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Glimpse of gender sensitization in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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Abstract

The protagonist of "*Untouchable*", Bakha's sister, Sohini, adapts the role of a submissive, patient, and peaceful woman. She waits for a caste Hindu to draw water from the well. As she is an untouchable girl, she herself is not allowed to pollute the well. Pundit Kali Nath an upper class priest in the nearby temple, decides to draw water from Sohini as reward of Sohini's patience. But then, she was sexually abused by Pundit Kali Nath but Bakha brings the blame somewhat on Sohini's physical attractiveness. A women, therefore, needs to toe the lines instructed by men of higher caste and should ingrain in themselves the feminine virtues like patience and submissive in order to appropriate the role of an ideal women. Most men do not find anything wrong with this standardization of women. Through his work, Mulk Raj Anand has made an attempt to analyze the subalternity of women in the society. This novel underlines the marginality of women as she is made to suffer under the prevalent class structure, flourishing on rich-poor disconnect. Women become the weaker construction of strong men. Sexualisation and feminine gendering also play prominent role in keeping the women down at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Keywords: women, untouchable, pollute, priest, temple, pundit, feminine, subaltern, sexualisation, gendering, society

Introduction

In *Untouchable*, the humanistic vision of Mulk Raj Anand presents subaltern sweeper boy, Bakha, higher than the high-caste people. The diverse methods of the de-sexualisation and merciless dictatorship over women are completed in Anand's novel. In most of the theories, the female individuality is given great honor, but in real life women are ashamed, dominated and depersonalized. A coordinated attempt is being made to make a woman realize her location in relation to men, from the beginning. The spirit of the occasion suddenly becomes very controlled right at the birth of a girl child. She is made to realize that she is not a permanent member of the family and a burden on her father brings the whole family in a contradictory anatomy. In *Untouchable*, Bakha is similar in this context. His sister, Sohini's body is a danger to his family and the burden is on her to keep the body away from the threatening male absorption. In his anxiety, he assumes that his sister is born to put down and abuse the whole family:

"Why was she born a girl in our house, to bring disgrace upon us?"

Pundit Kali Nath breaks away from his responsibility in the sexual abuse of Sohini, while Bakha holds his sister answerable for the whole catastrophe. Therefore, female sexuality needs cautious supervision in a society where men are not supposed to have any willpower in matters of sexual desire. In this context, Foucault refers to an "inspecting gaze, through which each individual exercises surveillance over and against himself."

Analysis

Mulk Raj Anand focused on the oppressed downtrodden and bring their problems to the surface so that an average reader might be able to understand the light of the innocent creation who suffer for no fault of their own, but simply because they are the outcaste as they are born in that particular class of untouchable. Pundit Kalinath is the example of it.

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In the morning, he poured water in Sohini's pot, while doing it; he has also seen, her blooming beauty. So he told her to.....

"come and clean the court yard of our house at the temple".

When she went to clean the courtyard of the house at the temple the pundit behaved abnormally. He was controlled by his unquenchable lust. When she did not surrender to him, "he shouted, polluted... polluted". Actually it was not he, but Sohini was polluted by his lustful touch. Pundit Kalinath's utterance was "Brahma Vakya" because he was Brahmin and priest, belong to higher strata of caste system. So none could doubt about him and none heard the untouchables. Anand has presented the fact that nobody has listened untouchables, even though they were right. As a result, they usually become the victim of upper castes lust. The sufferers are not the victim of upper caste lust. The sufferers are not the victim of fate or god but of society which is man made. Social forces play the role of villain. The sufferers are not the victim of fate or god but of society which is hand made. Social forces play the role villain.

Review

After finishing his morning service when Bhaka came home. He badly needed the tea. But there is no tea available, to prepare tea there is no water in house, so his sister Sohini went to bring water to prepare tea for her brother.

"looking dazedly at the utensils lying about in a corner, he felt he wanted tea. But as he felt he wanted tea. As he survived the room he heard his father still snoring under his patched quilt. His father was not in the room. He saw that his sister was trying to light a fire between two bricks. She was blowing hard at it lifting herself on haunches as she crouched on the mud floor. Her head almost touched the ground but each puff from her mouth succeeded only in raising a sport to smoke and was beaten back by the wet wooden. Sticks that served as fuel. She sat back helpless when she heard her brother's footsteps. Her smoke irritated eyes were full of water. She turned and saw her brother real tears began to flow down her cheeks." (p-13U)

Sohini was struggling even to prepare a cup of tea for her brother. There were no proper utensils in home. They were very poor. There is a very little cooking done in the house. The extent of it seems to be important subject in the novel. They were not preparing food in home. Sweepers and Lantern cleaners depend on the people for food when they work for food. It is part of their wages. The outcastes are at the mercy of the Hindu not only for food, but even for water. After morning hard work of cleaning the public lanterns, Bhaka the sweeper boy, went home. He was thirsty and hungry and felt like having cup of tea. His sister, Sohini, told him that there was not even a drop of water in the pitcher, she took pity on her brother and went to the well to

bring water. The outcaste were not allowed to mount the platform surroundings the well. Because the Hindus of the three upper caste would consider the water polluted. They had no well of their own because they could not afford it. They could not draw water from it. They had to depend on the mercy of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers. When Sohini reached the well, she saw there was none to give them water. She thought that she would have to wait her turn for long. She anxiously felt for her brother who was tired and thirsty. Since no passerby was in sight, she patiently and resignedly sat with other untouchables. Gulabo, the washer women was also there. She was a fair complexioned, middle aged women who had been very beautiful in her youth. She was jealous of Sohini's blooming beauty. Now Sohini being the lowest caste among the out caste would naturally be looked down upon by Gulabo. The delicate features of her rising beauty had added fuel to Gulabo's fire. Gulabo hated the very sight of her innocent, honest face, though she would not confess even to herself, that she was jealous of the sweeper girl.

"Go back home, said Gulabo mockingly. There is no one to give you water here! And, at any rate, there are so many of us ahead of you!p-16 Think of it! Think of it! Wanton! And your mother hardly dead. Think of laughing in my face, laughing at me who old enough to be your mother. Bitch! Ari you Bitch! Do you take me for a buffoon? what are you laughing at slut? are not you ashamed of showing your teeth to me in the presence of men. You prostitute.? p17(Untouchable)

Gulabo thought herself superior to every other outcaste because she claims a high place women's status is lowest to caste class, and gender hierarchy with men. Sohini is lowest among the lowest. Sohini bore all humiliation and insult patiently. Pundit Kalinath the temple priest appeared there and all of them prayed to him to draw water for them. The priest Pandit Kalinath drew water with great difficulty and all out-caste ran towards the well. Gulabo said that she was the first to come at her request fell flat on the Brahmin's ears. He recognized beautiful Sohini in the crowd. He called her and poured water into her pitcher. He told her to come and clean the court yard of his house in the temple.

"oh, you Lakhas daughter", come here, he said "you have been patient and the reward of patience, say the holy books, is supreme. Get away, you, noisy curse, get out of the way!" (p.21) "Hut pundit ji!" Said Sohini hesitating to receive the favor. not because she divided the brahmin's admiration but because, she was afraid of all those who had come before her. P-21

Look why do not you come and clean the courtyard of our house, at the temple, called the Brahmin's as the girl withdrew. Tell your, father to send you from today. (p-22U)

So we find from the above review about what in the Indian society, the sexual purity of a woman is made necessary where a woman is doomed to live in shame and imposed blame once her purity is lost. Mulk Raj Anand creates one of the most significant scenes in the recent Indo-Anglican fiction but he does not introduce any tricky situation.

Conclusion

So being influenced by the Marx's ideology and Gandhiji, Mulk Raj Anand believes that the outlook of democracy will be helpful to lift the social conditions of the subalterns. A woman is almost a product of a good possession in Patriarchal society. The site on which dominant power hierarchy dictates its rules is the sexualized body. The female virginity is what makes a woman precious. In this novel, Anand portrays woman who is steadily cornered in the social system by class, caste and patriarchal privileges. He also distinguishes all the aspects of Hindu hierarchy and gives the bulletin of humanism which is important for an individual development as well as for its betterment.

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