
Research Papers



A Crusade against Socio-Economical Exploitation: Romen Basu's Outcaste

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Abstract

India is the largest democratic country in the world. There are number of castes, sub castes, creeds, races and classes are living by heterogeneous. Basically, the social system of India is based on caste structure in which Dalit or Outcaste is one of the exploited castes among them, and these people are marginalized in Indian society for long ago. For that reason the untouchability carries out still today. According to four varna systems follows the old customs, conventions, ritualism, casteism and gender discrimination:

Persons from varna order considered it improper to deal with them and even to touch them as the idea of purity and pollution had been a major characteristic feature of untouchability since remote past in traditional caste system all over the rural India.¹

The social reformers of 20th century awakened the downtrodden or outcaste people for their fundamental right from Mahatma Phule, Pandit C.Iyothee Thass, Periyar E.V.Ramasami and Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar are the deliverers of outcaste movement and liberation. These great personalities are the energy, inspiration and motivator of outcaste people and writers who became the source of Indian literature. Millions of outcaste people in India who are systematically and institutionally deprived their civil, political, economical, social and cultural rights in every aspects of life.

Consequently, the outcaste people exploited by social, economical, political and

cultural perspectives, basically the lower caste people are known as labourers, agriculture labourer, peasants, nomadic tribes and tribals as well. Nevertheless the British, who ruled over India for more than 150 years, used the term for the depressed class, thus, we find a variation for the term. The lower castes are the part and parcel of Indian society they struggle for equal rights and equal status:

However, in actual historical practice economic and social status tended to coincide. There was thus a fairly close correlation between social (i.e., caste) status and economic status the high castes were almost invariably of high economic status, while the low castes were almost always of low economic status. In modern times, and particularly since the 19th century, the link between caste and occupation has become much less rigid in the sense that ritual religious prohibitions on occupational change are not easily imposed today, and it is easier than before to

change one's occupation.²

Romen Basu vigorously attacked on the social exploitation of outcaste people by upper caste and advocates the equal position and humanity. The author revealed the social deformity at different levels of untouchables. The internal pictures of outcaste people have presented with contrast. The novel has shown a dreadful predicament and Humanistic values of outcaste people in Bengal. The social inequality generated by caste and four varna system is divided people with discrimination. It builds by higher and lower position in society.

Romen Basu is a leading writer in Bengali literature. He has written so many novels which are based on sociological and economical values of outcaste. It shows the realistic picture of rural society of outcaste. He minutely observed the living way of them. It could be seen with a specific social purpose. It delineated on the social and economical problems of untouchables in rural area of Bengal. The novel brings out the social reformation and a just equality among outcaste people. So many lower castes are include such as Nelo[washerman], Kaura, Chamar, Chandal, Dom, Kasra, Mahsya, Muchi, Methua, Napit, Pod, Potuas, Santhal and Sudra are living together in Basuli village. Outcaste demands and advocates the humanistic values for way of life. Basu's novel is one of the best contributions to indo English novel from Bengal. Outcaste is written in 1986, which is delineated the surrounding area of Outcaste in Basuli village near Calcutta in Bengal where the story takes place:

Vultures were fighting over the guts of a dead dog lying in the middle of the narrow dirt road. The cattle dung had still not been collected. A just of wind spared the paddy from the stench near the entrance to the colony. The place looked as if dhobis had temporarily abandoned their homes, escaping an epidemic³.

The present novel related to one man standing for social and political struggle that Sambal, outcaste wages against an unjust and demoralized people and his estrangements from individual and groups. The major characters are Sambal, Parashan Babu, Sarju Bali Dasi and Putki. Parashar Ghose is a progressive school teacher also called Mastermoshai who supports Sambal in his critical condition but the communist want to exercise of him for purposefully. Parashar takes risk in favour of Sambal. He helps more the outcaste school children don't have rights to go school. He only imparts education and buys books

for poor children by collecting money from others. His ambition proves for villager who reveres him a lot. He doesn't discriminate among children he wanted to bring an innovation in outcaste society through education. Parashar's devotes himself for sake of poor children. "He was neither dumb nor wicket yet why couldn't he see that boys and girls studying, in that same school, surely lead to immortality"⁴.

The former large landowner Paramesh Ganguli symbolizes the social economical atrocities of the lower caste community in village Basuli. These people marginalized in village, could not permit to use the common well. Paramesh Ganguli also instigates the upper caste people to attack Sambal's father because he is an untouchable dared to enter the Kali Temple. Sambal is the protagonist in the role of crusader who struggle against casteism and economical exploitation symbolized by Paramesh Ganguli. He grows up with angry young man image with the aim to take revenge of an unjust society.

Likewise, Sarju Bala Dasi is a widow at twenty two years old. She is still a beautiful young woman with attractive personality. Unfortunately at her father's house she doesn't welcome by her stepmother, because she had blot of prostitution that's why she had been charged by the members of Basuli Gram Panchayat is male dominated and she had no way to justify herself and also Sambal in the crisis. Instantly Gram Panchayat ordered her to confine herself to her own palli [area where a colony lives, same as Para] without any visitor for three months. She had been boycott for several days and also fine for 10 rupees charge. In the meantime Sambal encouraged her to work with him for improving the status of outcaste women.

Sambal realizes that his vengeance on Paramesh due to casteism and he is supported by Manmatha a communist leader. Sambal learns how to organize and fight with injustice. Manmatha raise the question to bring the equality among the lower caste women and says "Women were equal by right, but they would have to work shoulder-to-shoulder, gun-to-gun, alongside men or else there was no salvation for the nation"⁵. Sambal's main object of taking revenge of Paramesh Babu but it was in vain struggle to unite the lower caste people in the village because there was no unity among outcaste. But the outcaste people were serious about financial matter they demand for equal wages for proper earning. The main purpose of economical exploitation by Zamindar [the large landowner] pays the cheap

rates for lower caste worker whether they dared to demands for better wages surely they have beaten ruthlessly.

“Zemindarbabu is very influential; he will not accept losing face easily.” Said Parashar who had not chosen his words carefully.” which zemindar? The magistrate asked. “Paramesh Ganguli. “He is zemindar to you, is he? I thought the Government abolished the zemindar system and the title years ago.” He had nothing more to say, except wishing Parashar a speedy journey back to Basuli.⁶

The untouchable labourers squeezed from starvation. The Conflict between the two untouchable's castes like the Bagdis and the Muchis in village, Sambal wanted to take action against Bagdis to control over Temple and to bring equality among untouchables, he also came into flash to plan for conducting marriage between the two lower caste for social interaction. And he is one of the victims who trapped in love affair with Putki is a daughter of Haripada, both love each other heartedly wanted to get married but her father was not ready to do so. Due to the social and cultural discrimination among lower caste where Sambal and Putki victimized in the confrontation between two communities .The relatives were aggressively opposing to this marriage because, it was inter sub castes matter, one was from Chandal and another was Muchi. “During the post-vedic period the Panchamas or Chandalas or those who came into being from mixed unions between the varnas had to lead a life of sub human conditions or even a life equal to animals”⁷ they have option only suggested by Parashar Babu, if Sambal wanted to marry Putki, he will have to be leaved the native place and join the Muslims pare but he was not ready to leave his ancestor place. It was dangerous situation created if he refuses to marry Putki then she may commit to suicide out of despair. Putki many times suggested Sambal to start business but he unnoticed her advice.

But unfortunately it happens a big tragedy with Sambal he does send to jail in case of murder a girl named Tagar friend of Putki, at that situation, Putki was alone, nobody was ready to help her to meet Sambal in jail. She convinced to get permission to meet him but she could not succeed on her own. When she searched Parashar and noticed that he is in Calcutta; she goes Calcutta alone without any fear. Somehow she does meet him and tell what happened exactly with Sambal, Parasharbabu helps her a lot. Some people believed that Putki is responsible for Sambal's

uncontrollable behaviour.

In this way, the novel exposed the realistic picture of lower caste in Bengal village Basuli and the division in groups that split between the high caste and low caste, but the several gradations of the untouchables which restrict them from coming together for oppression due to lack of unity of outcaste to fight against inhuman strategy. Sambal emerged as a revolutionary figure for equality. Romen Basu's novel abounds in social realism. The writer incorporates many examples of social, economic, political and religious exploitation of the lower caste as well as the political quarrels between Congress Party workers and Communist Party in Gram Panchayat of Basuli. The social structure as presented in the novel is afflicted with cold-blooded division in society.

References:

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