



**JUSTICE AND HUMANITY V/S DEHUMANIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
UNTOUCHABLE BY M.R. ANAND AND THE BLUEST EYE BY TONY MORRISON**

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Abstract:- This paper aims to comparatively investigate the issues such as race, gender, casteism, untouchability and slavery by a social –cultural materialistic approach through the novel *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand and *The Bluest Eye* by Tony Morrison. The novel begins with an autumn morning in Bakha’s life. He is in bed, half-awake, “covered by a worn-out greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor, in a corner of the cve-like, dingy, dark, one-roomed mud-house.” It is so early that the sun has not risen. *The Bluest Eye* is a story about the oppression of a poor black girl called Pecola Breedlove. She believes that the contempt and brutality which she meets within the society around her has its roots in her ugliness, her blackness. She is obsessed because she knows that she cannot be beautiful like any other white girl. A white girl has blue eyes and blonde hair which make her beautiful and accepted in society. Pecola believes that if she gained blue eyes, her ugliness will disappear and she will gain the love and security which is desperately missing from her life.

Key Words: Casteism, dingy, half-awake, investigate, materialistic, untouchability



Introduction:

Untouchable published in 1935, by Mulk Raj Anand examined the problems of poverty in Indian Society. And it is this singleness of purpose i.e. exposing the evil of untouchability and analysing its various aspects – social, moral, psychological, religion-based, etc. – that provides structural unity to the plot. The plot of Untouchable can unmistakably, be hailed as one of the most compact and coherent plots in Indian English fiction. This view finds confirmation in the fact that getting convinced and the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, Anand reduced the size of his manuscript to almost half of the original, keeping our extraneous details.

The black character in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* published in 1970 and marginals who strive to initiate themselves into the American society dominated by the racist whites. At the same time, these marginals try to hold on to the views of their own beauty and cultural worth. The novel is an account of the victimization of black people in general and black women in particular, in the American social order. It is the story of the damaging influence of white standards on the lives of black Americans, the marginalised. The source of this marginality is racism which makes the life of the black characters of the novel, vulnerable.

The opening paragraph of the novel epitomises the 'big-divide' between the untouchables and other resident communities in the town:

The outcastes' colony was a group of mud-walked houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters from Hindu society.



The harsh reality portrayed in the novel figuratively and artistically is the process of alienation and frustration that has been unleashed because of the various pigeon-holes into which the Hindu society is getting divided. As has been appropriately observed by E.M. Forster in the preface to the novel:

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others when he touches them. They have to purify themselves, and to rearrange their plans for the day. Thus he is disquieting as well as a disgusting object to the orthodox as he walks along the public roads and it is his duty to call out and warn them that he is coming.

The novel begins with an autumn morning in Bakha's life. He is in bed, half-awake, "covered by a worn-out greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor, in a corner of the cave-like, dingy, dark, one-roomed mud-house." It is so early that the sun has not risen.

A strong believer in the dignity of man and equality of all men, Anand is naturally shocked by the inhuman way the untouchables are treated by those that belong to superior castes – especially the Brahmins or the so-called "twice-born." The degradation and humiliation inflicted on the unfortunate sections of society is highlighted through the off-repeated refrain of Bakha 'Posh, posh, sweeper coming.' The very fact that they were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the only source of drinking water in the town of Bulandshahr called 'the



caste-well’ and had to wait sometimes for hours together for the generosity of some caste-Hindu to pour water in their empty pitchers speaks volumes about how deep-rooted this evil had become.

However, there is no definite and final solution to this deep-rooted social evil which seems to have eaten into the very vitals of the caste-ridden Hindu society. Therefore it cannot and does not lend itself to any easy solutions within the fixed parameters and the novel seems to have done a yeoman’s service in high-lighting the theme of untouchability in all its multi-faceted perspectives through its open-endedness.

Bakha feels bewildered and his mind is filled with gloom once again when he is left alone. The conflict in his mind makes him more miserable and he makes up his mind to go home and seek some solace by relating the story about Gandhi’s visit and his speech to his father. As E.M. Forster says in the Preface, “Some readers may find this closing section of the book too voluble and sophisticated, in comparison with the clear observation which has preceded it, but it is an integral part of the author’s scheme. It is the necessary climax, and it has mounted up with triple effect.”

The Bluest Eye is a story about the oppression of a poor black girl called Pecola Breedlove. She believes that the contempt and brutality which she meets within the society around her has its roots in her ugliness, her blackness. She is obsessed because she knows that she cannot be beautiful like any other white girl. A white girl has blue eyes and blonde hair which make her beautiful and accepted in society. Pecola believes that if she gained blue eyes, her ugliness will disappear and she will gain the love and security which is desperately missing from her life.



Pecola is made to realise her ugly, black experience by the society around her. Her classmate named Maureen, a light-skinned girl, teases People and her friends by calling them black and ugly. Pecola and her friends sink under the wisdom, accuracy and relevance of Maureen's remark. They were nicer, brighter too but still lesser than Maureen. The black sensibility makes them ask themselves – “What did we lack?” “What was the thing that made her beautiful and not us?” The things that they lacked were blue eyes, white skin, blonde hair, the American standards of beauty accepted by both the whites and the blacks.

Pecola's experience at Mr. Yacobowski's shop speaks volumes for this. He being a white, is at a loss to see a black girl in his shop. Pecola sees a vacuum in his eyes and total absence of recognition and glazed separateness. His distaste is for her blackness. Junior, a black boy and his mother too treat Pecola with haired. The mother drives Pecol away from her house: “Get out you masty little black bitch. Get out of my house.” In the process of imitating the ways of the white woman, Pauline, Pecola's mother, neglects Pecola. She, at the birth of Pecola, declares that she is an ugly child. Pauline showers her love and affection on her white employer's child whereas she scolds and slaps her own child.

Pecola's mother wants to identify herself with the white women by imitating their ways. She is a black woman who longs for beauty, romantic love, recognition and desire to live on ideal feminine life. Deprived of the same, she develops self-hatred. She tries to explore herself as central rather than marginal. Pauline hates the ugliness of her house, her daughter and herself. She becomes an ideal servant because that role fulfils practically all her needs. She compares the



lovely house and she household things of her employer. Fishers, with her own and neglects her house, her children, her man.

In Pauline we see an attempt of a black woman to alienate herself from her own community. In Pauline we also see a black woman struggling against social and economic hostilities stacked against her. But in spite of the limitations set by her family, society and race, she endeavours to live by female American standards. A self-conscious rebel is seen in Pauline.

Conclusion:

Anand has vividly depicted in the novel the miserable lot of the unfortunate untouchables and suggested that they can be freed from the shackles of killing orthodoxy and tradition only if men infuse into their own hearts some sympathy and tenderness and if the men who are humiliated as pariahs muster enough courage to live boldly and healthily.

The bluest eye is a study in race, gender and class, the main focus is on racism and its effects on the lives of Afro-Americans. People suffer and are dominated because, she belongs to a black community, a marginalised group. Thus the novel exposes the devastating effect of racism on the self-image and psyches of Afro-Americans. It is a study of a people relegated to a class of marginals by virtue of their race. Racism serves as the source of this marginality. Whiteness is equated with beauty and culture and blackness with ugliness. The marginals too try to live by the values which the white have created. Plackoottam rightly points out: "This covert form of racism was doubly injurious to the black race in that not much notice was taken of its invisibly corrosive nature."



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