

“SUBALTERNITY “-A CRITICAL STUDY ON MULK RAJ ANAND’S NOVELS

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Abstract

The term “subaltern” was first used by the subaltern studies group in 1982 to describe someone who was “of inferior status,” and it was thereafter used to refer to any person who was subordinated in South Asian society, regardless of class, caste, age, gender, or position. To explain the origins of the discourses of the minority and marginalized groups, new theoretical frameworks evolved in the last few decades of the 20th century. The work of the Subaltern Studies Group, which focuses on the colonial subaltern subject, is one of the most important advancements among them. The term “subaltern,” coined by the influential Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), refers to those social categories that are under the sway of the ruling class. Peasants, slaves, women, the proletariat, various racial and religious groups, and peasants are all examples of subalterns. In order to develop a plan for a better society where subalterns are treated with dignity and have their rights upheld and protected, this paper highlights the politics of undermining revolutionary subaltern voices, reveals the underrepresentations of the Subaltern groups in some select novels by Mulk Raj Anand, and applies the subaltern theory to some select novels by Mulk Raj Anand.

Keywords: Marginalized Dignity, Dominance, Revolutionary, Subaltern.

INTRODUCTION

The work of the Subaltern Studies Group has been used to adapt the term “subaltern” to postcolonial studies. A word for the overall attribute of subordination in South Asian society, regardless of how it manifests itself in terms of class, caste, age, gender, or office, according to Ranajit Guha’s definition (Guha 1982). The idea of what the work cannot say becomes significant, in Spivak’s opinion, “when we come to the concurrent question of the consciousness of the subaltern” (Spivak, Subaltern 287). In order to create a portrait of the subaltern, readers and interpreters must decipher what is concealed in the text.

Spivak maintains the idea that the subaltern never talks because he or she is never given the opportunity to speak; and if they do, there is always a “omnipotent” presence who assumes the role of speaking on their behalf on the presumption that the subaltern lacks the ability to express themselves. Only the powerful dominator is allowed to speak, while the “other” (whatever or anyone it represents) is invariably shown as deformed, mute, distressed, or occasionally as disturbed. The disadvantaged are never given the opportunity to tell their story or express their genuine feelings, emotions, or reactions in the elite narratives; instead, they are always portrayed as the inferior “other” whose tale should be told by more powerful individuals. The idea of resistance to elite dominance and the protest of the subaltern voices against ingrained norms and traditions are among the characteristics of this study that remain constant.

The writing of Anand has several elements. The Elephant and the Lotus by Jack Lindsay, published in 1965, goes into further detail about Anand’s fiction’s protest form. According to Lindsay, Anand has infused Indian culture with tremendous new energy and our literature with an unwavering confidence in human goodness and the power of life (165).

Mulk Raj Anand’s novels have been analysed in Dieter Riemenschneider’s The Ideal of Man in relation to Anand’s conception of man (1967). The Marxian concept of labour and man’s various, yet connected, forms of alienation as historical

phenomena caused by the development of factors of production and the ownership of the means of production forms the basis of his (Riemenschneider's) 1976 essay, "The Function of Labor in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels" (1-20)

In her book *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist*, Margaret Berry discusses Anand the man, Anand the writer, and the relationship between propaganda and art (1971). She reads and assesses Anand's books based on how effectively their centres of awareness are imagined. She comes to the conclusion that the writer did not successfully balance his commitment and distance.

In "Mulk Raj Anand: An Appraisal" (2000), K. D. Verma argues that European thought since the Romantic era has influenced the author's humanism, which supports both his fiction and non-fictional writing on a variety of subjects, including philosophy, art history, and aesthetics (83-103).

For methodological reasons, Susheila Nasta's *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* makes reference to Anand's works from the 1930s, which were written in England. This raises several insightful questions about the history of a wide range of diasporic writing in Britain that had its beginnings before contemporary agendas. She sees the author's decision to make an untouchable the protagonist of the book as a political and symbolic response to the prejudices of the Bloomsbury circle he encountered at the time. In this way, she sees his writing as an effort to change the reader's perspective in order to expose Britain's colonialism and to demonstrate his strong belief in the need to reevaluate and revise the West's conception of itself (15-55).

According to Dorothy Figuiera (2000), Anand's portrayals of the West in his books are similar to European perceptions of India in that both are phantoms born of inner conflict. She comes to the conclusion that the book presents a compelling argument against the idea that exoticism is dependent on the political and economic power of the writer's culture (41-46)

J. M. Waghmare views "marginality" as a term that applies generally to the peoples of the world that live in conditions of utter poverty and are as a result cut off from mainstream society in the article "Literature of Marginality" (2001). He draws comparisons between the downtrodden Dalits in our nation and the Blacks in other countries. The author examines how exploitation, insecurity, and unfairness of various types led to their unfortunate circumstances (16-24).

The versatility and adaptability of Anand's work allow for multiple interpretations to be made of it. To what extent is Anand successful in empowering his subordinates to take part in the "theatre of revolution" and inspire them to destroy the oppressive system that has held them captive? That is the question that this researcher is still interested in answering. Additionally, this essay will attempt to connect Spivak's and Ranjit Guha's concepts of subalternity in order to answer some issues, such as: Does Anand write about or about the subaltern? His characters either accept their subjection as divinely mandated or they fight against aristocratic dominance. A small effort is made to find answers to these problems through the researcher's theoretical involvement.

This article attempts to define subalternity in terms of historical elements and contextualises it in Indian social conditions. It concentrates on some significant perspectives on the caste system in the Indian subcontinent, the nature of its evolution, and the modes of its flourishing in modern India. It also attempts to examine gender as the primary unifying determinant of contemporary social life and the ways that gender overlaps with other significant routes of social change.

The sweeping view of the cities and their inhabitants is a component of Munoo's global experience. Bibiji can't speak English in this story. She therefore stands out when the Sahib pays a visit to Nathu Ram's home. Throughout the ongoing argument between Prabha and Ganpat, Parvati remains silent. Laxmi is Ahalya embodied, enduring life's unfathomable challenges. Piari Bai depends on her male client, whom she refers to as "raja," for his excellent grace, generosity, and condescension. Mrs. Mainwaring is constantly looking for her next husband to provide her with luxurious amenities in Europe.

The well-built body of Bakha's sister, which has a "sylph-like form," a "graceful frame," and a "arched slender waist," gives birth to his sensual ideas (*Untouchable*, 14). Anand, like other authors, only used a woman's beauty to define her in his tale. Anand helps Sohini overcome the identity crisis that Bakha experiences by restoring her sexuality. Her sexuality is shown as a possible strength that could help her overcome caste restrictions on one level, but it also renders her vulnerable to being preyed upon as a woman, if not an untouchable.

Even though she is an Untouchable, the Pandit has a soft spot for her. When the Pandit tries to ravish her and then humiliates her in front of the crowd for her low caste, he fills her pitcher with this attraction, but eventually this sexuality becomes her foolishness. She is viewed as his personal property by Bakha. In *Untouchable*, the author has created Sohini's voluptuous beauty in a sensually artistic fashion using parts and pieces. She is even more of a flesh pot for patriarchy's pleasure because Sohini in society lack the ability to speak out against their seducers.

The native women are portrayed in the book *Two Leaves and a Bud* as highly subordinated and doubly colonised subjects who live side by side with some loud, ostensibly superior Western female characters who are perpetually unhappy with their place in the native world as well as with the sand and heat of the tropical nation. Interesting observations about white women in colonial India are made by Leela Gandhi. "While European civil society remained undecided as to whether women possessed the attributes and capacities of individuals, its colonial counterpart – in places like India – was considerably more amenable to the good offices of the white female subject... And yet she was only anchored as full individual through her racial privileges." [Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial theory: A Critical Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1998, p.89.]

While Sajani is preoccupied with her regular task of feeding and entertaining the household. Lady Croft-Cooke is occupied with criticising her native maids, which she claims are badasses and liars by nature. However, when we learn that Mrs. Croft Cooke is her husband's handmaiden economically, her utter impotence as such comes to light. The Major will make the final choice; in order to obtain relief, she will only be able to rely on her good fortune. The author of the story created images that depict the miserable fate of all women, regardless of status or colour. Dr. Havre says about Barbara "will she always remain inviolate, virginal and innocent, even after the completeness she has had?" [TLB, 121].

The issue has to do with the unbreakable, unwritten patriarchal rule that women must be gentle, innocent, and virginal at heart. Virginitly in this context metaphorically denotes submission to a male despot. Regie Hunt's brutal treatment of women in the coolie lines is a sign of the tyrannical aggression of men. Regie's sexual assault highlights the extreme vulnerability of women, whether they are European or native. They are not permitted to speak for them. All of Sohini, Sajani, Parvati, and Lakshmi are mute beings who are mocked by events outside of their control.

Although praised by readers as a book by a Kshatriya who is articulating the voices of the Subalterns, *Untouchable* has many flaws. The Dalit rebellion was witnessed by a sizable portion of the population at the time. Many of them expressed themselves by destroying works of literature like *Manusmriti*, consuming water from forbidden wells, and battling for their right to an education. Anand, who is writing for the Subalterns, however, has not included such crucial information. In the same way that Anand has overlooked their cause, historians have historically ignored the perspective offered by minorities. Although we felt sorry for the heroes, we are aware that sympathy is typically reserved for the underdogs.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, I'd want to say that even if Anand's portrayal of the underprivileged has occasionally fallen short, he has undoubtedly created a platform for future transformation that would allow the underprivileged to become a part of mainstream Indian society. The field of historiography has been expanded by Anand. By assisting in locating the subaltern and, if necessary, claiming their moral rights, it is to be understood as a new intervention and interpretation for the social groups who have been overlooked. For the sake of building a free, equitable, and just society, he has attempted to integrate the various social groups that hold distinct positions within the wider mainstream society.

The purpose of an intellectual, according to Edward Said in 1994, is to "speak truth to power." To put it another way, an intellectual must oppose the existing power structure in society. Throughout his whole literary career, Mulk Raj Anand used literature to confront societal problems. In his *Apology for Heroism*, he made a memorable case for socialist realism (1946). "Any writer who said that he was not interested in a condition humaine was either posing, or yielding to a fanatical love of isolationism." (P-18)

Anand portrays the women in these three novels as being steadily cornered in a social structure characterised by caste, class, and patriarchal privileges, staying faithful to his socialist realism.

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