



COMPARING GOPINATH MOHANTY WITH MULK RAJ ANAND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESISTANCE LITERATURE

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This article aims at a comparative study of Gopinath Mohanty with Mulk Raj Anand. The article will analyse and examine the works of both the writers from the perspective of Resistance literature. Both of them have significant contribution to Dalit literature. These two writers are non-dalits. But they have comprehensive understanding on the plight of these miserable sections who are on the margin. They have tried their best to fight for their rights. Along with that they have created for them a distinct cultural identity by dismantling their colonial identity. They have raised voice against the ethical issues like bonded labour, economical exploitation, socio-political exclusion, land displacement and sexual harassment which were immanent in dalit's life in colonial and post-colonial India. They protested against the high class people for the betterment and alleviation of the dalits.

Key Words: Resistance, Exploitation, Colonial, Margin, Dalit, Protest, Dismantle, Identity, Discourse, Justice

Resistance literature is essentially a voice of rebellion that opposes as well as exposes all forms of oppression and exploitation of the weak, the minority by the strong majority. Both Mulk Raj Anand and Gopinath Mohanty have made a great contribution in the development of the Resistance literature. They had documented dalit's life on the base of anthropology. Both Anand and Mohanty's contribution to anthropological literature, as a means of understanding man and his social world, is significant. It is not merely through their major fictions either structured on capitalistic, feudalistic, caste-based society and tribal society (particularly in case of Mohanty) but it is the various ways through which they contributed to the understanding of the plight of these miserable sections who are on the margin. Both have dismantled the colonial identity of the dalit's culture through their literary works. They have not only created dalit as a distinct cultural identity but they have also written their history, and proved the richness of their tradition. They have provided a new

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direction to the dalit's discourse that does not talk about the assimilation or exclusion but on the contrary talks about the honourable place and equal socio-political-economical participation in post-colonial Indian Territory.

Besides this, both Anand and Mohanty have dismantled the colonial mentality of the post-colonial mainstream society that consider them from colonial point-of-view and do not behave with them at the equal ground. Their fictional works are an attempt in the direction of dismantling the existing colonial binary of center-margin that create a colonial situation in post-colonial India, and turn out dalit from the post-colonial framework of India. They explore the ethical issues like bonded slavery, economical exploitation, socio-political exclusion, land displacement, sexual harassment etc. that have been indispensable part of dalit's life in post-colonial India.

Anand and GopinathMohanty have provided a new trend to Resistance literature. They do not talk about the assimilation or exclusion of the dalit communities in the mainstream society. But, on the contrary, they demand for the equality, social justice, and freedom from the slavery, equal socio-political-economical right, and empowerment of the marginalised people. They have not only depicted these underprivileged sections as passive, silent, and mute observer but also have given them voice to revolt and self assertion.

The condition of center-margin binarism was created by the British colonizers in colonial period. They created it to dominate the native Indian. Under this colonial practice of center-margin policy, the dalits had to face double marginalization because the British colonizers and the native feudal lords constantly exploiting and displacing dalits from their lands. In post-colonial India too, the dalit remain on the margin. The native mainstream elite class applies the equal policy of marginalization and exploitation against the dalits what the white master used in colonial period against all native Indian. By raising dalits' issues of exploitation and suffering, both Mohanty and Anand in their fictional works, have attempted to dismantle the wall of center-margin binarism from post-colonial India.

Like Mulk Raj Anand, GopinathMohanty, is a renowned name in marginal literature who belongs to Orissa. Though he wrote his fiction in pre-independence period, but his work too is quite distinct from other colonial writers. Like Anand, Gopinath also voiced for the marginal people who had been a subject to exploitation and alienation in the hand of the mainstream society. His fictional works exposes to the economic exploitation, land displacement, social injustice. He attempted to provide a distinguished identity to the

dalitcommunity inIndian mainstream society. His literary works too, a kind of realistic report on dalit's life style and their economic exploitation.

The fictional world of both the writers deal with subaltern classes and groups such as the working class people, untouchables, industrial labourers, farmers, who are dispossessed and humiliated most of the time. They are socially ill-adjusted individuals who live under the burden of society. Take for example of *Untouchable*.*Untouchable* shows the evil of untouchability in Hindu society. The novel emphasizes on an individual's attempt to emancipate himself from the age old evil of untouchability. Anand is here, concerned with the evils of untouchability and the need for radical empathy. He describes the pathetic condition of the untouchables through the character Bakha, their immitigable hardships and physical and mental agonies almost with the meticulous skill of historical raconteur.

Influenced by Marxist thoughts, both the writers set out on a quest of social order. Both make plea for the reconstruction of a better society. And their purpose is to bring a revolutionary change in society so as to maintain the equilibrium between the haves and the have-nots. A true believer of Marxismcan not bear the pain seeing people being oppressed by the society. This has exactly happened in the case of both the novelists. Being lover of human being, it is natural to react against the corruption, exploitation and cruelty that meted towards human being in the prevalent society. The primary focus of Anand and Mohanty is to reflect the naked reality that pervades in a society.

Anand was influenced by the ideologies of Gandhi and Karl Marx. Similarly, Mohanty was inspired by the thoughts of socialism led by Karl Marx, Non-cooperation Movement by Gandhi and his ideas of non-violence.Mahatma Gandhi made an enormous contribution in awakening the conscience of upper caste people to oppression of Dalits. Gandhi is the reformer who undermined the caste system and continued to be the source of inspiration for India in the fight against this social scourge. Marx stated that the inevitable victory of the proletariat or working class would put an end to society forever. It was through the ideologies of Non-violence and socialism; both Anand and Mohanty proceeded to pen down the decadent aspects of contemporary society. As Brahmananda Singh says:

The Russian Revolution in 1907 has brought about revolutionary changes and new consciousness for the people of the whole world whose reaction had been both felt and seen during 1936. This awareness of Socialism had inspired GopinathMohanty to create

novels like *Amrutara Santana*, *Paraja*, *Dadibudha*, *Harijana*, *Shibavai*, *Apahanchain* later phase of his career (8).

Both Anand and Mohanty were influenced by the horrors of the two world wars. The consequences of wars left an indelible imprint on Anand's and Mohanty's mind. While Anand decided to pen down the conditions of contemporary society of pre independence era, Mohanty too mirrored those aspects in his novels. 1914 was also the year of the beginning of the First World War, the first great cataclysm faced by man in his history leading to the death of millions and destruction of several creations of human civilization. When the war ended and a peace treaty was signed on 11th November 1918, he was barely four and half years old, too young to comprehend the full dimension of the tragedy. But surely it entered into his subconscious self. It paved the way for his writing.

Inspired by the movements of Imagism, Realism and Impressionism in English literature, both Anand and Mohanty made successful attempts using these concepts in his novels. Realism, as movement found a place in the works of both the novelist. Both have attempted to present their works with a realistic touch.

Their novels are dealt with the theme of casteism, exploitation and human suffering, struggle for survival etc. For instance *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Harijana* and *Danapani* are based on such themes. The heart of *Untouchable* and *Harijana*, however, lies in its manifest social plea for the abolition of untouchability. These two novels describe the pathetic conditions of their protagonists namely Bakha and Puni respectively. They also deal with their immitigable hardships and physical and mental agonies. These two characters are the representatives of the exploited class whom Anand and Mohanty know. These two underdogs sail in the same boat as far as personal suffering is concerned. So also *Coolie* and *Danapani* are the novels dealing with the heroes' struggle to survive in the materialistic world. The protagonist of the former struggles to live a smooth and happy life, but his poverty does not allow his self to lead a happy life. He struggles to earn his livelihood, which has completely changed his fate from bad to worst. Coming to *Danapani*, we can see the same ordeal that is the fight to exist among the refined section of society which force the protagonist to imitate the aristocratic style, fashions and manners of the elite section. Actually, it is Balidutta's struggle for existence or assertion as Dana and pani symbolise the means for survival.

Hope and zeal for conquest is one of the features of the resistance literature and this feature is essentially reflected in the case of Anand and Mohanty's novels. The protagonists

of both the writers make painful journey in life with the hope of betterment. Though obstacles come in their lives still they struggle to survive. Thus in *Untouchable*, Bakha suffers the curse of untouchability in the beginning and middle of the novel, but towards the end he is hopeful for his future. In *Harijana*, the untouchable girl Puni tries her best to survive. She fights with the situations. In fact, the other characters like Puni's mother Jema, Sania, and Jashoda suffer the curse of untouchability and try to adjust themselves with the worst situations in the novel. *Danapani*, best reflects Balidutta's struggle to earn his livelihood. He too learns the basic trick to survive in the middle class society; trying to reach each ladder of his service career till he achieves success.

Another common feature in both novelists' writing is that these two novelists draw their characters from the real men and women whom they happen to know in actual life. Real people constitute the germ of the novel. The characters have authenticity in the society. Like Anand, Mohanty creates characters out of his own experiences. From the very beginning of his life, Gopinath was a deeply introspective person who absorbed the world around him and made them an integral part of his Being. In his case, his creativity had more to do with his self interacting with the world around and less on knowledge learnt from various sources, simple events, theories or ideologies. In fact on more than one occasion, he has asserted that rarely he has written anything unless he was deeply affected and moved by some personal experience. Many of the characters in his fiction are noticeably modelled on real life. The portrayals are so living and intimate precisely for this reason. Quite often he identifies himself so much with his characters that some of them become the writer himself. Among such characters one may include SarabuSaonta, the village head in *Amrutara Santana* and Ramesh, the protagonist in his well-known story 'Ants' and many others. No doubt he maintains a slight aesthetic distance but the intensity of the core of his personality is easily identifiable. Several other characters are so living in their portrayal that the reader feels that he has met them somewhere in his own life. Take the character Janakamma in the short novel of the same title. So many of them have met her in Sri Mohanty's house for she was for long years a maid servant who had almost become a part of his family. The portrayal is so life-like that those who have seen Janakamma in person would easily see that she has been reincarnated by the author in his work. This could apply to many other characters including the famous Balidatta in his novel 'Danapani'. He has seen more than one Balidattas in his long office career of three decades; Balidattas who would go to any extent to satisfy every

little whim of their boss and spare no efforts to modulate their own lives to fulfil their demands and meet their whims. Being close to his characters, Mohanty very well understood their inner pain and conflict. Regarding the characterisation of Gopinath Mohanty, Kartikeswara Sahoo says: "Gopinath Mohanty's greatness as a writer lies in his portrayal of characters who have real existence. He portrays them lively" (417).

If we talk about Mulk Raj Anand's choice of characters, we can also find that his characters are real and actual. That is why Iyengar has equated Anand with Dickens, and aptly so, for his keen sense of the real and the actual. His childhood friends were mainly children from the cantonment. They included a dhobi boy called Ramcharan, a Muslim child named Ali, son of a cobbler called Chota and a sweeper boy named Bakha. In the words of C.J George:

He mixed with them freely without giving any importance to the caste feelings his elders were trying to infuse in him. One day while playing with them, a stone thrown by Ramcharan hit him and he was flattened to the ground. Immediately, with great anxiety, they rushed towards their hero. Though he was in need of their help, they were afraid even to touch him for fear of committing the sin of 'pollution' (29).

But Bakha helped Anand in carrying him to his home. Her getting angry with Bakha in return of his act of kindness and generosity was something shocking for young Anand who was very sensitive at this tender age. At that very instant, all the sensitiveness in him got polarised and it turned out to be a vow to fight for the cause of innumerable Bakhas in India. In connection with this incident Anand shares: "Bakha, the sweeper boy, took courage and carried me to my home to be only scolded by my mother" (6).

In the novels of both the writers we find the aspect of social exploitation, cruelty of men meted towards men, and occasional helplessness of men which are the chief characteristics of the resistance literature. And the basic purpose of them is to fight against those aspects. In this sense they play the role of rebel. Like Anand, Mohanty in his novels raised voice against the exploitation of the marginalised section of society. Both the novelists resist voice for the abolition of colonial practices of bonded slavery, system of feudalism, and many other draconian practices of mainstream elite class. They revolt to wipe out the evils from society. Regarding Anand's revolutionary touch in his writing, critic Meena Dubey observes:

Anand has taken his purview gamut of human relationships of their totality so as to participate the emergence of a revolutionary human being in accordance with the needs of the hour – to help and raise the untouchable, peasants, the serfs, the coolies –to human dignity and self awareness in view of the abjectness (58).

Resistance literature stands against the mainstream aesthetics rejecting the monopoly of high caste people. Both Anand and Mohanty in their novels raise the issues of oppression, cruelty and inhuman behaviour which make their characters neglected. Through the characters these novelists revolt against the hegemony of so-called mainstream aesthetics and develop aesthetics of resistance. Regarding the theme of Anand's writing R.K Dhawan writes:

Anand in his novels is mainly concerned with the problems of oppression and exploitation of the lowest classes by the upper classes: the tyranny and torture by the higher castes of the lower castes of the Hindu society and the ignorance and superstition of the people due to illiteracy and orthodoxy that are hurdles to the progress of society (101).

Both Anand and Mohanty condemn casteism, religious rituals and superstitions which are the hallmarks of mainstream literature. They expose the narrow-mindedness of upper caste people, the so-called cultured people. Mohanty draws a picture of artificiality and pretention of the high class society. KartikeswarSahoo opines: "Mohanty makes his lower characters great by exposing the hypocrisy of the higher caste; in doing so he describes the role of higher caste behind the helplessness and poverty of downtrodden" (193). Take for example of *Harijana*. It is the story of poor, helpless and exploited groups of society. The themes centre round basic denial of freedom and equality, happiness, help and opportunity. Here he exposes the real picture of high society and portrays the occasional helplessness of the characters. The high caste always takes the advantages of the low caste people. They never compromise with these underprivileged sections of society. That is why in *Harijana*, Manamayee wishes to beautify the outcaste colony and make it into a park. In the words of Raj Kishore Mishra: "Manamayee's desire to change and beautify the outcaste locality into a park in *Harijana* can be described as a self-centred motif of the so-called refined society" (61). This desire subsequently results in evacuating people deliberately by setting fire in MehentarSahi. Abinashbabu takes the leading role in rendering thousands of people homeless. At the end of

the novel we see that the entire people of the village are seen to move in search of a new place leaving MehenterSahi.

To Conclude, we can say that both GopinathMohanty and Mulk Raj Anand have traced on the journey of the marginalised by conceptualising their psyche from the shadows of anonymity and obscurity to the centre of focus in the society. They have highlighted on the predicament of the protagonists who are alienated from society, their hazardous journey towards the path of life, their struggle for survival etc. Both Anand's and Mohanty's principal actors come from the subaltern classes and groups such as untouchables, coolies, farmers, industrial labourers, working class women, socially disadvantaged etc. Both reveal the horror and miseries of their existence with a strong sense of social commitment. Their characters achieving a sense of identity mobilise resistance against caste and class oppression.

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