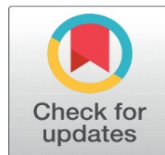
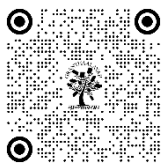


# THE WICKEDNESS OF CASTE PREJUDICE AND ITS CONSEQUENCE IN THE NOVELS OF MULKRAJ ANAND, ARUNTHATHI ROY AND PERUMAL MURUGAN

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## ABSTRACT

Introduction to Indian literature and the writing novels have been untraded enough to exhaustively reflect the history, society, economic and political domain and the tradition of Indian subcontinent navigating since the ages. The novel is one of the genres of literature that everyone recognizes at sight. In spite of uncountable varieties of method and manner, the differences in the appeal it makes to its readers stand clearly apart from any other literary shape. Its medium is prose, not verse; as to content, it is a portrayal of life, in the shape of a story, wholly or in the main as to its way of fictitious; as to its way of portraying life, though the pretence of exact reporting of indiscriminate detail is generally regarded as a mistaken kind of realism, and much latitude is allowed to plot and surprise, everything recounted is required to be credible, or at least to have a definite and unchanging relation to the facts of existence. The Novel is concerned with the real world; its aim is to present a world as like as possible to the actual world, not to fashion a new one to the heart's desire. Undoubtedly Indian novelists are the creative masterminds behind such ravishing story, plots and nonstop mashes in language. Today Indian Novels have reached to the height of success and secured a notable status not only in Indian market, but also globally. The much has been done in this field yet more is about to do.

The preparatory part marks out the initiation and expansion of the realm of Indian literature. It also highlights the career, contribution and the status of the three well known Indian novelists Mulk Raj Anand, Arunthathi Roy and Perumal Murugan.

**Keywords:** Caste Prejudice, Discrimination, Psychological Imbalance, Social Injustice and Exploitation of Gender

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Among the three novelists Mulk Raj Anand is committed himself to reveal the deep-rooted social malice in the Indian society made the caste discrimination. He wanted to show the youth's unique sensitiveness as against the people of the upper caste who thought merely touching him is degradation. He meant symbolically to show that such small tenderness among people in private life or the catharsis of human existence. Problem of untouchability is still prevalent in the society and Mulk Raj Anand through his novel *Untouchable* brings to light the sorrows and sufferings that high caste Hindus inflicted on the *Untouchables*. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, is more compact than his other novels. The novel *Untouchable*, published in 1935, centers around a sweeper boy, Bakha. The eighteen year boy Bakha, son of Lakha, the jamadar of sweepers is a child of the twentieth century, and the impact of new influences reverberates within him.

Mulk Raj Anand successfully shown how the *Untouchable* are not accepted equal to the dominant caste in the Indian society and ill-treated by them worst to the core. Anand's most illustrious novel *Untouchable* meticulously delineates with a note of faith and idealism. As the protagonist Bakha the eighteen year old sweeper boy by profession returns his mind is raised with the hope that soon his multiple sufferings will end and the flush system would come to the sweepers and people like him: "Can be free from stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society. Bakha fervently hopes for the dawn to his nature of work and his relevance in the society without the label of an *Untouchable*. Anand meticulously brings out the inner life of Bakha. It was growing concern for metaphoric *Untouchable* in all cultures and walks of life.

The novel *Untouchable* also shows Anand's sympathies with the underdog in India, and his humanitarian and reformist zeal because evidently it was written to awaken the conscience of the upper castes in the country. The highlight of the novel is a temple priest's attempt to seduce Bakha's sister Sohini, and the ray of hope which is was awakened in Bakha's heart towards the end of the novel when he listens to the discourse by Iqbal Nath Sarashar, a poet-cum-journalist.

The novel employs the stream of consciousness technique partly the traditional method of narrative technique which was then gaining acceptance, having originally been employed by James Joyce in his novel *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and by Virginia Woolf in her novels *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*. The novel *Untouchables* is undoubtedly achieved a tremendous success because it does hold the reader's attention from beginning to end and it arouses in the reader's heart several emotions one after the other. Sometimes simultaneously the characters in the novel have really been made to live. On the whole the novel expresses the miserable condition of the untouchables in the typical caste based Indian society.

Arundhati Roy's first novel to date *The God of Small Things* is semi-autobiographical in that it incorporates, embellishes, and greatly supplements events from her family's history. When asked why she chose Ayemenem as the setting for her novel because of her ingrained understanding of Ayemenem's diversity and cultural paradoxes, Roy allowed her imagination to run wild in a familiar landscape.

Mammachi's daughter Ammu leaves the ancestral home and went to Calcutta and marries an alcoholic assistant manager in a tea estate but soon she divorced him and returns to Ayemenem with her twins Raphel and Estha. She faces a hostile reception in the household. As an alienated, frustrated and the neglected Ammu sees the "*Untouchable*" Velutha and establishes a sexual liaison with him. Her brother Chacko a Delhi University alumnus, goes to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, where he meets a café waitress Margaret and marries her. But Margaret divorces him when she is pregnant and marries a biologist, Joe. Chacko is greatly attached to their daughter, Sophie Mol. He returns home to take over the family business, Paradise Pickles and Preserves; initially started by Mammachi.

Chacko is in touch with a local communist leader, K.N.M. Pillai, a press owner who prints the labels for Chacko's pickles and preserves. Velutha is an '*Untouchable*,' a Dalit (Parayan- Adi-Dravidar Community). But he is an entrepreneur, master of many trades and excels in carpentry. He is employed by Chacko and is attached to Rahel and Estha. When Margaret's husband Joe dies in a car accident in London, Chacko invites her and Sophie Mol to Ayemenem. Two weeks after her arrival, Sophie dies while roaming with Rahel and Estha in the Meenachal river at night. Velutha is implicated in the tragedy as his liaison with Ammu has already horrified the family. Velutha is hunted down by a posse of policemen in the history house and tortured to death. Ammu becomes an outcaste in her own family while Estha is dispatched to Madras to live with his father. Chacko's business, Paradise Pickles and Preserves, collapses and is almost finished. Ammu dies a miserable and lonely death while hunting for a job away from home. She is cremated unconventionally in an electric crematorium when she is only at the age of thirty-one.

Their traumatic experiences haunt them throughout their life. On the other hand, Baby Kochamma, Rahel's grandfather's younger sister, appears to be the vamp of the story: she is a sadist who revels in making everybody's life miserable. Her aloofness and indifference to the twins bring out her sense of frustration and unfulfilled desires.

Dr. Perumal Murugan is considered as one of the most significant and remarkable novelists of Indian literature. He has published his illustrious novel *Seasons of the Palm* recently and this novel has won him name and fame. During the initial stage of his novel writing he has been considered as the most problematic writer and his novel *Seasons of the Palm* is also been considered as merely an assault of the upper crust community people. But the major theme of this novel, as the very title suggests, is the poverty of the working-class people of rural Tamilnadu. The novel *Seasons of the Palm* narrates the painful life of the working-class protagonist namely Shorty, (A Short boy in his physical appearance and a

Goat herd (Shepherd by profession). The story of this novel has absolutely depicted and represented an unending financial and socio-economical condition and sufferings of the rural area of modern day. In the urban area even the domestic servants, are leading a much better life than they used to lead in those days; and they have, in addition, become not only self-assertive but also aggressive.

The workers' trade unions today are a force to reckon with; and even the government is afraid of them. The arbitrary dismissal of a land-lord in the novel is simply inconceivable these days. Unemployment is certainly a problem in our times also; but it is mainly the white-collar jobs which are in short supply. In any case Perumal Murugan's purpose in writing his novel is to depict the misery and the wretchedness of the common people and especially of the people in towns and cities, in those days, just as it had been his purpose of deal with the social evil of inhumanity, poverty, humiliation untouchability and denial of equal opportunity. A subsidiary theme of *The Seasons of the Palm* is the conflict between rural labourers and Landlords (capitalists). This theme is as relevant today as it was in those days, and it has, in fact, become even more acute, more pressing, and more complicated. But this kind of theme in the novel is barely touched upon, and that too in the closing stages of the story where Shorty and his friends have been working, decides to reduce the number of the working-days at the goat farm in order to bring down its expenses.

*The Seasons of the Palm* delineates a depressed and painful story containing of actuality lies in the life a shepherd. There are a large number of dramatic situations in the story, and the story does not become dull or tedious at any point. Lot of suspense is created in our minds in the course of the narration of various incidents and the events in shepherd boy Shorty. While there is an abundance of outward action; the author does not ignore the state of mind of his protagonist at any time and at any stage. Shorty's reactions to his every experience have been described in detail, and in this connection the author has employed the technique of the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue. There are many descriptive passages in it, enabling us to visualize the different localities and places like bazaars, streets, and markets through which Shorty has to move. Incidents, psychological analysis, dialogue, descriptions of places and sites thus, constitute the structure of this novel, providing ample evidence that Perumal Murugan has here employed the traditional technique of story-telling, with only one innovative device, namely the stream of consciousness.

But the most striking feature of this novel is that, like M.R. Anand's *Untouchable* and Arunthathi Roy's *God of Small Things* are an embodiment of its author's humanism. Perumal Murugan's major novels are sociological in content, dealing with some of the burning social issues of his times, especially with the issue of poverty and the evils of the caste system. *The Seasons of the Palm* is, like Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable* and Arunthathi Roy's *God of Small Things* is a novel of protest. Here the protagonist Shorty is protesting against the capitalist exploitation of the poor and the underprivileged people. An important point to note here is that Perumal Murugan does not allow his novel to deteriorate into a work of propaganda. Nowhere does Perumal Murugan come forward in the course of the story to revolt against the capitalists and the industrialists, or to suggest measures and remedies to solve the problem of poverty. Perumal Murugan merely gives us the vivid pictures of the suffering of the shepherd caused by poverty and unemployment, leaving the readers to draw their own inferences.

Perumal Murugan is a didactic writer, even though the readers themselves may draw any number of moral lessons from his stories. His methods as a novelist are strictly artistic and therefore legitimate. Nowhere does he become a moralist preaching sermons; and nowhere does he put on the mantle of a social reformer out to convert people to his views by his own utterances and his harangues. Of course, his novels have contributed to the introduction of certain social reforms. Nor is there doubt that social reform was Perumal Murugan's chief motive in writing his novels. But Perumal Murugan is a literary artist first, and a social reformer afterwards. In other words, he does not super-impose a social or moral purpose or design upon his artistic aims.

Perumal Murugan is an excellent novelist at delineating character in his novels. Realism is the hall-mark of both his plots and his character-drawing. In the course of *The Seasons of the Palm* the readers and critics may across a large number of persons all of whom have been made to live in the pages of the novel. The novel is full of portraits and vignettes of character showing by Perumal Murugan's wide-ranging observation of the life and the people from caste discriminated society in the twentieth century. While M.R. Anand's *Untouchable* observed the unities of time, place, and action, *The Seasons of the Palm* does not observe any of the unities. Nor is it necessary for a novelist, or even a dramatist, to observe the unities of time and place though the unity of action is certainly desirable and even essential. *The Seasons of the Palm* is written in the manner of a picaresque novel in which the protagonist moves from place to place, meeting a series of ill-treatments and rejections. The protagonist in a picaresque novel is generally a rogue; but Shorty is no rogue. *The Seasons of the Palm* is picaresque only in so far as the protagonist does not stick to one place, but travels from one place to another

for employment opportunity, with the result that he meets different people at different places. The unity of action gets disrupted because of the changing locale and scenario.

The immense contributions of Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan to the contemporary Indian literature. Themes of Indian fictions are poverty, isolation, the struggle for independence and identity as well as the lack of meaningful communication among people. Many of the characters are perfectly delineated they may seem both vaguely puzzling and completely comprehensible. Who are driven by fear and their adaptation to that fear is one of Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan's central concerns.

In the beginning of Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan's novels several readers are apprehensive that they have only encountered still more domestic dramas seemingly oblivious of the public dimension of the life of men and women in the discriminated society. The critics might feel that Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan's every limitation of subject matter confirms an ideology of the private family to the detriment of socio-political and economical awareness, and a feminist reader might think that only female actions have more public importance. In all their novels, one can see that Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan's unusual use of narrative patterns accomplishes much that should interest the male and female and the social critic alike. This trait in Anand, Roy and Murugan's works might be a striking point for some serious readers because of prejudices about what is realistic in the plots of novels about families. Anand, Roy and Perumal Murugan's fiction, in fact, thwarts prejudices. Their's plausible narrative form is a door through which the reader passes to a deeper sense of realism.

*Seasons of the Palm* follows the life of its protagonist, Shorty, and his friends, Belly, Tall fellow, Stone-deaf, and Stump leg, all of whom belong to the community of *Untouchables* and all of whom are bonded laborers to land-holding farmers. Shorty is a bonded laborer who tends to his master's sheep and is generally responsible for small chores around his master's house. All the *Untouchable* characters, similarly, are tied to their masters and to their responsibilities, by fear, by societal norms, by conventions and traditions, without the possibility of change or escape. The evolution of the protagonist from a relatively carefree, lively, and enthusiastic child to a teenager resigned to the hardships in his life, broken and scarred by brutal and humiliating experiences at the hands of those to whom he finds himself enslaved, is brought out through the division of the book into three chapters, meaningfully titled 'Dust,' 'Fine Mud,' and 'Dry Earth,' in the order of chronology. The three states of earth denote the three states of Shorty's psychological make-up and the nature of its transformation as he attempts to come to terms with a state of unceasing, unrelenting, inhuman oppression.

## 2. CONCLUSION

As a major literary trend in India through Indian regional languages and translations. Dalit literature is marked for self-assertion of Dalits, subalterns, lower strata of Indian caste-class-religion, language-capital ridden society through novels, poetry, plays, short stories, self-narratives, and oral performances challenging inhuman treatment, atrocities, inequality, and the so-called mainstream literary and critical conventions. Dalit literature is emerged as an outcome of the exploitative nature of Indian caste system. The ideology is drawn from the Dalit well-wishers as well as the great philosophers Lord Buddha, Charvak, Kabir, Jyothi Rao Phule, Karl Marx and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. At this stage, Dalit literature needs to be stabilized at theoretical and critical level, considering western critical approaches in order to explore the essence of Dalit literature on the contemporary literary and critical canvass. This paper attempts to focus on the term 'Dalit', the elements of Dalit literature, Dalit literature in English, the term 'Dalit identity' and how it reflected in Dalit literature, theorizing Dalit literature and literary critical standards, précising Dalit literature in the recent literary trends in India, comparison and contrast of Dalit literature with the Anglo-American and third world literary tradition, the issues raised by Dalit literature and their validity in the present era, the sources and forces of Dalit literature.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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