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## Resilience And Revival: A Comparative Analysis Of Untouchable And Bhukha (The Starved) Communities

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### Abstract:-

The matter of dalit suppression has been of great concern towards constructing an ideal Indian nation. It has been a curse for the Indian nation since the beginning of the caste system. The outcaste or the so-called dalits have been oppressed and discriminated against in the hands of upper caste people of the society. Although some steps have been taken for their upliftment after the colonial era, still they're in a suppressed state. Still there is a change to come to build up a caste and class less Indian nation where nobody will be oppressed. There is the need for a change in the mindset of both the upper caste people and the dalits themselves to come. This paper tries to bring a link between Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable" and Odia writer Manglu Charan Biswal's play "Bhukha (The Starved)" on dalit cause.

**Key Words:-** Dalit, untouchable, starved, hunger, out-castes, oppressed, discrimination, change, hopeful.

### Introduction:-

The history of dalit suppression is very long in India. Their struggle for living has a similar long history. This struggle has been the main theme of many Indian writings; in many Indian languages, whether it is Bangala, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Odia, Tamil or it is Indian English; whether it is novel, drama, short story or it is a non-fiction. Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable" and Manglu Charan Biswal's "Bhuka " also have the theme of 'dalit struggle' for their survival. The first one is an Indian English novel whereas the other is an Odia short play in local Sambalpuri language. Both these writings depict the realistic picture of Hindu society and the real condition of the outcastes. They present the readers with the day to day struggle for living and the suppression of the out-caste people in the hands of upper caste Hindu people. While Anand's Untouchable deals with the struggle of the sweeper class (treated as out-castes) people, Manglu Charan Biswal peaks the Bajnias (performers of folk musical instruments like - Dhol, Nishan, Tasa, Muhuri, etc) as the subject for his Bhukha or the starved. Both these writers have tried to bring some solutions for the dalit cause. Though Anand has tried to place the dalit cause internationally by choosing English language for his novel, Biswal has dealt with this at root level choosing local dialect for his play.

### **Dalit cause in Indian writings:-**

There are many writings in various Indian languages including Marathi, Bangla, Hindi, Punjabi, Odia, Kannad, Tamil, etc, which deal with the dalit cause. Again they are in various literary forms such poems, drama, short stories, novels, autobiographies, etc. It is believed that such writings emerged in the colonial era after the publication of Jyoti Rao Phule's 'Ghulam Giri' in 1873 which highlighted the plight of the outcastes in India. Nevertheless there are examples of such writings from the ancient times including the poetry of an 11th-century cobbler-poet during reigns of the Chalukyas, the 12th-century Perriyapuram in Tamil and the 15th-century writings of Sudramuni Sarala Das in Odia. But during the colonial era more focus was given to the problems of the outcastes. Influenced by Gandhian philosophy, many writers including Mulk Raj Anand started writing on them with great zeal.

### **Mulk Raj Anand and Manglu Charan Biswal as Writers:-**

Mulk Raj Anand (1905 - 2004) was a prolific Indian writer in English. He pioneered Indian English fiction along with R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. He is well known for his new trend of realism and social protest in Indian English fiction. He portrays the miserable condition and lifestyle of the poor and oppressed class of the traditional Indian society in his novels. He chooses the downtrodden as his protagonist; for example - a sweeper for "**Untouchable (1935)**", a coolie for "**Coolie (1936)**", and a peasant for "**Two Leaves and a Bud(1937)**"; all are exploited by the upper class people of the traditional Indian society.

Anand's first novel "**Untouchable**", projecting the theme of untouchability as a problem of Orthodox Hindu society, brought him international fame as a novelist of high order. He repeated the same theme for another novel of 1961, titled "The Road". Because Anand found the curse of untouchability prevailed in Indian society even after independence. Thus he has tried again and again to warn against the orthodoxy of Hindu society.

In 1952, Anand was awarded with the International Peace Prize for his contribution through literature to promote peace among the nations. In 1967, he was also awarded with the Padma Bhushan honor by the President of India for his literary service.

On the other hand, Manglu Charan Biswal (1935–2022), an eminent Odia litterateur and a veteran teacher, has written many plays, poems and short stories, novels both in Odia and his local Sambalpuri language. Although he was not famous internationally like Mulk Raj Anand, he has got the fame as a prolific writer in regional language. His writings include a biography "**Hajila Dina**"; poetry collections "**Daria Parira kabita**", "**Paunsa Talara Nian**"; story collection "**Astaragara Kabi**"; play in Sambalpuri "**Udla Patar Budla Danga**", "**Bhukha**", "**Hathyar Bhutiar**", "**Lura**", "**Surendra Sai**", "**Barua**", "**Chhaili**", "**Ulgulan**", "**Maa Samalei**"; novels "**Di Dhara Luha**", "**Smruti Magna**", "**Dura Basanta**", etc. These are highly appreciated by the readers. Most of his play cast the social reality of his locality.

His play "**Bhukha**" has been credited to be adapted into first Sambalpuri film, an award winning film. Apart from this the writer has been conferred with an honorary D.Litt. degree by the Sambalpur University for his contribution to literature. He has also received **Bharatchandra Nayak Smruti Sahitya Samman and Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Bhasa Samman**.

### **Comparison between Anand's Untouchable and Manglu Charan Biswal's Bhukha:-**

Mulk Raj Anand's "**Untouchable**" is a novel in English, whereas Manglu Charan Biswal's "**Bhukha**" is a Sambalpuri play. Although these are different genres of literature written in different languages, both have the same theme. Both the writers have chosen the theme of dalit suppression for their writings. Focusing on the problem of survival of the outcastes in the Orthodox Hindu society, both the writers have tried to prescribe some solutions for them through their writings.

Though both the writers have used different modes for the communication of the message to the society, both their writings have some similarities between them. These similarities can be viewed in the following heads:-

**Title:-**

When one thinks for a comparison between Mulk Raj Anand's '**Untouchable**' and Manglu Charan Biswal's '**Bhukha**', one thing that comes to his/her mind is the title of the two. There is a close relation between the titles of two. Both the titles represent a whole (i.e- a class of people in total.) Both the titles are symbolic of the miserable condition of the millions of those people in India who are marginalized as out-castes by the orthodox Hindu society. The titles are "**Untouchable**" and "**Bhukha**" (means starved) rather than just "**The Sweepers**" or "**Bajnia**", so as to represent all the deprived classes who are victims of social injustice. Further the titles seem to represent the condition where such people are forced to lead a miserable life of helplessness both physically and mentally. In particular these two writings depict the miserable condition of two different classes of people i.e, the sweeper class and the bajnia class (players of special musical instruments), but in broader sense these two groups are included in the same class of out-castes as a whole. In this way, the titles of the two literary works are quite similar indicating the miseries and helplessness of the out-castes in every society as a whole.

**Theme:-**

As per the titles suggest, both Mulk Raj Anand's "**Untouchable**" and Manglu Charan Biswal's "**Bhukha**" have nearly similar themes. Both deal with the dalit cause with very little differences. Anand has chosen the theme of untouchability for his novel "**Untouchable**". Through this theme, he has tried to show the day to day struggle of the outcaste sweeper class people for their living and their oppression in the hands of the Orthodox Hindu upper class.

Similarly, Manglu Charan Biswal has used the theme of 'starvation and its impact on the outcastes' for his play "**Bhukha**". Hunger, the dilemma between embracing modernity and retaining traditional cultural values, the decline of traditional folk music and its performers, the dreadful effects of caste system and poverty are some of the main issues being focused in this play. Like Anand, Manglu Charan Biswal has tried to show the day to day struggle of the outcaste 'bajania' people for their survival and their sufferings in the hands of circumstances and also the sufferings caused by the upper class 'mahajans' in the society.

A deep analysis reveals a correlation between the themes of the two because the untouchables in the novel are also described as Bhukha or hungry. Reminded by the words of his father to collect some food for the family; Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, shouts. "Bread for the sweeper, mother; bread for the sweeper." No one responds to his request, nevertheless he is being scolded for touching and thus polluting the threshold of a house. He finds himself helpless before the hunger and the rude behavior of the upper class people of the society. On the other hand, the bajnias of the play '**Bhukha**' are also regarded as untouchables by the upper class Hindu people. It's because the musical instruments like Dhol which are made from cowhide. Thus being physically contacted with cowhide, they are considered as impure and untouchable.

Furthermore, both the writers have tried to bring the national feeling of equality among all irrespective of their caste. They urge for sympathy from the upper class people of the society towards the marginalized out-castes.

**Plot and Structure:-**

Basically Mulk Raj Anand's "**Untouchable**" and Manglu Charan Biswal's "**Bhukha**" have no story interest. Rather they try to expose some social evils present in the Hindu society. Analysis of such problems to find out some solutions has been their sole purpose. So both these writings have straightforward plots like the one that of morality play in Mediaeval English. In such a play the viewer was familiar with some existing social norms that would always keep people on a track and their behavior is controlled by such a track.

The plot of "**Untouchable**" is linear and straight forward projecting the miserable and pathetic condition of the untouchables through a day's events in the life of its central character Bakha. Through a day's action the

writer focuses on the day to day sufferings of the untouchables and their treatment in the hands of the superior castes. Thus the plot observes the three Aristotelian unities. The single purpose theme of exposing the evil of untouchability and its analysis from various aspects makes it one of the well-structured plots. In his essay “On the Genesis of Untouchable”, Anand observes:

“The binding together, the orchestration, and the interplay of Bakha's inner feelings and outer experience with the apperception of intangible “cloud of unknowing” hovering over his head, was not achieved merely spontaneously. The different elements had to be knit together, with intense effort, to achieve some sort of coherence.”(p.12)

Similarly, the plot of “Bhukha ” is well structured one, which focuses on the plight of the tribal bajnia community of western Odisha. The play revolves around the day to day lives of five Bajnias placing Ainthia at the center. The five bajnias play five different kinds of traditional folk musical instruments and are led by Ainthia. They struggle to earn a livelihood as their ancestral profession had been in danger due to the interference of modern musical bands with their new and advanced musical instruments. As a result they suffer at the hands of landlords, money lenders and some other members of the upper caste of the society. The struggle of these artists for their existence is chronicled in this play.

The play “Bhukha” does not observe the three Aristotelian unities, even so its settings, choosing of characters, narrative techniques, choice of language, its division into different scenes, etc make it a well-structured plot. Though there are some differences in the plot structure of the novel “Untouchable” and the play “Bhukha”; their settings, characterization, narrative techniques are quite similar. ‘Untouchable’ is set in Pre-independent India, whereas ‘Bhukha’ is set in Post-independent India; but both of them have their main characters from lower strata of the society and their settlements are similar to some extent. At the beginning of the novel Bakha, the protagonist of ‘Untouchable’, is in bed, “half-awake, covered by a worn-out greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor, in a corner of the cave like, dingy, dark, one-roomed mud-house.” (Untouchable, p. 10)

A very similar setting is found in the play “Bhukha”. Ainthia’s house, the center of all actions in the play, has mud-walls and straw thatch, no back doors or windows, only small holes in the walls for light and airflow, making the interior of the house perpetually dark. The dark house in both the settings signifies the darkness covering the lives of the out-castes in both the cases.

### **Narrative technique, style and language:-**

The narrative techniques of Mulk Raj Anand's “Untouchable” and Manglu Charan Biswal's “Bhukha” are similar to some extent. Both of them have used stream of consciousness technique, flash back, interior monologue for their writings. Gandhi's speech towards the end of the novel “Untouchable” and the PhD scholar Asim's talk in the play “Bhukha” are also quite similar. Through them the writers have tried to provide some solutions for the problems raised by them in their writings. Both of them are talking about equality among all irrespective of their caste.

Anand's Untouchable is written in English language, but the English used in this novel has a touch of Indianness. As his characters belong to the lower part of the society, he has used simple English mixed with Hindi and Panjabi words. The characters talk to each other in such a way as if they are talking in Punjabi. On the other hand, Manglu Charan Biswal has directly used local Sambalpuri language for his play.

### **Characterization:-**

The characterization in Mulk Raj Anand's novel Untouchable as well as that of Manglu Charan Biswal's play Bhukha is very realistic. Most of the characters in these two works have been chosen from the lowest strata of the society. They are deprived of primary benefits of a human being, like food, clothing, shelter, health, hygiene, education, etc. The characters are individual as well as type in both these works. They represent the society as a whole. The female characters in these two works suffer twice in the hands of the

society, firstly because they are out-castes, secondly being women. There are other types of characters who do not hesitate to exploit these lower caste people. Again there are some characters in these works who want to bring some changes in the society. So the characters in these two works are quite similar.

### Conclusion:-

From the above discussion, it can be summed up that despite two different genres of literatures; Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Manglu Charan Biswal's *Bhukha* have similarities in many things. Both these works can be termed as revolutionary writings. The writers of these works want to bring some change in the society. They have depicted some problems present in the society and try to find out some solutions for them. Gandhi's speech in the novel *Untouchable* and Asim's research works in the play *Bhukha*, have left their characters in optimism. Bakha in *Untouchable* and Kasturi in *Bhukha* are hopeful to see the transformation, which has been depicted towards the end of the two works. At last it can be noted that like Jayant Mahapatra, famous Indian English poet from Odisha, Manglu Charan Biswal has also depicted two types of hunger in his play *Bhukha*; the first one is the hunger of food, clothing and shelter whereas the second one is the hunger of traditional art and literature.

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