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Unsuccessful and Successful Struggles of Slaves: A Comparative Study of *Uncle Tom`s Cabin*, *Untouchable*, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* and *Aaydan*

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However good one was and however many attempts one made to unravel the difficulties of his life, it was not possible for them at all to get success in getting liberation and make progress on the platform of humanity if they were not free from the invisible negative power of blind belief. Ultimately, they were all bound to end up fighting a losing battle which made no sense. Tom and Bakha were obsessed with the blind beliefs. Hence, they could not manage to get a breakthrough in emancipation. Both Kamble and Pawar were born into the families of slaves. But the readers of *Aaydan* and *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* could see them encountering the crafty and inhuman oppressors and challenging the long-held beliefs. They surpassed their husbands in creating an egalitarian society. They succeeded in their individual lives. Their contribution to emancipating a number of Dalit individuals particularly women was remarkable. In the end, one could find the two Dalit ladies Kamble and Pawar to have become iconoclastic and revolutionary personalities in the Indian society. They were in a position to get success in liberation from the superstition because they were lucky enough to have organic intellectuals and the ideology of resistance.

Keywords: Novels, Autobiographies, Ideology of Dominance, Slaves, Failures, Organic Intellectuals, Ideology of Resistance, Successes, etc.

Introduction

Four books have been selected for a close analysis and a comparative study from two major genres of literature. The genres are novel and autobiography. The two novels are Harriet Beecher Stowe`s *Uncle Tom`s Cabin* and Mulk Raj Anand`s *Untouchable*. The autobiographies are *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* by Shantabai Kamble and Urmila Pawar`s *Aaydan*. *Uncle Tom`s Cabin* was published in 1852, and *Untouchable* was written in 1935. *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* was published in Marathi in 1983. It is also considered to be the first Indian Dalit autobiography by a woman. Urmila Pawar`s autobiography *Aaydan* was first written in Marathi in 2003. Later on, it was translated into English and the title of the English version is *The Weave of my Life* and the same was published in 2009

This paper essentially relates to the oppressed and slavish life style of the Coloured masses in America in the nineteenth century and the similar way of existence of the Untouchables in India during the twentieth century. It also discusses the predicament and the persecuted world of the Dalit women in India in the twentieth century and their dogged determination to liberate themselves. It

Banshelkikar Yashpal Murhari

further provides an insight into the fact as to how superstition and stagnation go hand in hand no matter in which society the victims of blind belief live their lives and to which period of time they belong and how awakening and emancipation go together. Lastly, the paper throws light on the reasons for getting liberation for the slaves in India in the past. The researcher has made two different comparisons in the present paper. One, a comparative study between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Untouchable*. Two, a comparison of *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* and *Aaydan*.

A Similarity between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Untouchable*

A number of similar situations and dissimilar ones between both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Untouchable* could be witnessed by the readers. First of all, it is essential to discover the fact that even though both the books were related to the most downtrodden classes of two different societies in two different centuries, their respective writers had belonged to exactly opposite sections of societies, -i. e. Stowe was a white American woman novelist and Anand came from the non-Dalit Hindu community in India. In other words, both the books were not based on the first hand experiences of the writers as such. And hence, these writers based their respective novels on the phenomena of observation, sympathy and imagination even though it has been claimed in the Preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that its incidents, events and episodes were real, "Mrs Stowe herself said that all the happenings of the story were true incidents, arranged by her in the form of a continuous story." (iv) Here it may be observed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is more realistic than *Untouchable*

Similarities between Tom and Bakha in Curse, Superstition, Ambition and the Lack of Organic Intellectuals

Both the protagonists Tom of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Bakha of *Untouchable* were accursed by the slavery system in America and the caste system and the practice of untouchability in India correspondingly. The slavery of the Coloured masses in America degraded them to the level of animals and human goods, and therefore, Tom was bound to have at least four masters in his life namely Mr. Shelby, Haley, St. Augustine Clare and Mr. Simon Legree as portrayed in the novel in spite of the matter that he had all the essential qualities of a human being as such. For instance, Tom was honest, good-natured, virtuous, hard-working, and dutiful. Consequently, he was able to win the trust of his master, Shelby, who states, "Well," said Mr. Shelby, "Tom is sincere, if anyone is, and completely trustworthy. I know that from experience. I shall be sorry to part with him, I must say." (1) Likewise, the caste system and the practice of untouchability in India debased the Outcastes to such a level that they were considered to be lower even than animals of any sort. And as such Bakha was subjected to inhuman treatment, misery and deprivation at the hands of the non-Dalits, who strongly believed in the theory of rebirth and the theory of purity and pollution. *Untouchable* shows the caste-based belief system and value system destroyed the very existence and identity of Bakha forever. It can be witnessed in *Untouchable* everything and anything in the whole world was found touchable except for the Outcastes. Since his birth till the last moments of Bakha's life, as portrayed in *Untouchable*, Bakha had always been forced to lead life as an object of ill-treatment, humiliation and hence enormous demoralization despite Bakha was extremely sensitive, sensible, sincere, respectful and service-oriented, but unfortunately he was oppressed all the time by the superstitious Hindus, who had developed excessive superiority complex and practiced it whenever they came across the Outcastes, who were made to internalize inferiority complex throughout their lives and bear any inhuman deeds the Hindus did against them. Bakha shares with his friends Chota and Ram Charan the way the indignities were meted out to him over and over again when he went to the Hindu locality to do his caste-based works. Bakha remembers, "There was another insult waiting for me

Banshelkikar Yashpal Murhari

further up,'Bakha added, and he narrate the story of how the woman in the silversmith's alley had flung the bread down at him from the top of the house." (79/80)

Both Tom and Bakha were deeply superstitious and god-fearing. Although Tom along with his entire family was completely enslaved by white Americans by means of law and was treated on par with animals and goods, he was not been in a position to think out of the box, analyze the sorry state of affairs reasonably and make any efforts to escape the permanent misfortune called slavery. Instead, he quite meekly surrendered to the oppressive, dehumanizing and destructive system and began to believe blindly in the Christian belief system.

Unfortunately, he continued believing in the existence of God Jesus Christ and felt that He would come to rescue the poor, helpless and innocent. His belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of Christ was so unfathomable that he ran the risk of getting killed at the hands of his master Mr. Simon Legree for the simple reason that Legree wanted him to be cruel, practical and immoral while dealing with Tom's fellow slaves in the estate. More importantly, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicts that not only did Tom believe in the Christian worldview, but also he dared to confess it and refused openly to become unchristian and willingly preferred death to remain alive. Similarly, Bakha as well as his whole family was nearly always compelled to face ostracism, humiliation, ill-treatment and acute pain every time he came across caste conscious Hindus in all walks of life as the caste system and the practice of untouchability were keenly and strictly observed. Yet, Bakha's family could be found having unwavering belief in the existence and greatness of Hindu deities such as Rama. When Colonel Hutchinson told him about Jesus Christ Bakha was automatically reminded of Hindu Gods. Bakha asked himself, "Was he a God like Rama, God of the Hindus, whom his father worshipped and his forefathers had worshipped, whom his mother used to mention quite often in her prayers?" (103) And Bakha's family went on believing in Hindu theology with profound feelings despite they were never considered to be human beings as such and were regarded the dirtiest and worst substance on earth.

Not only this, a priest attempted to molest his sister, Sohini, amidst the crowd of devotees in front of the temple. Of Course, Bakha got infuriated and wanted to teach the priest a lesson. But unfortunately, he fell prey to the superstition and consequently could be seen getting scared of the idols of Gods inscribed on the doors of the temple over there. Such was the totally unreasonable and sentimental belief of Bakha and his family in the Hindu theology, which never came to the rescue or became practical good will of the Outcastes.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and *Untouchable* present Tom and Bakha were highly ambitious. Tom honestly felt to master the skill of reading so as to be able to read the Bible and understand the teachings of Jesus. Yet, he could never do it as the circumstances in which he had been living his life were extremely unfavourable. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* records the difficulty faced by Tom when he had to write and convey a message to his wife through mail, " In such a case, you write to your wife, and send messages to your children; but Tom could not write,- the mail for him had no existence," (69) Similar is the case of Bakha, who sincerely aspired for fashionable and stylish life just like that of the Britishers in India at that time. Furthermore, Bakha made a number of efforts to gain knowledge from the sons of Babu in their locality. He even went to the extent of paying them money for the same. However, Bakha could never know how to read and write because the Untouchables were absolutely forbidden from going to public places and institutions like schools. Neither Tom nor Bakha could fulfil their wishes to be able to read and write.

Lastly, what is more remarkable to find out is the fact that awakened, knowledgeable and committed leaders, especially from Tom's and Bakha's sections of societies are not found in the novels; the guides and leaders were completely missing from the lives of both the protagonists. That is why the struggles of Tom and Bakha to overcome the entrenched obstacles in their lives became utter failures.

Dissimilarities between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Untouchable* in Realism

Since the novelists, Stowe and Anand, did not belong to the victims' sections of societies, they depicted the stories of the central characters as they had observed societies and imagined about them. It is fascinating to realize the fact that the point had been brushed aside by Anand that in reality a few great organic thinkers and revolutionaries such as Jyotirao Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Narayan Guru, Periyar and Ambedkar analyzed the societies of their times, became fully aware of their drawbacks, made attempts to awaken the masses from the deep slumber, and challenged the dehumanizing social system before the novel *Untouchable* was written. The novelist Anand had consciously shied away from making reference to the awakening movements of those great organic intellectuals in India. That is why Bakha was found absolutely ignorant of such personalities and was excited about Gandhi's speech. In the same manner, Stowe through *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had not depicted any such organic intellectuals belonging to the Black community in America either because such scholars in reality did not exist in America at that moment or prior to it. Therefore, the readers notice a sharp contrast between the point of view of Stowe who claimed that her novel was real and the perspective of Anand from which the entire story of Bakha was based on observation, imagination and compassion. Both the novels are fictitious, given the above discussion yet it can be found that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is more realistic than *Untouchable*.

Upon reading the novels, it can further be learnt there is a great difference between the period of time in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was set and written and the span of time in which *Untouchable* was set and penned. The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe was first published in 1852. It was set in free and independent America in the mid-nineteenth century as opposed to Mulk Raj Anand's book *Untouchable* which was written in the year of 1935. It was set in British India in the mid-twentieth century. The former was set in realistic locations in the United States of America such as the state of Kentucky, Southwest and Southeast America, Canada, France, and Africa. On the other hand, the latter was set in an imaginary locality of Bulashah and its surroundings in India.

Dissimilarities between Tom and Bakha in Untouchability, Religion and Indoctrination

Then it is more interesting to discover the fact that for the white masters Tom was never untouchable. Even the houses of them both were not that far away. On the other hand, the caste conscious Hindus were invariably careful and strict in practicing untouchability with Bakha. And hence, their localities were quite far away from that of Bakha regardless of the fact of living in the same village.

When it came to religion, Tom automatically started to follow Christianity as his masters belonged to it and Christianity was a major religion in America. On the contrary, the life style of Bakha was forced on him by the dominant and manipulative non-Dalits in India. As portrayed in *Untouchable* it may be learnt, for the dominating non-Dalit Hindus religion was a matter of indoctrination and compulsion. *Untouchable* further reveals how Bakha fell prey to both indoctrination and force and how non-Dalit Hindus with the help of these two weapons continued to maintain the status quo in society. The massive power of brainwashing can be found out in *Untouchable*. The intoxication of indoctrination was too intense for Bakha's family to think of conversion to any other religion irrespective of the fact however good, favourable, progressive, and humanizing it is. *Untouchable*

chronicles how Bakha's father, Lakha, and Bakha himself turned down the opportunity to convert to Christianity when the missionary Colonel George Hutchinson had made several efforts to get them converted to it and had promised Lakha to make his people sahibs and officers like the Colonel himself.

In a nutshell, given the above discussion, it is quite possible for anyone to tend to draw the conclusion that however good one was and however many attempts one made to unravel the difficulties of his life it was not possible for them at all to get success in getting liberation and make progress on the platform of humanity if they were not free from the invisible negative power of blind belief. Ultimately, they were all bound to end up fighting a losing battle which made no sense.

Similarities between Kamble and Pawar in Caste Discrimination and Untouchability

Kamble belonged to the Western Maharashtra area. On the other hand, Pawar came from the Konkan region of Maharashtra. Interestingly, both Kamble and Pawar belonged to the same sub-caste of the Untouchables in Maharashtra. That was Mahar. Of course, they were both Buddhists in later periods of their lives. *Aaydan* points out that the caste-based Hindu religion made its followers especially the non-Dalit Hindus to develop superiority complex and ill-will towards the Dalits. The non-Dalit Hindus left no stone unturned to keep the Dalits deprived of both the access and acquisition of the natural resources and the development of the human resources. A case in point can be witnessed in *Aaydan*. Pawar recollects in her autobiography she was not allowed to have access to drinking water, which was a natural gift. Pawar had to suffer at the hands of the casteist Indians because she had to go to fetch water from farms situated at far off places which had been under the direct control of the non-Dalit Hindu landlords. Pawar documents, "When I saw there, women were kept waiting with empty pots in their hands to take water at a Maratha's well. They were entreating Maratha women, who were taking water at the well, 'Oh madam, please give us water.' I saw it and came back with the empty pot." (Translation Mine) (169) A similar story could be learnt through *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* in which Kamble and her relatives were forced to get off their bullock cart and not to drive it on the public road in her village. When the Dalits tried to assert themselves, they were subjected to extreme humiliation and the feeling of helplessness.

Aaydan then goes on to reveal how the non-Dalit Hindus have never been well-wishers of the Dalits because they could not get rid of the feeling of superiority which emanates from the caste consciousness. In this connection, Pawar remembers how the non-Dalit Hindus cursed the Dalits for no mistake of their own except that they were born Dalits, "Let all troubles be avoided and let them go to the Mahars by this complaint. There would be a special grievance like this!" (The upper caste Hindus say so as a part of their prayer.) (Translation Mine) (38) Similarly, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* does not show any transformative deeds on the part of the non-Dalit Hindus as far as the suffering world of Dalits in Kamble's autobiography is concerned.

Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha exposes how Kamble was considered to be inferior to the non-Dalit Hindus; she was not given the status of a human being even when she had become a good teacher. Untouchability was practiced with her and she was subjected to ill treatment. Kamble was a teacher, yet she had to suffer at the hands of the casteist Hindus. In this context, Bhagwan Das, a noted Ambedkarite intellectual, emphasizes the same point by articulating his understanding about the typical mindset of non-Dalit Hindus, who cannot tolerate the goodness, welfare and progress of the Dalits. If the Dalits wish to take part in any correct, good and honourable activity, they are never allowed by the non-Dalits to do so. Here, Das, exposing the cunning and crafty strategy of the non-Dalit Hindus, says, "Anything which the untouchables consider good for them is vehemently resisted

and opposed. Whatever goes to make them weak, dispirited, disunited and dependent is encouraged...” (109). A similar story of Pawar could be seen in *Aydan* when she was discriminated against in public places after she had become a government employee.

Suffering at the Hands of the Husbands

Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha points out Kamble’s irresponsible husband used to harass her. Her husband was indifferent towards her. He did not care for her at all though he was a teacher. He had a wife, yet he got married to another woman. He did not think of his first wife, Kamble herself. In addition, when Kamble had gone back to her parents’ house because of a problem in his family, he accused her of stealing ornaments from his house and lodged a complaint against her with the police. This was how he created problems for her and gave her mental torture. Likewise, *Aydan* shares Pawar’s story of suffering at the hands of her jealous, insensitive and insensible husband, who tried to stop Pawar from getting highly educated and became the root of the problem for her. Pawar did not get necessary cooperation from her husband. He was opposed to Pawar’s progressive thinking and activities in society because he was a male chauvinistic person. He hurled abuses at her whenever he got angry with her on account of her social activities. He did not like her getting higher education, especially post graduation because he was jealous of her as she was going to get higher education than him. This point is emphasized by Pawar’s eldest daughter. She writes, “He feels bad because Aayi got educated, she got fame.” (Translation Mine) (259)

Dissimilarities Between Pawar and Kamble at Schools, Workplaces and Marriages

Aydan portrays an episode in which the non-Dalit Hindu teachers made Pawar run errands for them at schools. Those teachers unhesitatingly forced her to do all kinds of mundane manual labour for them which was equal to capitalist exploitation. Pawar could not avoid doing menial work which her teachers asked her to do. If she avoided doing so, she would be harassed mercilessly. To Corroborate this point similar experience of Aravind Malagatti, a Kannada Dalit autobiographer, at school can be shared here. Malagatti recalls, “Do you know what the offences were that deserved such severe punishments? Not that we did not do our homework; nor were we untidy. The reason was that we skipped sweeping the classroom sometimes before the morning prayers at school. It was mandatory that we, friends from the lane, should come early to the school and sweep it fully!” (14) The above quoted lines reveal that the Dalit students were made almost bonded labourers at their schools. However, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* does not have any episode in which the non-Dalit Hindu teachers at Kamble’s school were unnecessarily caste conscious and sadistic while dealing with her.

Pawar had to face discrimination, humiliation and mental torture at the hands of her colleagues at the place of her work and that too in a cosmopolitan space like Mumbai. On the other hand, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkath* provides a different version of the lifestyle of the non- Dalit teachers, who were her colleagues and did not practice casteism at all.

Aydan then points out that Pawar did not get cooperation from the non-Dalit women when it came to confront the caste discrimination. Even though, Pawar’s neighbour, a non-Dalit Hindu woman was a domestic servant, she did not hesitate to show her casteist nature. Pawar was humiliated and her relationship was disconnected by the non-Dalit domestic maid when she came to know about Pawar’s caste. It was discrimination against a Dalit woman made by an ordinary non-Dalit woman. Not only was she illtreated by her neighbour, but she was subjected to indignities by her landlady also, who was a member of the Municipality of Ratnagiri district. How a struggling Dalit woman could be in trouble

may be understood in the words of Khanderaoji Kale, a scholar, “Along with men upper caste women do not accept the leadership of a woman if she is from a backward class. This way, the woman is caught in double trouble.” (Translation Mine) (08) But one can hardly see instances of non-Dalit ladies being discriminatory against Kamble in *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*.

Eventually, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* exposes how Kamble as a Dalit woman was doubly marginalized—first as a woman and then as a Dalit. She was considered an inferior human being. She was made to feel inferior by the casteist and patriarchal society. Among Kamble’s relatives, women, including Kamble, had to eat bread of jowar collected from dung lumps of bulls, while men were given bread of better quality. Kamble describes, “Akka would offer bhavaji and her son pieces of bread of good quality to eat. Akka, I, and her daughters ate pieces of bread made from the undigested grains retrieved from dung.” (Translation Mine) (58) Kamble was an educated girl, yet she was not intimidated about her marriage. In other words, she had no role to play in the process of her own marriage. However, *Aaydan* shows an opposite picture of Pawar’s life; whenever possible, Pawar managed to challenge the norms and practices of the patriarchal life style and even went to the extent of choosing her own life partner.

Emancipation and Uplift of Kamble and Pawar and their Participation in Education, Job and Activism

Both *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* and *Aaydan* show the fact that thanks to Ambedkar’s revolutionary activities all the Untouchables got liberated and began to make progress in their lives. They got opportunities to get educated. Pawar and Kamble were educated Dalit women. During their childhood, adolescence, and adult lives, they went through several ordeals in the names of phenomena like untouchability, caste discrimination, etc. But, since they got free and educated, they began to uplift themselves and develop their personalities. These autobiographies further describe that the atmosphere was quite adverse for women to make progress and uplift themselves. Despite such situation, Kamble got educated. She was the only girl student in her class not only from the Dalit community but from the non-Dalit community also. In fact, Kamble was a very good student. In her student days, there was no electricity at her home, yet she studied in the light of a lamp. Kamble participated in cultural programmes at her school. Later on, she became a teacher and retired as an education officer. Kamble was a social activist with the Ambedkari consciousness. She tried her best to create awareness about education among the Dalits in the village where she had been working. She even took special classes for women. She was instrumental in getting her children highly educated. Her eldest son, Arun Kamble, became a professor at Mumbai University. Afterwards, he established himself as a social and political leader. Her daughter also became a professor.

Likewise, Pawar also pursued all her education by going against all odds. Pawar began to make money for herself. She herself chose her life partner. Even if her family members were opposed to her marriage with her lover, she remained adamant and married the lover only. Later, she became a government employee and developed as a well-known litterateur. She worked as a determined social activist in Mumbai along with Meenakshi Moon, her fellow social activist. Along with her co-social activists she conducted a Dalit Women Literary Convention. In this connection, Pawar says, “The literary festival which we conducted at Vartak Hall in Mumbai in May 1987 was the first Dalit women festival in Maharashtra; also, it should be the first one in India.” (Translated Mine) (234) Pawar is a story writer as well. She is the co-author of the book called *We Also Made History: Women in the*

Ambedkarite Movement. She is a hardcore Ambedkarite, feminist, and intellectual. More importantly, she has been a better Ambedkarite and Buddhist than her husband.

Conversion

As both the autobiographical protagonists Kamble and Pawar were immensely influenced by Ambedkar, they renounced caste-based Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. When Ambedkar urged his supporters and followers to do so in order to get rid of discrimination, untouchability and deprivation of all sorts of opportunities, in 1956, Kamble converted to Buddhism when she was quite adult and Pawar's family embraced it when she was twelve years old. They began to practice Buddhism. Their cultural activities changed. They started celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti for the first time in their lives.

In short, both Kamble and Pawar were born into the families of slaves. But today one can see them encountering the crafty and inhuman oppressors and challenging the long-held beliefs. They have surpassed their husbands in creating an egalitarian society. They have succeeded in their individual lives. Their contribution to emancipating a number of Dalit individuals particularly women is remarkable. Ultimately, we find these Dalit ladies Kamble and Pawar to become iconoclastic and revolutionary personalities in the Indian society.

Conclusion

To conclude the discussion, it is significant to note that the only difference between the failures and successes in the lives of slaves for emancipation and progress is the very absence and presence of the organic intellectuals like Jyotirao Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Narayan Guru, Periyar and Ambedkar. In other words, no organic intellectuals were present in the lives of Tom and Bakha to guide them to escape the slavery and attack it. However, Kamble and Pawar got enough and timely guidance and inspiration from the organic intellectuals to get rid of the clutches of casteism and patriarchy and uplift themselves.

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