sword cannot penetrate the consciousness of the elite as well as the Brahmin. Therefore, none of their ideological notion is able provide the ultimate peace, happiness and prosperity. Thus, still today dalits are marginalized and alienated from the mainstream of humanity and their

pangs and pathos are unheard and uninterpreted which raises the finger to the hollowness of their foundations.

Now the time has come to engineer the human consciousness not on the basis of power, caste, race, colour, gender, mundane fame and economy but on the basis of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. Only then, the human values such as equality, equal rights and equal opportunities for all human beings in the world come to be realized.

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