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## Dalits as Marginalized in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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### Abstract:

The Present paper tries to explore the marginalization of Dalits. Marginalization is a complex as well as shifting Phenomenon linked to social status. It is also called Social Exclusion. It is the social process by which a person or a group of people are made marginal or become relegated to the edge of the society. There are different social structures that impact exclusion i.e. race, geographic location, class structure, globalization, social issues, education, religion, politics, economic status etc. Women, people with disabilities, Dalits, Aged people, children, minorities, poor, sexual minorities etc. are most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society. The marginalization of Dalits influences all spheres of their life, violating basic human rights such as civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. A major proportion of the Dalits and lower castes are still dependent on others for their livelihood. Many Creative writers depicted this reality in their writing. This paper is an attempt to discuss the misery of untouchables and the inhumanity of upper caste on them described in the novel *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand. He has realistically depicted the very sensitive issue of Dalits, particularly pre independence India. Indian society is caste based group where the upper castes exploit the lower caste. Hindu is a major religion in India and earlier Hindu society has condemned untouchables as the dirt of the society. Hindu society did not consider untouchables as human being. This inhuman discrimination is the shameful drawback of the Indian society. The author has realistically described the truth.

**Key Words-** Dalits – A members of the lower class in society, Marginalized – a person or group of people treated as insignificant or less important etc.

Marginalization is a complex as well as shifting Phenomenon linked to social status. It is also called Social Exclusion. It is the social process by which a person or a group of people are made marginal or become relegated to the edge of the society. There are different social structures that impact exclusion i.e. race, geographic location, class structure, globalization, social issues, education, religion, politics, economic status etc. Marginalized group is viewed with hostility and fear. Marginality is an experience affecting millions of people throughout the world. The forms of marginalization are very and it changes from country to country. It is true that more marginalized group exist in Third World especially in developing nations. Women, people with disabilities, Dalits, Aged people, children, minorities, poor, sexual minorities etc are most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society.

Being excluded from economic, social and political means of promoting one's self determination can have adverse effects for individual and community. Poverty, dependency and feeling of shame are everyday aspects of economic dislocation and social marginalization. The effects of marginalization are extremely large. Those who are marginalized generally suffer from a crisis of identity and this perhaps leads to rise in social inequality. Deprivation in various aspects of life is the most common result of marginalization. Material resources such as food, shelter etc. are unfairly dispersed in society and the marginalized individuals or group



are excluded from employment. It is true that marginalization is the unfair or unjust treatment of individual or minority groups by the majority or stronger group. Making marginalized refers to making separated from the mainstream society and being marginalized refers to being separated from the rest of the society or forced to remain in the fringes or outskirts and not to be at the center of social or national life. Sometimes marginalized people are not considered as an ingredient or part of the society rather they are thought to be unwanted or negligible in the building of society or nation.

In every nation or society, there are some sections of the people deprived of socio-economic opportunities for their development and they are victims of social, cultural and political exclusion. They are the marginalized and the marginalized communities are Women, people with disabilities, Dalits, Aged people, poor, the down-trodden etc.

In India the caste system is a strict hierarchical social system based on underlying notions of purity and pollution. The Indian society is broadly classified into Upper cast and Lower cast. Brahmins are on the top of the hierarchy and Dalits or the depressed class constitutes the bottom of the hierarchy. Among them there are also some sub-castes. Caste based discrimination entails social and economic exclusion, segregation in housing, denial and restrictions of access to public and private services and employment, and enforcement of certain types of jobs on Dalits. Dalits in India have existence as if they have their own island in the same society. The geographical, cultural, social, educational existence of Dalits is different from the upper caste Indians.

The marginalization of Dalits influences all spheres of their life, violating basic human rights such as civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. A major proportion of the Dalits and lower castes are still dependent on others for their livelihood. Dalits does not refer to a caste, but suggest a group who are in a state of oppression, social disability and who are helpless and poor. Many Creative writers depicted this reality in their writing.

This paper is an attempt to discuss the misery of untouchables and the inhumanity of upper caste on them described in the novel *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand. He has realistically depicted the very sensitive issue of Dalits, particularly pre independence India. Dalits or untouchables are not a caste but a group of untouchable castes where sweeper is at the lowest level. Indian society is caste based group where the upper castes exploit the lower caste. Hindu is a major religion in India and earlier Hindu society has condemned untouchables as the dirt of the society. Hindu society did not consider untouchables as human being. This inhuman discrimination is the shameful drawback of the Indian society. The author has realistically described the truth

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian writer in English notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. He drew a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor of his country. He is the champion of the underdog. All his novels deal with the underprivileged sections of Indian society. He portrays his characters with the knowledge of their own understanding and personal experience in reality they faced in real life. He was the first Indian novelist to make an untouchable the hero of a novel. His first main novel *Untouchable* (1935), describe the day-to-day life of a member of India's untouchable caste. It is the story of a single day in the life of Bakha, toilet cleaner, which accidentally bumps into a member of a higher caste. He is treated as dirt by all Hindus just because his profession is to clean latrines.

Bakha is the protagonist of the novel and belongs to *Bhangi* caste. He is eighteen year old young boy. He cleans the latrines of the upper caste colony but loves to live in a clean and



decent manner. He has fascination for the western dress. This novel of Mulk Raj anand has created waves of protest against social injustice. Mulk Raj Anand in his novel *Untouchable* has effectively handled the theme of class distinction in order to bring out the ignorance of the marginalized sections of society. His novel focuses on the class distinction between the rich and the poor, between the high caste Hindu and lower caste known as untouchables.

There are different customs and traditions in Indian Society. Among them lower caste or untouchables are not allowed to enter the temple. Upper caste Hindu considers it as an act of defiling the temple yard. Bakha, the protagonist of the novel *Untouchable* goes to the temple where he is to sweep the courtyard and faces series of humiliations. This incident creates the spark in Bakha to realize his self and feels that he is a victim of the caste conscious society. Bakha is made to feel that he is a sweeper's son and hence untouchable. Bakha realizes how Hindu society is society of hypocrites. Emotionally tortured soul and heart of Bakha make him realize his own existence in this sadistic society. Bakha is again humiliated for sitting on the doorstep of a caste Hindu and the lady of the house shouts and curse him for defiling her house.

Mulk Raj Anand is naturally shocked by the inhuman treatment meted out by those that belong to superior caste. The degradation and humiliation inflicted on the unfortunate sections of society is highlighted here. He shows a complete understanding of the human situation and a sensitive discrimination of moral values and we hear the deep cry of these human beings who are considered untouchables.

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is essentially a tragic creation of the individual caught in the net of age old caste system crying for an escape. Author has portrayed the marginalized section of society in more effective manner than any other author because of their involvement and their interest in the reformation they expect in their respective societies in which he lives. He pictured the vary condition of the lives of the protagonists and the miseries imposed by the so called upper caste people.

Marginalization of Dalits is evident in literature and the Dalits are given a focus in Indian Literature in English in the hands of author like Mulk Raj Anand as marginalized group in India.

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