

## Evaluation of Dalit Sentiments in the Non-Dalit Writers of India

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### Abstract

*Many Indian authors from outside the Dalit community have helped to express what it means to be Dalit in stories. Their voices may not echo that of Dalit writers, but what they write has had a big impact on how social justice and caste are seen. Often, those who are not Dalit have described Dalit life in their work, revealing the many problems and wrongs Dalits experience. With his novel "Untouchable," Mulk Raj Anand has drawn attention to the problems of Dalits and the need for change in society. The most common themes in Non-Dalit literature. Social inequality caused by the caste system is described in Non-Dalit literature related to Dalit concerns. Authors in this group have highlighted that social justice and equality are necessary, encourage others to support progress and support needed changes. Non-Dalit writers want to encourage everyone to care about and better understand other castes and communities. Although many non-Dalit writers have contributed a lot, their writing has been questioned by some critics. A few problems exist such as. There is a danger that writers outside the Dalit community will not entirely understand Dalits' experiences which may result in incorrect or undue simplification. Not all upper-caste writers do enough to ensure that Dalits are heard rather than acting to speak on their behalf. Despite its shortcomings, non-Dalit literature has made a big difference in discussions about caste and social justice.*

**Keywords:** Dalit writers, Untouchability, Social inequality, Caste and Communities, Social justice, Dalit movements.

Non-Dalit writers have made many people aware of Difficulties faced by communities. They have brought about change in Indian society and made readers consider the caste system. In short, writers from outside the Dalit caste have helped represent Dalit feelings in Indian literature. Although their studies have certain constraints, they made a major contribution to

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the conversation on caste and justice. By promoting empathy and understanding, non-Dalit literature has the potential to inspire positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

The following is some reputed authors of Non-Dalit caste who tried best to upgrade the dalit literature through their pens.

### **1. Rabindranath Tagore**

While Rabindranath Tagore was born into an upper-caste Brahmin family, his engagement with the issue of caste and particularly untouchability evolved over time, and his writings reveal a growing empathy and condemnation of this social evil. While he might not have consistently articulated “Dalit sentiments” directly (as the focus often remained on the perspective of those observing or challenging the system), his works, especially his later ones, undeniably reflect a deep understanding of the suffering and injustice faced by those considered “*Untouchable*.” Here’s a breakdown of how Tagore’s works and views touch upon Dalit sentiments:

Initially, some of Tagore’s perspectives on caste might have been influenced by the prevailing social norms of his time. Some scholars point out instances where his early writings seemed to accept a more traditional view of social hierarchy. However, his humanistic ideals and growing social consciousness led to a significant shift in his later works and public pronouncements. He increasingly recognized the inherent inhumanity and injustice of untouchability. Condemnation of Untouchability in his Works:

Chandalika (The *Untouchable* Girl): This dance drama is perhaps Tagore’s most direct and powerful engagement with the issue of untouchability. It tells the story of Prakriti, a young woman from the “Chandal” (traditionally considered *Untouchable*) caste.

Kabuliwala is especially significant because Tagore gives his human characters such as Prakriti, a human spirit. Many in Tagore’s society viewed “*Untouchables*” as incredibly dirty and apart from all other people, but in his work, he makes the character’s feelings known and longing apparent. Making the marginalized person understandable emotionally and mentally is a blow to untouchability because it rejects the basic idea that “*Untouchables*” lack humanity. As she experiences great loss and then hopes for recognition, her story represents what systemic oppression might do to a person’s mind. Her wish for Ananda to look at everyone the same way seems to show her desire for full human dignity which was repeatedly denied by the caste system. Such unacceptance stands in sharp contrast to everyone’s natural sense of wanting in, especially among those pushed to the sidelines. Tagore was born a Brahmin, but in his later

book, Chandali, he shows how even the most traditional Brahminical ideas can involve cruelty and rigidity toward those from lower castes. In the play, we see that ritual purity appears to demand that an entire group is banned and spoken ill of. Equality and compassion are central themes in Ananda's teaching, and they are exactly what contrast with the caste system in Hindu India. Tagore knows that traditional society rejects many people and chooses to explain another way to learn.

## **2. Premchand**

The celebrated Munshi Premchand described both the everyday scenes and serious social issues in rural Indian society. Even if he wasn't a Dalit, he observed and felt for people's suffering so keenly that many of his novels include stories about Dalits, often with great sensitivity. Reading his work demonstrates that he saw "Dalit views" early on – sometimes done without direct comment by the characters, but shown effectively in their battle against prejudice and hardship.

Premchand shows us the experiences of Dalits in vivid social realities. Both of these stories, *Sadgati* (Deliverance) and *Kafan* (The Shroud), vividly show how untouchability, poverty and strong prejudice affected relationships among castes. The end of *Sadgati* reveals how little regard for human dignity there is for Dalits, as the main character suffers while doing work for a Brahmin. The upper caste has no value for Ambedkar's life or for his death, making clear how people can be degraded by the caste system. Though the author tells us the tale from without, it still manages to capture the acceptance and hopelessness of many oppressed Dalits.

Unlike other Dalit works, *Kafan* describes Ghisu and Madhav, who are Chamar men, as people who seek short cuts and are usually lazy. While certain critics think their apathy creates a negative image, looking more closely at the message implies that their resignation comes from continuing poverty and being cut off by society. The way they react to Budhia's death suggests that, in the face of great hardship, their only consideration is how to survive and what keeps them safe. Given how the system has treated them, it's not surprising that their last act was to spend the money meant for cremation on food and drink. They may simply accept that the upper castes do not value what they do.

The author uses Ghisu and Madhav, Chamars from a poor background, in *Kafan* (The Shroud) to paint an unnerving picture of life as a Dalit. "Sadgati" is a clear tragedy, but in "Kafan," readers see how the impact of social and economic marginalization on mindset can lead to shocking behavior, familiar to many Dalits. Though the work has been examined in several

ways, including doubts over the way it portrays Dalits, it certainly shows how severe poverty can separate individuals from reasoning based on general morality.

### **3. U. R. Anantmurthy**

The author explores tradition, morality and awakening in the lives of Dalits living within a Brahmin community in U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara*. Praneshacharya's main dilemma is moral and spiritual, but the appearances and representations of Dalit characters add important yet largely hidden comments on the rigid caste system facing those at the bottom. Their stories of rejection, suffering and the constant fear of being contaminated clearly express what Dalits must have felt, even if clear signals are few.

Out of all the Dalits in the novel, Chandri is the most significant, since she is Naranappa's lover. The fact that she exists in Brahmin society makes her out of place and her later maltreatment makes plain how untouchability can rob a person of humanity. Fear that touching Naranappa would bring him and the Brahmins pollution because of his bond with Chandri is a clear sign of the prejudice behind their connection with Dalits. Chandri is often portrayed as a source of impurity, not as someone mourning a loved one, since the Brahmins' idea of ritual purity depends on keeping the "other" out. When the Brahmins are arguing over the ritual, Savitri uses her possessions to quietly save the day and demonstrates how inactive they have been.

Even though they do not have detailed backstories, the Dalit characters play a key role in bringing to light the hard truths of India's castes. Chandri stands for inner toughness and a practical challenge to Brahminical traditions and Belli represents what it means for women from cannot sidestep justice. Because the story is mainly from Brahmin viewpoints, we see how lower castes were oppressed by society. The characters in Rohinton Mistry's novel help us see that the tradition responsible for such great inequality has lost its ethical foundations. Just by being there, they push us to realize how untouchability hurts people and why it must be overcome.

### **4. Mulk Raj Anand**

A notable character in Dalit literature is Mulk Raj Anand. Published in 1935, his seminal work *Untouchable* is considered the first great social fiction. It describes a single day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper child from the town of Bulashah. Bakha is the son of the sweeper's Jamadar. He finds himself upended by the fresh forces that motivate him. He hopes to imitate the

foreigner's trends when he somehow obtains a pair of old boots from a sepoy and a pair of old trousers from an English soldier. When it comes to cleaning latrines, he works quite efficiently. After her career in fashion, his sister Sohini is also a skilled worker. She goes to the local well one day to get water. A temple priest named Kalinath demonstrates his generosity by bringing out a pail of water for the gathered outcasts. After being drawn to her youth, he pours water into her pitchers, driving the others away. After that, he invites her to come clean the courtyard at his home, and she fulfils her obligation. She begins to scream as the priest attempts to woo her. Kalinath shouts "polluted! polluted" in agreement. Bakha arrives on the scene and becomes enraged, yet he sends Sohini home. He personally visits wealthy people's homes to pick up the bread scraps. He tells his father about the incident with bitterness once he gets home.

Bakha who is protagonist of the novel is an *Untouchable*. He receives tyranny and injustice, abuse and rebuke, insult and humiliation sometimes on trifles and sometimes without any cause. The first incident is that Bakha inadvertently touches a Caste Hindu in the market. The caste man begins to blow hot and cold and hurls at him abuse and rebuke. People, there, also support him. They say these *Untouchables* have begun to think a lot of themselves. A small boy tells a lie that once Bakha had beaten him. Bakha apologizes. He implores and entreats, but in vain. It is a Muslim tongawallah that Comes to his rescue. What an Hindu while à Muslim consoling him. Once Bakha goes to a lady and asks for a loaf of bread. She scolds him and throws one as if to a dog. But on the other hand, she feeds a Brahmin to his fill with undue respect. The novelist also illustrates a fine picture of the water problem of the *Untouchables*. At that time, the *Untouchables* could not get water from any public well. They had to wait there for hours till some kind man came there to help them.

The hockey match incident also presents a pathetic scene. A small boy gets hurt in a hockey match and faints Bakha rushes in and rescues him. He takes him to his house. Any other mother would have rewarded or at least thanked him. But she says that Bakha has defiled the boy and her house. The author presents a very fine picture of his psychological anguish:

But there was a smouldering rage in his soul. His feelings would rise like spurts of smoke from a half-smothered fire in fitful jerks when the recollection of abouse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes of remorse inside him. (Anand, M.R. *Untouchable*, 105)

Thus, *Untouchable* is unquestionably a true portrayal of the plight and predicament of the socially isolated *Untouchables*. It reminds us of a popular novel, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, a Booker Prize winner author. In this novel, the *Untouchable* Character, Velutha, gets the same treatment as of insult and humiliation.

## 5. Bhabani Bhattacharya

Bhabani Bhattacharya's writings portray human existence in connection to society. They sometimes also depict the dilemma that man faces about himself and fate. The idea that "art for the sake of life," or that "art must have a social purpose," is central to all of his works. According to Bhattacharya, literature's primary goal is to improve humanity by portraying society in its truest light. This is what we find in almost all his major works like *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960) and *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966). However, a careful reading of his writing also demonstrates his exquisite workmanship, his lyrical and artistic depiction of a harsh and arid reality of poverty and hunger, and most importantly, his rich symbolic and connotative description.

The main themes of Bhattacharya's books are hunger and poverty. Disease, the plight of the impoverished and destitute, societal problems, caste politics, tensions and presences, inter-racial interactions, tradition and modernity, and the shifting ideals of contemporary civilization are all topics covered in his writings. In a nutshell, his books depict India in miniature. The author rightly holds the view, "A novelist may well be concerned with today, the current hour or moment, if it is meaningful for him, if it moves him sufficiently into emotional response." (Bhattacharya, Bhabani.47)

As a matter of fact, Bhattacharya is not opposed to sexual portrayal in literature as such. He is a tremendous realist. Therefore, he cannot completely ignore it. The cheap portrayal of sex or its crass exploitation is what he really opposes. He thinks that Hemingway and D.H. Lawrence's sexual representation is excellent. He observed:

The flow of cheap, paper-backed, vulgar, low taste books revelling in sex descriptions cannot be welcome. I have a revulsion for them. But look at Lawrence. He creates a whole world of this much tabooed feeling and yet the descriptions are most beautiful and excel in their lyrical quality. Look at Hemingway and you will learn how sex can be a theme to write upon, without making it repulsive. (Joshi, VIII)

The book portrays the two diabolical forces of war and famine which sucked the blood of the poor. His harrowing account of a famine in Bengal and the joy of the profiteers and black-marketeers are very thoughtfully and beautifully projected, though a bit exaggerated and sentimental. Let us see an extract from the book:

Corpses lay by the road, huddled together. Picked to the bones, with eyeless caverns of sockets, bits of skin and flesh rotting on nose and chin and ribs, the skulls peeked open, only the hair uneaten. A family group had sunk into sleep; and beyond the sleep-vultures. (Iyengar, 413)

*Music for Mohini*, the second novel by Bhattacharya presents the caste distinction and poverty and a reconciliation is suggested to fill up the gap between the low and the high, the rough and the sublime. It, as L.N. Gupta remarks, “blows up the citadel of old traditions and superstitions which menace India’s progress.” As a matter of fact, Bhattacharya tries his best to mirror the modern India at that time in a very realistic and poetic way. The Chicago Tribune observes:

India as presented by Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore and others has become to us a multiple image. Now these diverse pictures are brought into focus by a native son. In a splendid novel that may rank with Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth*, Bhabani Bhattacharya gives us Modern India. (Gupta, L.N., 49)

## 6. R. K. Narayan

While R.K. Narayan’s fictional world of Malgudi is often perceived as a harmonious microcosm of Indian society, a closer examination of his novels reveals a subtle yet significant engagement with the realities of the caste system and, by extension, the sentiments arising from the experiences of those at the lower rungs, including Dalits. While Narayan’s focus is not primarily on the overt struggles against untouchability, his portrayal of social dynamics and certain characters offers glimpses into the systemic inequalities and the quiet suffering endured by the marginalized.

## 7. Raja Rao

Raja Rao, a prominent figure in Indian English literature, is primarily known for his philosophical explorations of Indian identity, spirituality, and the complexities of cultural encounters. His novels, such as *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, delve into metaphysical questions and the essence of India. Even so, Dalit views are not consistently the main theme throughout his important writings. Many of Raja Rao’s narratives reflect the way Indian society works, especially including village life and the caste system, yet his main focus is on the spirituality and meaning behind the Indian experience. Where the caste system features in his writing, it is generally used to look at social position, tradition and a person’s place in the universe.

In *Kanthapura*, different classes and castes in the village are clearly described. The Brahmins are in a privileged position and the literary work looks at how groups within society are engaged. Even while the caste tensions are discussed, the author centers most attention on what



the nationalist movement did for the village. Even though the villagers unite in a shared opposition to colonial rule, the book's main goal is not to explore Dalit views as a separate political viewpoint. Ramaswamy's intellectual and spiritual journey takes up much of the narrative in *The Serpent and the Rope*, just as it does in *The Serpent and the Shell*. The author explores concepts about philosophy, the world's mysteries and how relationships and cultural backgrounds work. Even though social issues in India, including caste, play a role, details about Dalit lives and feelings are shared only rarely. Raja Rao regularly uses metaphysical and symbolic ways to illustrate India in his books. The writer often gives his characters and backgrounds a sense of permanence and a spiritual aspect. Social inequalities are recognized, but they rarely take center stage in how Indian society is studied.

### **8. Mahasweta Devi**

Mahasweta Devi helped India's most marginalized people, Dalits and Adivasis, by ensuring they were a part of her writings and activities. While many of her peers didn't do so, Devi chose to experience the daily hardships of these people, honor their stories and vigorously defend them in her books. The books she creates testify to the hardships, courage and hopeful pursuit of justice suffered by the country's most vulnerable people. She shows Dalits and marginalized groups in her books with unvarnished realism.

### **9. Arundhati Roy**

One of the best contemporary Dalit authors is Arundhati Roy. She is from Kerala and is a Brahmin Christian. Dalit feelings are portrayed in her book *The God of Small Things*. The most pitiful people in our nation have been the marginalized or *Untouchables*. The biggest obstacle that has always been a bloodsucking parasite to Indian society is untouchability. The deprivations that these societies experience are shown by untouchability, which is a major barrier to the Dalit or marginalized segments of society. Keralan social outcasts are portrayed.

In the age that Arundhati Roy describes in her book, the *Untouchables* of Kerala suffered from social exclusion. They were compelled to remain silent. Anyone who dared to speak out did so at their own risk. Caste-wise superior to him, Velutha is portrayed as an *Untouchable* Christian Paravan who lives at the whim of social hegemony. When he dares to speak out against his enforced quiet, he suffers the consequences. Contrary to his superior sensory reality, his innate nature aligns with his name, Velutha, and its symbolic meaning of "whiteness," which denotes purity. Unfortunately, his "low birth" and dark skin allude to his social inferiority and the ensuing oppression and discrimination he experiences. The proprietors of the Paradise Pickle



plant take advantage of Velutha, a carpenter and symbol of the saying "Black is Beautiful." However, due to their high caste status, Velutha is not permitted to enter their Syrian Christian family home. Words and phrases that denote "quietness" are used to describe Velutha's demeanour. He has "quiet" strength and conviction in his walk, demeanour, and vocabulary, yet underneath this exterior of silence is a primordial energy that knows no bounds. This is shown by his passionate and deep love affair with Rahel's mother, Ammu. His interactions with others and the way his persona is outlined both reveal the invidious nature of conventional power dynamics. The author's description serves as an example of this point. "In Mammachi's time. Paravans like other *Untouchables* were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed" (Roy, Arundhati, 74).

Thus, the study underscores the need for more nuanced and authentic portrayals of Dalit experiences, ones that move beyond traditional tropes and engage with the layered realities of caste oppression and resilience. Non-Dalit writers, despite their contributions, must remain conscious of the ethical responsibility inherent in representing marginalized voices. Ultimately, while their works contribute to broader awareness, genuine Dalit narratives are best articulated by those who have lived those experiences, ensuring that literary spaces reflect the true diversity of Indian social realities.

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