

ISSN 0976-8165

*The Criterion*



# The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Bi-Monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access Journal

August 2013 Vol. 4 Issue IV

**Editor-in-Chief**

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[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)  
[criterionejournal@gmail.com](mailto:criterionejournal@gmail.com)

## **A Chastisement to the Marginalized- Addressing Fourth World in Kaveri Nambisan's *The Story that Must not be Told***

**A A Vijaya Jyothi**

Asst. Professor  
Anil Neerukonda Institute of  
Technology and Science (ANITS)  
Sanghivalasa,  
Visakhapatnam

“Languages are not merely a means of communication .They define and reflect the roots of our society,” said the president of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee in his speech at the Fourth world Telugu conference.<sup>1</sup>

The term fourth world refers to the pre-settler indigenous groups whose economic status and their oppressed conditions brings them to the edge of marginalized position and are placed in the lowest rung of the ladder in the political as well as social strata.

The term Fourth world has been coined by George Manuel and Posluns in his book ‘An Indian Reality’(1974).The expansion of Fourth World includes Dalits, Natives and Tribals of India who are poor, lead marginalized life than other communities.<sup>2</sup>

Control and abuse are the key words which delineate a colony in broad-spectrum and Fourth World scrupulously. The following paper explores the rootlessness of one among such unprivileged few who are the victims of postcolonial subalternization like the casteism, bonded labour, patriarchy, oppression, atrocities against the tribes.

Postcolonial literature seeks to tackle way non-European literature and cultures have been marginalized as a consequence of colonial rule and to find possible modes of resistance, retrieval, and reversal of their ‘own’ postcolonial pasts. It is a literature of confrontation, annoyance, remonstrance and anticipation.<sup>3</sup>

Colonisation is now defined by the ‘Oxford English Dictionary’ as an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak people by a larger power. It is identical to oppression, disparity, racial discrimination and abuse. The Indian characters in Indian English novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan deal with stories portraying the real picture of the then the social order from various perspectives, some writers depicted Indians in the US and other countries as exile and rootless as they lead dual life. The globalization has in fact led to racial discrimination which is prevalent in many countries. There is no exclusion even for few people who are at home as they too are the victims of alienation and encounter the predicament of dual identities. Such ambivalence produces existential angst in their psychology.

As Lorraine Hansberry quotes that: “One cannot live with sighted eyes and a feeling heart and not know and react to the miseries which afflict this world.”<sup>4</sup>

“Minority” implies a group that is victimized. This need not to be so. A dynamic minority has the potential to influence events, writes Kaveri Nambisan.

A stagnant society disregards minorities and trivializes the self. In their midst, the underprivileged are denied a decent livelihood and denied the chance to change it. Only small, committed groups and individuals with courage will bring about change. "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions," wrote playwright Lillian Hellman to the U.S. Congress during the infamous witch-hunt of the McCarthy era. The U.S. is urgently in need of more Lillian Hellmans as we are in need of Teesta Setalvads.<sup>5</sup>

Can a person be exiled in his own motherland? Can a person be rootless in his own country? Deprived of civil liberties which are the constitutional rights of any human being, for his only sin of being born as an untouchable.

The Indian Writers portrayed this evil as an individual is affected by the social scene in the country. This has been a main focus since the pre-independence days which they tried to show forth the impact on society by a blind adherence to institution which has endowed an Indian with its confining caste systems and the Master – slave relationship. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and even contemporary writers like Arundhati Roy and Kaveri Nambisan dealt with this issue.

Mulk Raj Anand (The Untouchable and The coolie) is the most strident of all the writers who interpreted the social evils most artistically with a happy sense of humor. His novels show suffering, inequality, poverty and exploitation of characters, which are weak and thoroughly Indian. Dr. Anand articulates his compassion for the victims of misunderstanding. Bakha in Anand's untouchable is a character who was in the clutches of social evils of untouchability. It is the story of a single day in Bakha, a toilet cleaner, who accidentally bumps into a member of a higher caste<sup>6</sup>.

Arundhati Roy depicts the fatal consequences of the inter-caste sexual relations in 'God of Small Things' between a low class man and caste less Christian. Kaveri Nambisan contemporary writer also addressed the same in 'The Story that Must not be Told' which speaks about the life of a sweeper boy, Thatkan who loses his life while cleaning the sewage.

Arundhati Roy portrays the ultimate result of adoring a high caste woman and how for this transgression Velutha was made to compensate with his life.

Leslie Fiedler writes: What is called "Love". Love in literature is a rationalization, a way coming in terms with the relationship between man and woman that do justice, on the one hand, to certain biological drives and, on the other, to certain generally accepted conventions of tenderness and courtesy; and literature, expressing and defining these conventions. Leads to influence "real life" more than such life influences it.<sup>7</sup>

Mulk Raj Anand, speaking about the real test of the novelist, once said:

It may lie in the transformation of words into prophesy. Because, what is writer if he is not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his own torments, urges and exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations and aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient powers of expression, transmutes in art all feeling, all thought, all experience - thus becoming the seer of a new vision in any given situation. (qtd. in Dhawn, 14)<sup>8</sup>

In ‘The Story That Must not be Told’, Rashmi listened to the members of association. Sitara the slum caused filth, bad odours and noise. It let loose criminal minded urchins in the guise of workers into some of the Vaibhav apartments. Something had to be done about it.

Bacqua says is it wonder that the beggar who accepts your win and touches it to his forehead has nothing but hatred for you? Or the shudra woman who cleans your toilet mentally spits in your face every time she says, ‘Vanakam Aiyya’.

The contemporary writers focused on this intimidation which crumbles the democracy of our nation which we are proud of. Casteism is the threat that Indian society is infested with and which is not found anywhere else in the world.

In ‘The Story That must not be told’, Kittan, father of Thatkan got the job of unblocking the main sewer for the Boy’s Hostel in Chepauk. This required two men to undertake the work: one to climb the man hole and the other to guide him with a light and to hand him the bottle of acid and bleaching powder until the block was cleared. At times, the man inside had to wade waist deep in sewage to dig out the muck and he carried the stink for days and even his family would shun him. The payment was only two hundred rupees and two bottles of arrack. Kittan decided to undertake this with the help of his son Thatkan. Despite pleading his father many times and so Thatkan had to go into the hole. His father said, “Keep going ... our food comes from other people’s shit, don’t forget.

Kittan guided the boy with commands, threats and abuse. The torch gave off a weak light and was not of much use. He wanted him to finish the job before sunset. Suddenly he lost his footage while he was trying to take the bottle of acid from his father and slid of into the sewage. He was found some thirty meters away from the sweeper’s colony.

Thatkan an intelligent boy who stood first in the class, the boy who took care of his bed-ridden mother and who could have been a role model to the society was no more.

Arundhati Roy ‘In God of Small Things’, describes the fate of a Paravan for loving Ammu. He was accused falsely of kidnapping and killing a small girl Sophie Mol and for the attempt of molesting three were all alone when Chacko the male member was out of station.

They did not tear out his hair or burn him alive. They didn’t hack his genitals and stuff them in his mouth. They didn’t rape him. Or behead him.

His skull was fractured at three places. His nose and both his cheek bones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth has spilt open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverted his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered; one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The blood on his breath bright red. Fresh, frothy. His lower intestine was ruptured and hemorrhaged the blood collected in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged in two places; the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his knee caps were shattered. Still they put the hand cuffs. He could not walk so they dragged him.

“After all they were not battling an epidemic. They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak”( Nair 209).

Baqua says in 'The Story That Must Be Told', 'It is absurd to think that by indoctrinating a few like us, you can change the society. How about the government, the big business houses? They have power and money. They will find you.'

There are terrorists who kill for fanatic causes. Soon there will be terrorists who cannot bear the burden of poverty. And you know they do not discriminate. Can't you see they are giving you a chance? Pacing up and down he says that the world has a thousand sitaras. The future depends on who recruits this army' (Nambisan143).

Rashmi told Simon, "Appu, you must try to understand what's happening here. There are frightening reports about the slum. I beg you not to waste your generosity on criminals."

The protagonist Simon tries to explain the residents of Vaibhav that without these people and their services our sustenance is difficult. We feel we can but we can not. If they are relocated to a new place and if they do agree to go away, we have to pay extra money for transporting them each day (223).

Sitara was built the migrant laborers came because decent citizens like us can have homes. They were paid so that they could eat and have strength for the next day to resume work of carrying bricks and cement, to mount stairs and burn slowly in the Sun and breathe dust instead of air so that noble arcades, silky corridors, balconies and bay windows with potted anthuriums could come up.

Now the residents were thinking of protecting the environment for which getting rid of the slum is necessary. The residents of Vaibhav wanted a three acre eco-park with landscaped sensuous water bodies, a swimming pool and a gym to be built in the place of the slum which was the shelter for the poor.

'The Story that Must not be Told', The story of the slum Sitara and the life of the people who do not exist for anyone, whose existence is only at the mercy of the 'Rich', the residents of Vaibhav apartments. The poor are too many in search of work, food and shelter. The rich use them to build their houses, clean their houses and their shit but fail to recognize that they are also human beings like them. A right to live in peace is what they require. Simon the protagonist tries to help the slum dwellers but the residents of Vaibhav were against it. They branded the slum dwellers as thieves and criminals who had no right to be favored. Their disagreement led Simon to abandon his social work. So he says he has to lick his wounds. And decides that when it stops hurting and when he is whole he would go back to Swami, Chellam, Prince and especially to Velu who lost his best friend Thatkan, who would tell him why heaven is a yellow flower because this story is not for telling but to act upon.

To the question in an interview whether Bakha's position changed after 50 years? Dr. Mulk Raj Anand says 'In *Untouchable*' Bakha becomes aware but is not shown to be doing very much about it. But in '*The Road*' Bikhu, is caught in a situation where he has to fight back. This struggle is now going on in all part of India .

The Marxists in India have overlooked the problem of casteism. Marxism has to have an original interpretation in India , because most of the Harijans are not caste Hindus, and the recent



murders of the untouchables were committed by the landlords who wanted the Harijans to come to work who refused to do on the basis of payment in kind, they wanted payment in cash. They fought back and the caste Hindus murdered them.

The conversion of the untouchability into the ostracism of a class of people (workers) itself shows the conversion to at least 60% a class phenomenon. This is very much evident in Karnataka. Unfortunately this great emancipative movement in other parts like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat has not been taken up by the Communist parties. Maybe that is inevitable that in India the class war will not be fought purely as a class war, but as a much more important war of the oppressed of all kinds against the oppressors who include not only the top of Mrs. Gandhi's government, but include many of the opposition parties who claim to gain power. Because the party of Charan Singh the Lok Dal is the party of the upper caste people. In the voting in Haryana recently they showed their true colours. In relation to them Mrs. Gandhi's party seems to me progressive, but I'd say the solution of this thing may lay in the kind of social democracy which is emerging in Bengal. The Communists of Bengal have shown the way by which they can combine the two struggles.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

“Where there is no vision people perish: but he that kept the law, happy is he.” (Proverbs 29:18)

Felony and belligerent demeanor regardless is the outcome of distorted mind which is cantankerous to the sustenance of humanity. Therefore religion is the only concoction to address such distortion and purge away such a transgression. Revelation to virtuous doctrine sets the mind to descend in righteous path by illuminating the constricted mind. So it is the commitment or apparition of a religion to obliterate such social evils which destroys humanity and does not allow us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This novelist portrays identity- crisis of a section- ‘The tribes and the poor’

A story teller is like a prophet who narrates the history of community but critiques it through social annotations through his writings he cautions, advises and guides his community so is Arundhati Roy and Kaveri Nambisan who shows different shades of human temperament. A community is thus built through imaginative connections. Kaveri Nambisan's novels are an excellent example of magnificent picturisation of different levels of subjugations.

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