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Representation of Cultural Trauma :A Comparative Study of  
*Anand's Untouchable* and Murugan's *Season of the Palm*

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## Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “Representation of Cultural Trauma :A Comparative Study of *Anand’s Untouchable* and Murugan’s *Season of the Palm*”, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Santa Maya Bishwakarma has been approved by the undersigned members of the thesis Research Committee.

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## *Abstract*

*Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable and Perumal Murugan's Season of the Palm deal mainly with caste discrimination, economic inequalities, superstition and children exploitation to awake social consciousness in India. Caste system affects the moral, social, cultural, psychological and even aesthetic values of the outcaste people in the society. The conflict of caste system is not resolved but the possibility of a solution in future is hinted out in both novels. The cultural trauma is mainly applied to clarify the transgression of the lower caste characters, Bakha and Shortie. This type of trauma shapes different societies and exposes the way victims cope up with it afterwards. The decision of Bakha to listen the speech of Gandhi and his keen interests on the conversation between poet and lawyer is an attempt to overcome the cultural trauma of the pre-independent India. Likewise, Shortie's decision to leave his Master's house after getting punishment is an attempt to overcome the cultural trauma of the independent India which shows the possibility of social change. The research concludes with the finding that the two novelists have not only represent the marginalized position of so called untouchables but also provide agency for progressive consciousness.*

**Keywords :** Cultural Trauma, Collective Identity, Traumatic realism, Caste Based Slavery System

The present research entitled “Representation of Cultural Trauma :A Comparative Study of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* and Perumal Murugan’s *Season of the Palm*” to demonstrate the psychological and emotional wound of the characters. Anand’s novel was published in 1935 and Murugan’s was in 2004. Despite, there is more than sixty years’ gap between these two novels. Both the novels show the realistic picture of Indian society or attempt to sketch the system of casteism. This system is dominated by cruel higherclass people with absolute power and brutality. Perumal Murugan has presented pain, suffering of the outcaste children relating them first to the traditional cultural beliefs, superstitions, customs and rituals, in second, the diabolic forces of the modern corrupt society in the name of caste system. On the other hand, Anand traces the Anglo-Indian society and describes a range of scenarios that effectively highlight every single aspect of an untouchable person’s life is affected by rigid hierarchies of the caste system.

Anand’s novel narrates the story of a day in the life of the outcaste, Bakha. It presents suffering, anxiety and humiliations of Bakha’s life. The story is set in the town of Bulashah. Bakha, a hero of the novel begins his day with cleaning of latrines of high castes as well as British colony. Bakha does not live in bungalows but in poor huts. One day, he goes into town to sweep the ways and he accidentally brushes up against the high caste man. The man hits Bakha because he has been touched by untouchable person. Bakha walks to the temple where he sees the priest accusing her sister Sohini for polluting him. The priest tries to sexually abuse her. He tells his father and his friends about the high caste man who hits him. After the incident, Bakha remembers his hockey stick and goes to get it. He joins a game of street

hockey to take revenge of his humiliation in the street by high caste man. His father throws him out of his house because he has been lost all the afternoon. Bakha takes shelter under a tree after throwing out from the house. Afterwards, Bakha listens to a speech of Mahatma Gandhi, speaks with the Christian Priest and also observes the conversation of two highly educated Indians about untouchability. Bakha understands a little about the conversation between two people that the flush toilet will soon be brought to India. He feels a surge of hope and rushes home to tell his family what he has heard. Bakha experiences distressing events like beating, scolding, discrimination and extreme poverty in the society.

Similarly, Muruganis an Indian author and scholar who writes in Tamil language. He recounts the everyday brutality of Dalit community of South India. *Season of the Palm* is his third novel, translated into English language by V. Geeta which was nominated for Kiriyaama Prize in 2005. His novels, short stories and other writings are classified as regional writing, evoke the sense and sounds of farmer life in Tamil Nadu. In the novel, he explains the story of Shortie, an untouchable lad in bondage to a powerful landlord. It narrates the Zamindari system, struggle of the child and everyday humiliation of untouchability. Shortie is a young teen protagonist of the novel. He herds his Gounder's goats, takes care of all his goats, cleans his cow pen, works at his home even at night. He faces lots of hardship in the landlord's house. If anything wrong happens to goats and cows, Shortie and other untouchable children get punishment by their masters. With lots of physical works and very less to eat, Shortie and his other friends become expert in finding food from nature. Nobody from the land owner's family is allowed to touch any part of the Chakkili (untouchable) boys but the children of their masters secretly come and play with them. One day, Shortie is caught stealing coconuts of his landlord's enemy field. After

that he is hanged upside down in the well. This incident has a strong effect on his mind and tries to run away from this master's house. He came back thinking of the fine that his parents have to pay to the Master. He also thinks about his little brother who will have to work in his place.

Caste has been dominate subject in India. The inhuman, savage and dirty practice of caste system is still prevailed almost everywhere in Indian society. It has been most dehumanizing activities over suppressed community. Anand and Murugan are both eminent Indian writers, notable for their depiction of the lives of the poorer caste in traditional Indian society. Anand presents suffering of people caused by such problem as casteism, the realistic picture of the 1930s' during which Indian was struggling for independence whereas Murugan depicts the bussiness of innocence or abusing of child for manual work, after the independence. Therefore, the humiliation, physical exploitation and mental agonies of the untouchables are clearly depicted throughout the novels.

The research project excavates the condition of the human life, caused by trauma. Trauma is the result of dreadful event. Including both protagonists Bakha, Shortie and other characters face psychological or mental trauma which is majorly caused by the casteism. Though they are innocent and do not involve in any kind of negative works, they become victim of the casteism. The difficulties faced by the central characters of the both novels could be studied through the cultural trauma theory. The main focus of the study is to explore the consequences of castieism in Indian society and analyze the texts from the lense of cultural trauma.

They focus on what makes it able for human to expose cruelty upon others. Anand and Murugan use the characters of Bakha and Shortie to depict how the domination over people affect the personal lives, how these psychological defenses

negatively affect not only personal life but also in the society. It also focus on how unpleasant memory create lifelong effect in personal lives. At last, it presents how the problem of untouchability can be understood as a case of an emergent trauma process. Moreover, the researcher tries to present the tension of the caste system of Indian society as presented in both the novels dramatically. It addresses the question related with the evil and dehumanized practices of higher caste's people upon outcaste people from which people have been mentally suffering.

Actually, this is not the study of the casteism as presented in both novels. This means researcher not study the problem of casteism that argues for an ontological reality. What is of interest is not what actually happen to the outcaste, rather, how the major issue "untouchability" of these novels are connected with cultural trauma. I intend to use specific elements of the cultural trauma theory as it formulated by theoriest. Cultural trauma interest is purely epistemological.

Anand's *Untouchable* and Murugan's *Season of the Palm* have been interpreted from different perspectives by many critics. Both novels dealwith the issue of untouchability caused by traditional belief and caste system that are emotionally painful and distressing. The painful experience overwhelm people's ability to fight with the harmful situation. These novels present the breakdown of the psychological makeup of those who are directly affected by the untouchable system. There is the possibility of the emergence of depressive mentality in hostile situation, which is explored and analyzed in the Indian context.

In this case, Dr. KanaklataTiwari, a criticin *Untouchable*,Anand portrays a picture of untouchable system. It brought to him prestige and immense popularity because of the realistic representation of down trodden society. Anand raises the problem of the oppression, suffering, pain, humiliation of the outcaste system.

Commenting on the novel, he asserts:

In his realistic portrayal of the novel 'Untouchable', Anand is concerned with the sufferings of the masses i.e. Shudra- sweepers and his wish to bring about social happiness in their lives and to register his protest against the evil in the social system of Hindus as well ... He describes the pathetic conditions of the untouchables through the character Bakha, their immitigable hardships and physical and mental agonies almost with the meticulous skill of historical raconteur. (9-10)

Considering Tiwari's perspective the title of this novel suggests that it explores the realistic picture of Indian society. Bakha, the protagonist of the novel is a victim of suffering just because of his lower caste. Through the characters, he presents anguish and exploitation due to whole outcaste system in India. So, Bhakha is a universal figure to show the reality of outcaste system during the time in pre-independence of India.

Similarly, another critic, Shashi Yadav argues, Bakha's helpless, anger, anxiety, frustration, agony to the degree that he becomes embodiment of his own creation. The following lines convey Yadav's view point on the core content of *Untouchable*:

Mulk Raj Anand's commitment to reveal the deep-rooted social malice in the Indian society made him to create Bakha. He wanted to show the youth's unique sensitiveness as against the people of the upper caste who thought merely touching him is degradation. He meant symbolically to show that such small tenderness among people in private life or the catharsis of human existence. Bakha is a real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometime weak, and thoroughly Indian. Even his physiques distinctive, we can recognize broad intelligent face, graceful torso. (47)

It would be fair to say that it highlights the condition of inhumanity faced by poor people in Indian society. Bakha becomes victim of systemic oppression who experience the trauma of persecution in ways that are unique due to the complex cultural and social environment prevailing in his community.

Characters of this novel are trapped between traditional thought and modernity. They stand for social change for transition from the old to new. On the other hand, they are fighting with an identity dilemma which include inner conflict and resistance due to domination of caste and colonial systems. Commenting on the novel Sumit Shankar exposes:

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* offers opportunities to introduce and explore a variety of theoretical, historical, and ethical issues. A canonical text of Indian writing in English, the novel presents a day in the fictionalized life of a Dalit ("untouchable") boy in colonial India. As such, it is situated aesthetically in the triangular tension between colonial modernity, Gandhian nationalism, and Ambedkarite anti-caste radicalism. *Untouchable* enables rich discussions in relationship to these aspects through contextualization and comparison. (333)

It is clear from the observation of Shankar that Anand presents suffering of lower class people under the pressure of outdated oppressive tradition of caste system as well as under the British rule. Due to the old age practises of discrimination on the basis of caste system, an untouchable boy, Bakha suffers under the burden of slavery system.

Likewise, Murgun's novel is the novel of the protest against rigid system of caste. The exploitation and the repression inflicted upon the lower castes are the worst alarming concern of the writer. Seline Augustine urges,

PerumalMurugan's book may be seen as a response to the genre of Dalit literature, a literature of protest, resistance and subversion. He recounts the everyday brutality of caste society in relentless detail. Murugan writes as a critical insider, being from a dominant caste. His art both records as well as indicts the inhumanity he grew up with. It is a reality whose cruelty insists on being written about, as it were. Shortie life is hard. He is in bondage to his landlord, herding his goats, working in his field and home. The lovingly drawn young-teen protagonist finds himself sandwiched between an oppressive working life and a happy dream world. (320)

It is clear from the observation of Augustine that the horror and the interface in the life of the untouchable people come to fore every day when something wrong happen and these people prepare themselves to take the punishment. Therefore, Shortie is narrative of pain and sorrow, despair and hope, helplessness and anger, violence and resistance.

Due to their caste and their poverty, lower castes people curse and abuse every hour, beaten and rejected every day. One has to fight for his/ her identity in the society. Literature becomes the medium for those people who want to raise voice against inequality between people in the society. The following lines conveys Ms Daisy's view point on the core content of *Untouchable*:

Progressive creative literary writing in many Indian languages attract the writers of a variety of communities to focus on the inhuman treatment of the lower caste in India. Some of these writers like PerumalMurugan, however, excel in their narratives by providing authentic descriptions, plots and stories using the powerful native dialect of Dalit communities. (12)

It is fair to say that torture and brutality of fictional characters in the novel refers to

the brutality of the lower caste people of India. The suffering of the poor has a universal significance. The suffering is worse than the suffering of animals.

The narrow- mindedness and insensitivity that create problems to the people. At the heart of these novels lie the suffering of lower caste people who are the victims stranded in the futile reality of Anand's and Murugan's fictional cities of India. Most of the critics pay their concern on deeply rooted caste systems and inhuman activities of Indian society. However, these novels chronicle engagement of characters in their social-cultural trauma. This research aims to search causes and consequences of cultural trauma in these novels. The theory of cultural trauma was first developed at Stanford University's Center for advance study and developed into a core research interest under the caption of cultural sociology. As such, this research makes use of different theoretical elements from the works of Jeffery C. Alexander, Roy Eyerman, Aarelaid-Tart, and other popular theorists of cultural trauma.

Alexander Jeffery and Roy Eyerman are the prominent theorists of cultural trauma. Cultural trauma is an empirical scientific concept. It is shared by certain group of people and their experience that are represented through various institutional arenas. It is closely related with culture. A single cultural people have common experience. So it is a type of common or collective experience that stands for particular community and group. It is quite similar to individual trauma. Ron Eyerman explains cultural trauma as:

The notion of cultural trauma implies that direct experience of an event is not a necessary condition for its inclusion in the trauma process. It is through time delayed and negotiated recollection that cultural trauma is experienced, a process which places representation in a key role. How an event is remembered is intimately entwined with how is represented. Here the means

and media of representation are crucial, for they bridge the gap between individuals and between occurrence and its recollection. Social psychological studies provide grounds. (12)

It is fair to say that the definition of Eyerman focuses upon shared/ common experience or history that includes people may not have gone through same experience and knowledge but such common experience evokes such emotion and feeling in group and community. Therefore, collective experiences have a kind of similar base that develops a kind of solidarity among people and communities.

In this way, cultural trauma is the matter of representation because one may not have such traumatic experience but could understand feeling and emotion of traumatized person. One generation can suffer from such traumatic experience but same experience can not be found in next generation however they are represented through various types of medium and people can feel same experience. Alexander Jeffery urges:

Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. Although this may be a catalyst factor it is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors decide to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go. (10)

Definitely, cultural trauma is the subject of collective experience. The dreadful and terrible events are remain in human psyche as an external memories. Such deeply attached memories are consciously and uncounsciously re-emerged through various means of representations. Moreover, Alexander adds, "trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (2). By observing Alexander's comment on cultural trauma, we can say that, trauma is socially

constructed attribution.

Nachman Ben-Yehuda, a professor of Hebrew university, comments on the notion of cultural trauma that was developed by Alexander Jeffery. The difference between events and socially constructing events are the reason for the social process of creating a cultural trauma. He urges,

... this trauma as structured by claims making activity, carrier groups, audience and situations, classification and constructing a master narrative focusing on the nature of the pain, the nature of the victim, the relation of the victim's trauma to the audience and an attribution of responsibility. The traumas are further structured by institutional arenas which include religion, aesthetic, mass media, state bureaucracies, and lastly identity revision memory and routinization. (3)

Yehuda analyzes the long-lasting effects of traumatic shock unleashed by different institutional arenas. Not only individual memory and social memory but also institutional arenas are the dynamic process of continuous change in people's life. Collective memories are the agents who function as carrier of trauma. Carrier groups, media, religion etc are the collective agents of the trauma process.

Trauma is rooted in post-independent society of India. It creates detrimental and fatal consequences. The effect of trauma in human psyche is unimaginable and unbearable. It has very negative and terrible effects upon human mind. Normally, physical trauma is taken as physical loss or caused by an overwhelming event. It can be repaired at times but the subject can not be assimilated in rational terms. But the psychic trauma has destructive power in human being. The notion of psychic trauma to public notice by the works of Sigmund Freud. His notion of traumatic neurosis is still found in contemporary trauma critics such as Cathy Caruth and Roger Lukurst.

Luckhurst defines psychological trauma as, “something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by usual mental processes. We have, as it were, nowhere to put it and so it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in the mind like an intruder or ghost”(499).

Luckhurst focuses on the belatedness of the traumatic experience. This idea of Luckhurst is related with the idea of Freud. Freud asserts that, “the original traumatic event takes place without the traumatized subject noticing it” (qtd. Silvia.60).

Mental wounds often can remain long time upon human mind or such catastrophic and unexpected events built room of human mind. Unpleasant events, violence and painful experiences are deeply attached by those wounds whereas human mind is guided. Again, Freud adds:

the repression and failed ‘abreaction’ of this first shocking event as the origin of the posterior development of hysterical neurosis ... the time that elapsed between accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the ‘incubation period’, a transparent illusion to the pathology of infectious disease ... It is a feature one might term latency. (qtd. in Silvia.59-68)

The notions of psychic have become foundational for trauma studies, as Luckhurst remarks that “this two stage theory of trauma, the first forgotten impact making a belated return after hiatus, has been central to cultural trauma theory” (8).

Considering Luckhurst’s view upon trauma studies, he has drawn the ideas of Freud to explore the ideas of belatedness. The effects of traumatic experience are not easy to understand during the period of traumatic event. But the traumatic events return as a repressive movement after a sudden lapse of time.

Trauma is related in the series of events but not necessarily in their direct experience. Such traumatic experience mediated through books, media, newspapers,

television etc. which involves a temporal and spatial distance between its experience and the events. Therefore, cultural trauma is quite different than personal trauma. It always engages, a grappling with an events that the nature of the victim and pain. In literature, trauma theory has been applied in the ‘memoirs of Holocaust and war veterans’ but this research aims to explore the traumatic experience caused by the caste based slavery systems as a whole for untouchables.

To begin, I provided some short description on caste system. Caste system is a historical truth as well as a reality of modern day of India. The dominant Hindu society was divided into several castes, organized around their occupations in ancient India. The members are divided into four groups Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Those people (Shudra) who put outside the caste system were severely depressed and oppressed to the margin of the society. Untouchables are the people who fall outside of the caste system. Untouchables are still forced to live outside the boundaries of the village where people of upper castes are resided in Indian society. According to the Omprakash Valmiki,

there was hope that the wave of change sweeping Indian society during and after the struggle for independence from British rule would liberate the Untouchables and grant them a life of equality and dignity, but Dalits today remain hostage to the oppression of caste, even though untouchability was legally abolished in 1949. (17)

The word “Dalit” as Valmiki includes, is adopted by the untouchables of India but encompasses all victims of trauma. The word itself is painful. Due to extreme poverty, lower caste people are obliged to remain bondage to the high caste people’s house in modern India.

Caste based slavery is based on work that is carried on for generations by the

members of the same groups and caste. This form of slavery is closely related to Hindu religion and caste based social relation. It is fair to say that it affects Dalits as a sub-social group in Indian community. The similar form of caste based slavery and discrimination exist not only in South Asia but also in some countries of Africa like, Niger, Mali etc. It is old form of slavery system. It is embedded in traditional blind fate and beliefs as a result of long lasting brutality against the most miserable groups in society such as poor, low caste and tribal people. The UN Human Rights Council (2009) states on the contemporary forms of slavery that “ILO research shows a clear link in Asian countries between forced labour and long-standing patterns of discrimination. In India, the overwhelming majority of bonded labour victims in agriculture, brick making, mining and other sectors are from scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes” (A/HRC/12/21). Untouchability is the burning problem and reality in Indian social system. It has made a large number of people victim of exploitation, physical and verbal abuse.

Slavery or bondage system is a cultural marker. The social condition of slavery which all untouchable in India either feared in the period of pre- independence and post-independence have been transformed into a symbolic situation affecting all the outcaste people. So, cultural trauma signifies on the basis of collective memory and particular events. Through which new generation of outcaste people could understand old history of caste based slavery and bondage system of outcaste people in India. It becomes the group identity by being the collective memory of certain group. In this connection, Ron Eyerman in his journal, says ‘Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity’ urges that “cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion’ (2). The cumulative effects of the

caste system on the community can be seen as collective trauma. First, the caste system that is traditionally based on Hinduism has left a tremendous impact on life of lower caste people. Many of lower caste people and their lives have been completely destroyed due to the bondage and slavery system.

Based on the trauma theory, this dissertation proceeds with the analysis of the characters' internal struggle, anxiety and displacement of identity focusing on the ethical and cultural implication of trauma in the explanation of these novels. One must know what 'identity' means in order to know how caste based slavery and discrimination of outcaste influence their sense of identity. According to the Kelman, identity refers to, "the enduring aspects of a person's definition of her- or him' self, the conception of who one is and what one is over time and across situations. Personal identity is "a cumulative product built up over a person's lifetime experiences"

(3). Talking about untouchables' identity, it always leads towards bondage and slavery systems of high caste people to outcaste. Outcaste makes them unified for making their identity.

Anand and Murugan demonstrate dehumanize effects of caste based slavery in their novels and the presence of higher castes in society that change their character's capability to form their own sense of self identity. The alienation the lower caste slave experience evoke into future generation by mutilating any hope of conforming relationships after attaining freedom and create mental obstacles, outcaste slaves should conquer in the future. Furthermore, these novels metaphorically show that Bakha's and Shortie's experiences are not their individual trauma but also the collective trauma of the outcaste people of India. Outcaste people saw themselves as participating in the different movements in India against high caste people for their independence and freedom. In this context, the analysis of Anand's *Untouchable* and

Murugan's *Season of the Palm* show lots of textual evidences to bolster the fact that psychosocial or cultural trauma lies at the heart of these novels.

Anand's and Murugan's characters moves constantly between individual and collective identities and trauma. Bodily injures such as, beating, abusing, humiliation based on rituals and physical torture are bound up with aspects of cultural identity. Cultural trauma as Alexander Jeffery defines it, "occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their identity in fundamental and irreversible ways" (1). He focuses upon the representation and narrativization of trauma whether it is national, cultural and psychological. Traumatic effects spread like wild fire because of the narrativization of cultural trauma. There are various specific moments in every collective memory. These moments are conjugated as turning points. As, both the writers present that caste matters not only in the collective cultural experience of outcaste in India, in the construction of group identity but also in the experience of the individuals. They depict untouchable condition and their history in their novel.

In *Untouchable*, Anand presents uncompromising or unyielding image of lower caste people, which always creates indelible impression within low caste people. His almost all novels such as; *Coolie*, *The Big Heart*, *Teo Leaves and a Bud* etc. raise the problem of untouchability, oppression of caste system, miserable condition of lower caste people, poverty, superstition, Hindu tradition and caste collective memory. He portrays the trauma of abusing, beating, not touching system and casteism violence that exist within the Indian community. In the preface of *Untouchable* E.M. Foster urges:

Untouchable could only have been written by an Indian, who observed from

the outside. No European, however sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha, because he would not have known enough about his troubles ... By caste he is a Kshatriya, and he might have been expected to inherit the pollution-complex. But as a child he played with the children of the sweepers attached to an Indian regiment, he grew to be fond of them, to understand a tragedy which he did not share. He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment, and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth. (7)

Much of the actions of this text show the reality of Indian society during 1930s. Anand himself was the witness of the caste discrimination. He presents his own memories about what he saw in the society. Anand shows those evidences or witness of outcaste people to the shame and trauma that exist in the lives of outcaste people who had undergone with similar experience. He demonstrates the painful and tragic incidences through the novel but it evokes common soul among outcaste people.

Anand presents desires, hopes, sorrows and pain of the lower caste people, poor families and the problems that man faces in twenty century in the novel. It has been able to draw the attention of the reader because Anand shows the pathetic condition of Bakha and other characters. Anand chooses his protagonist from the lower caste of society. Bakha cleans three rows of latrines every day. He does his duty with full dedication. The following lines describe Bakha's morning round duties with a pain staking; "a soft smile lingered on his lips, the smile of a slave overjoyed at the condescension of his master, more akin to pride than to happiness. The steady heave of his body from one laterine to another made the wispered refrain a fairly audible note" (Anand 9). Bakha is portrayed as smart, talented and intelligent human being. Because of the caste barriers, he is forced to serve the higher caste Hindu all his

life. He learns to play hockey so that he can defend himself from any beating on the street. These actions by Bakha demonstrate his social consciousness and his progressive movement.

Pain is the primary mode of conveying trauma. The narrative of this novel moves from physical terror to internal terror. Pain moves from external to internal; afflicts the body literally become the vent through which trauma reaches the soul of the victim. Trauma is the immediate local site of suffering. The psyche trauma is a deeper traumawhere the body of the victim is subject to changed. There is the direct results of experiencing physical suffering. That is 'traumatic realism'. "The very category/concept, 'traumatic realism', gestures at suffering, pain and (perhaps) atrocity with its first key term 'trauma'. Traumatic events 'shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others'"(qtd. in Herman 51).

Bakha exposes his emotional terror on several occasions through out the novel. It is obvious that a lot of characters like Bakha are found in reality. Bakha is the fictional representation of Indian community. Anand presents how a eighteen years old boy faces obstacles and humiliation in the city due to the caste barriers. The high caste man starts abusing Bakha for his presence near the advertising boards. Bakha pleads him but the man does not listen him. Suddenly, a huge crowd circles him and starts to abuse him for his actions. Lots of emotions and pain flow from crying Bakha who is accused by higher caste people for being sweeper or untouchable. The unkind, disloyal behavior of high caste man on the street torments Bakha's innocent mind. As Bakha explains:

All of them abused, abused, abused why are we always abused? The sanitary inspector that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it to... I am a

sweeper, sweeper-untouchable I am an untouchable! They think we are mere dirt, because we clean their dirt. (11)

Physical trauma for untouchable is the consequence of a larger social structure. The wounds on Bakha's body is instantiations of the violence of economy and traditional beliefs. Those wounds are traumatic events inscribed on the body of untouchable. It is fair to say that those wounds are merely symbolic of a larger trauma to untouchable as a whole. Again in the preface of *Untouchable*, E.M. Foster adds:

the sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion. (Anandvi)

It is needed to mention here that the sweepers are regarded as untouchable due to the filthy work they have to do. The so-called higher caste people believed that a touch by a sweeper would pollute them. The presence of the sweeper or untouchable was known to be a bad omen to the higher caste people. The high caste people always try to dominate, crush and exploit these untouchables due to their powerful social structure.

Psychological trauma is explained by Merton as "shock to the cultural tissue of a society, and presents a model of the traumatic sequence, describing typical conditions under which cultural trauma emerges and evolves" (31). He mentions that cultural trauma is treated as a connection in the ongoing chain of the social change. It depends on the number of factual portions. It may be a phase in the formative "morphogenesis of culture or in the destructive cycle of cultural decay" (84). One can say that patriarchal culture makes the way for the emergence of trauma that is tantamount of cultural trauma.

Verbal assaults transform into physical trauma through 'traumatic realism' in Anand's text. The insulting comments, beating and the upper castes' atrocities are the physical state of the untouchable. Bakha is insulted by the lady with bitter words while begging food; "You eater of your masters... You have defiled my house! Go! Get up, Why didn't you shout if you wanted food? You have defiled my religion! Now I will have to sprinkle holy water all over the house" (Anand 63). Anand presents the shame of higher caste people when two persons are begging food at the door step of higher caste's house, one is Sadhu and another is an untouchable, Bakha. Sadhu is treated with full devotion because his blessing will be important to them. Insulting comments and memory of the discrimination by the lady from higher caste continues to torture in Bakha's mind. Through the character in the novel, we can understand that not only a single person from lower caste but also entire community was victimized by the tradition beliefs of Hindu society, it's law and enforcers with the collaboration of the upper caste in pre-independence of India.

Michelle Balaev, in her books *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* provides a useful definition of trauma. She urges that there is common agreement between psychologists and psychiatrists that the traumatic experience can "disrupt or alter consciousness, memory, sense of self, and relation to community" (6). She notes, "trauma as a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society" (1). The scolding, beating and domination contaminate the souls of those who face the everyday brutality of caste system. In the novel, the narrator is heavily endangered to the countless numbers of brutality. All the forthcoming time of Bakha's life would be full of unexpected shock and sudden disorder. The inability of Bakha to return to the normal world is impacted in the consciousness of those who

faced the everyday humiliation of rigid caste system. The fate of the narrator stands as the suffering of those who are forcefully involved in the caste based slavery system.

Cultural trauma is made, not born. Neil Smelser comments on the difference between psychological and cultural trauma, “an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole” (38). Cultural trauma is the process of meaning making and an attribution in which various people and groups cope to define a situation and control it. Likewise, Alexander defines two sides of cultural trauma, an emotional experience and an interpretative reaction; “these forces are unlikely to create a trauma out of nothing; there is likely to be some powerful, shocking occurrence that creates the possibility, providing the opportunity to mobilize opinions and emotions” (6). Cultural trauma is discursive process by a dichotomy between victim and perpetrator. In modern societies, mass media and modern technology plays significant role in this interpretative process. In the other hand, shocks create emotion by breaking daily routines and as such, demand interpretation so, a well known individual can play a determinate role for opening a discursive process.

In *Season of the Palm*, Murugan focuses in his narrative by giving authentic descriptions and story providing the powerful native dialect of Dalit community. Set in the late 1960s, the novel presents a heart touching story of the untouchable children in such a village in Tamil Nadu. It projects the relationship between Gounder landlords and their Dalit servants. Beside portraying the caste based slavery, it projects the dream of an innocent boy shortie who is struggling to hold his existence in a world of brutal injustice. The untouchable children presented in the novel are the typical example of untouchables in India. A person who born on low caste categories has no rights in larger society outside their caste. Shortie and other children have no rights to

play, read etc in the novel. They are bonded in landlord houses for grazing goats and sheep due to their poverty. The following lines give exemplification of the caste based child labour in point. Murugan explains:

When Shorty and his herd of sheep enter the vast field outlying the village, the sun sits snug behind Karattur hills, reluctant to climb even that modest height. The earth is silent under a veil of thin light. Excited and hungry, the sheep set up a thick rustle as they scramble noisily into the harvested plots that lie scattered across the field. (1)

Murugan presents problem of Dalits of twenty century when India becomes a strong country. After Independence, social transformation brought positive changes in many communities of India. On that same century, many laws were made, some had changed, country was no longer under British rule. But, the caste based slavery system was still under the Hindu rule. Even in today, this system is still existed in various communities of rural part of south India where Dalit poverty is extremely high.

After independence of India, the group of untouchables protested for their rights, the event that left some positive response for sometime on the society as a whole, but failed to give all the proper conditions necessary for the untouchable. However, as Aarelaid-Tart argues, “Very often it is not the human bodies, but the world-view of a given collective that suffers in a collective trauma” (43). The notion of cultural trauma is basically given to a great number of death such as in war or murder of famous people. Indeed, the pain and suffering of one is very strong to create a trauma in a group of people but it is important to consider their consciousness. The narrative, Shortie is at one level fictional representative of real individual, he is also the narrative of a caste based society and a larger collective.

Therefore, it is not only individual but also an entire community that becomes victim. M.S. Daisy in her article, *Hoping Against Hope: A Discourse on Perumal Murugan's Season of the Palm* urges, "Shortie, the affectionately drawn character, resembles to every 'Chhotu' of roadside "dhabas" or small restaurants in North India, where no matter what he does, he gets the rebuking from his master. However, much the differences are, the people and their attitudes all over India seem to be the same" (17). Social changes are capable for causing cultural trauma in many societies. India has failed to offer the same opportunities to untouchable of rural part, causing anti social and rebellious individuals. The rebellion of Untouchables is represented in the novel *The God of Small Things* (1996) by Arundhati Roy. The untouchable, Velutha's family has served 'Ipes' a high caste family for generation. When Velutha's relationship with Ammu (a high caste girl) is discovered, he is banished from the society. Then, Velutha joins the city communist party to rebel against domination and discrimination. His movement is a response to the failure of social change of modern India to meet the untouchable's expectations.

Cultural trauma is related with negative consequences of changing society and its collective acknowledgement. Pioror Sztompka comments on the notion of 'trauma' in relation with social content, "the social agent's ability to cope with unfavorable social changes through recognition, its reactive creation of collective coping strategies and consequent establishment of a consistent social becoming" (124). According to lines of Sztompka, the social actors receive traumatic events consciously and their reacting focus in problem solving. Therefore, it gathers collective memory together with the cognitive communicative atmosphere that is developed around it.

Murugan's novel depicts suffering, pain and dreadfulness at both levels, physical and mental. The Dalit children in the novel, Shortie, Stonedeaf, Tallfellow,

Belly are economically poor and socially marginalized. They are very intelligent but helpless against their circumstances. Because of extreme poverty and their caste, they are abused every hour, beaten every second day and cursed everyday. They work in the field all day like grown ups. When something wrong happens in the work place, these children prepare themselves for beating as a punishment. The following lines convey a short description about the brutality. M.S. Daisy mentions:

Beside being Chakkilies, they are very poor. And this double trouble makes it a harsh life for these bonded children who have no sympathy from their own drunkard fathers and helpless mothers. The innocence and generosity of Shortie, the sauciness of Belly, the boldness of Tall fellow, the leadership of Stump leg and the beauty of Stonedeaf captures the reader's mind. (16)

Torture has a very strong capacity to stop the voice of the victims. Victims lack the ability to raise the voice about their identities and their rights. Children from the novel, quickly forget their verbal and physical abuse of their masters because they believe on the cycle of birth- death-rebirth based on their karma. Religion plays a vital role in the system of castism.

The entire village of Shortie represents the place where low caste people are affected by high caste unjust suppression. Characters in the novel attempt to escape from a high caste domination and create their own children's world while they are in the forest. "All these children struggle to keep their fragile happiness when they are together at the palm-dotted pastureland herding the goats. Happy moments include sitting together, playing some games together and the occasional adventures to go in search of something to fill in their empty stomachs"(Daisy 13). It has been seen that people of the low caste are afraid of high caste society. High caste people treat them as inferior people who are perceived as dirty. Children of this novel lose their own

identity and rights because of the bondage system in the society. They are searching their own identities and happiness far from the society where they can get freedom for some hours.

In this way, the researcher concludes with the finding that the novels under study have not only exposed the brutal reality about the marginalization of those from so called untouchable community but intend to raise the level of consciousness as represented by the characters Bakha and Shortie. Both novelists address the gap between event and representation as far as the system of untouchability is concerned.

Set in the historical background of Indian caste system as prevailed in the pre-independence time, the novels reflect upon the inequality, injustice, discrimination and exploitation as suffered by the people from untouchable community. The research explored these experiences of cultural trauma with help of the insights from trauma theorists. The experience of Bakha and Shortie shows the example of cultural trauma where their social and cultural identity has been frequently threatened and assaulted by different forms of physical torture as experienced by Shortie and Bakha.

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