



MARGINALIZATION OF SERVANTS IN THE WORKS OF SUDRAKA, MULK RAJ ANAND AND ANITA DESAI

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Abstract

Literature is an expression of society that adds to reality and enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires. We are in a world where human rights are under critical lens, which in depth emphasizes on marginality. The central focus of this paper is to explore the character of domestic servants' and realize the oppression and subjugation they face. In many cases they remain unnoticed whereas in some cases they are the central characters of the story. For instance, in Mulk Raj Anand's "Coolie", he has given the center stage to his servant character; whereas in Sudraka's *Mrcchakatika* we find the character of the servant remains unnoticed. Likewise, in Anita Desai's "The domestic Maid", we find how the hegemony suppresses the marginalized section in our society. Also the works from different era are taken so as to discuss that marginality and subalterns not the current themes, as they have always been prevalent in literature as well as in society. To impart a deeper sense, mythological references are also being taken.

Key words: marginality, exploitation, bonded labor, loss of identity

"The body is not a thing, it is a situation, and it is our grasp on the world and sketch of our projects. -Simon de Beauvoir

Introduction

Indeed, the plot plays an important role in developing the story, but a well-drawn unique character enriches the plot. As, the incidents, actions, periphery, hamartia; all happen to the character, we as readers get more connected towards the author's work. For example, the character of Lucifer from Doctor Faustus is such an engaging, that sometime we get a vicarious feeling of a real one hovering around us. Even Aristotle says that representation of characters should always enhance the plot. In a way, we can say characters add life to the plot. The readers get engrossed with

the characters and start shadowing themselves in those.

Character's in literature helps us to in a way confront the outer world. When the reader starts seeking himself in the characters, he interlines with it because these characters create tensions, conflicts, and then resolution. They are like the crux of the story. To name few Hamlet, Lady Macbeth, Emma, Mrs. Norris, Jane Eyre and many more are some evergreen characters in literature. The term "character" has given a new vision to many segments of society and one among them are servants. Many a times the role of servant becomes the main plot of the story and sometimes a flat character. But in both the cases it adds and enhances the story. While making a critical appreciation we sometimes forget to discuss about them. Let us examine few embarked works in literature where

the voices of these marginalized servants are elaborated and where it needs to be focused upon.

Mythological reference

To begin with let us take examples from our Epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The character of Manthara gives us a feeling of anger and hatred as she was the one who trapped Kaikeyi in her words and plotted against Ram. But if we do an in-depth analysis we would see the deeds of Manthara actually started Ramayana. Trijata who took care of Sita in Lanka had always been calm, composed and friendly with her. Historians say it was somewhere because of Trijata, Sita was able to stay there. The character of Vidur in Mahabharata was of a *dassi putra* although he is one of the central characters. The purpose of discussing these characters is only to understand that they all were marginalized voices who were in some or the other way suppressed and has always added their presence in the story.

Role of Madanika in Sudraka's *Mrcchakatika*

The genre of Indian dramatist is very old and has given us some memorable everlasting plays. One among them is Surdraka's *Mrcchakatika*. Although being ancient, the theme of the story has great relevance with contemporary world. The plot revolves around the protagonist Charudutta and Vasantsena. We find all the features of a hero as mentioned in *Natya Shastra*. Charudutta is a Brahmin, who performs *dharma* acts. Vasantasena is a courteous and house is like a Kuber's house. Along with other characters Madanika's character is also important and should be suited under lime light. She is the maid of Vasantasena and had a very good knack of reading her mistress mind.

Her Character basically throws light on the fate of slave women during that time and contemporary as well. Madanika was a thralldom to Vasantena, with no right to marry until someone plays a certain amount to set her free. She even did not have any salary or increments. Years after years the same job is continued. Madanika is clever and shrewd but that is of no use. Sarvilaka frees her as he loves her but did not attend her as his friend Aryaka needed help. This shows that she was although no more a bounded labor but her fate and

attitude towards her did not change much. Through the character of Madanika we can throw light on the condition of servants of that time; moreover, we can call them as bonded labours. Still statistics show this malpractice still prevails in few places of our country.

Voice of Munno in "Coolie" by Mulk Raj Anand

"Man is both subject and object of his culture, he is both the builder as well as the building his name is synonymous with culture. -Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand is also known as "the angry man of literature." He is a man of varied interest and manifold achievements, not merely in the world of fiction but in the public life and criticism. He discussed throughout about the social concern in his novels. Anand believed, "Every insult, every humiliation and, every deprivation, every lowering of dignity, must be protested." His second novel *Coolie* published in 1936 talks about the hardships of Munno, who is an orphan and stays with his uncle. He is ill-treated by his aunt and faces domestic exploitation. Anand says, "He realized finally his position in the world. He was to be a slave, a servant who should do the work, all the odd jobs, someone to be abused, even beaten. He was condemned by an iniquitous system always to remain small, abject and drab." But he dreamt of going to city and earns his livelihood. On his arrival in city, he found himself placed as a domestic servant in Baboo Nathoo's house.

His dreams were soon shattered. Munno was regularly abused either verbally or physically by his master's wife. He was served food not in a plate but on hands that too the left overs. Munno had a defined place where he had to stay. Endless punishments were given to him. Anand calls his novels a Whitman's poem "A passage to India" not for its poetic quality but for its picaresque nature. It moves from hills to plains, village to city from north to south and back to hills. But one thing did not change and that was Munno's bad luck and sufferings.

Meeting Prabha Dayal was a temporary relief and cure of his tragedy. With him he worked as a labor in a pickle factory but was happy but

unfortunately Prabha had to leave his place because of debt. Therafter he worked as coolie in local market and slept on footpath. And there was tough competition too among the other coolies. Next he landed in Bombay but more of sufferings were waiting there. Even the elephant driver said, 'the big the city is, the crueller it is to the sons of Adam. Soon he experiences and realizes the 'Life in death" there. He started working in a mill and the workers were exploited there and no proper wages were given to them. The living conditions described are pathetic and surprisingly those degraded places still prevail in our society.

Munno's fate was too atrocious. The mill was in a verge of closing because of union strike. While heading towards work he was knocked down by a car driven by Mrs. Main warning, who lived in *Shimla*. In order to recover the situation and hide her deed she takes Munno along with her to Shimla. Munno finally reaches to hills where he worked as a servant cum rikshawpuller. He got tuberculosis and found death in peace. He was only sixteen when his life ended. Coolie is described as an epic of misery and the odyssey of Munno. Mulk Raj Anand through this novel also threw light on Child labor prevailing in society. It is very easy to get children as workers or servants and that to also with less pay. Munno had become a victim of irrational system and inhuman cruelties' of society.

Munno says, "I am a Kshatriya and poor and Verma, a Bhramin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No caste does not matter. The Babus are alike. There must be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor." Coolie deals with the economic exploitation of people on marginalized segments of the society.

Condition of Urban servants in "The Domestic Maid"

"Men and women migrate to the cities with dreams of better earning and better living conditions." - Anita Desai

The domestic Maid (2014) is a short story by Anita Desai. The story revolves around the life of a migrant domestic worker Geeta. The plot is simple with less characters but it lasts for long in our

thoughts. Every morning comes a new day for us but is it so with these domestic maids also? Mrs. Desai through her work has tried to put up this question to the readers.

Tangling herself in salwar kameez and carrying her pouch she rushes to her work. As a routine protocol, Geeta has to show her ID card to the security guard, but many a times the general outlook towards these domestic help is suspicious. She works for Asha didi, who stays in a posh residential apartment. Geeta was morose and disturbed that day, and as she entered Mrs. Asha's house, she screamed on her for being late. Till the time Geeta worked, she continuously bore the verbal abuse of her employer.

It is almost three years for Geeta in this city, changed several houses but things for her did not change much. It seems as if she is used to all these abuses. The shouting and cribbing from her madam does not exude her anger anymore. Even if Geeta tried to explain the reason of her being late her madam was not interested in listening to it and even before hearing it typically was ruled out as a cooked story. "Don't tell lies...every day you people have the same excuse" said Asha.

A flurry of thoughts came in Geeta's mind. She did not say anything to her madam, but was definitely dismayed. She thinks, "These rich people have no compassion for poor women like us." Anita Desai has emphatically discussed the situation of these people in her story. Rich people don't understand their condition. They do have all the facilities nearby, but people like Geeta has to wait in queue to fill water and use bathroom. They do not have basic necessities to lead a dignified life. And even after all these daily ordeal, they always get to hear of being lethargic and indolent. But her friend chayya while consoling her makes a philosophical remark. These women also live under the subjugation of their in-laws and husbands and also have job pressure." Because they cannot take out there anger and frustration on anyone else they take it out on us." Says Chayya.

Anita Desai through this work presents a nebulous picture of the quality of life of the servants and domestic help in our country. She minutely

discusses about the dress, the talking style, their group and that depicts their situation. Geeta's poverty and misery is not only her story but of many. The title of the story also refers to marginalizing of women in our country. Although these people work still they did not have self identity in the society. They are a crowd of labors and domestic maids.

Conclusion

Servant portrayed in literature has depicted the true shades of society. The paper is an attempt to explore the voice of the voiceless. The characters discussed have been taken from different eras so as to see how subjugation over marginalized people is prevailing from a long time in our society. We talk about democracy, equal rights, but they are still the victims of discrimination and hegemony. In reality these subalterns are still struggling to shape their life and identity.

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