

A Comparative Study of Social Pressure and Office Life: Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh's *Vipatra*

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Abstract: This research project conducts a comparative and translation-based inquiry into the representation of social injustice within Indian literature, focusing on Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh's *Vipatra* (1964). The study examines the evolution of the "Social Gaze"—the mechanism by which society monitors and marginalizes the individual—shifting from the physical caste boundaries of pre-independence India to the bureaucratic alienation of the post-colonial era. Central to this project is an original English translation of Muktibodh's *Vipatra* from its source Hindi. Utilizing Michel Foucault's theory of the "Panopticon" and Lawrence Venuti's framework of "Foreignization," the research argues that the structures of oppression have not vanished but have transitioned from the external village street to the internal institutional office. The study concludes that the "unworthy" individual in modern bureaucracy is a direct psychological successor to the "untouchable" figure of the past.

Keywords: *Untouchable*, Social Gaze, Physical caste boundaries, social injustice

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian novel has always been more than just a collection of stories. It has served as a powerful record of the nation's struggle with identity, power, and justice. From the early twentieth century to the modern day, Indian writers have used fiction to show how society treats those it considers 'outsiders'. This research project focuses on the two very important books that show this struggle: *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand and *Vipatra* by Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh. While these books were written almost thirty years apart and in different languages English and Hindi they both tell us something deep about how society watches and judges the individual. In the 1930s, India was still under British rule, and the fight for independence was at its height. During this time, Mulk Raj Anand wrote *Untouchable*, which broke new ground by making a young sweeper named Bakha the main hero. Before this book, most heroes in Indian literature were wealthy or high caste, but Anand chose to focus on the "lived experience" of someone at the very bottom of the social ladder. Bakha's life is defined by physical boundaries. He cannot enter temples, he cannot draw water from the common well, and he must always be careful not to touch someone from higher caste. This type of social control is what we call the 'Social Gaze'. In the village setting of the 1930s, this gaze was very obvious and religious. It was a

system where everyone in the village watched everyone else to make sure the 'rules' of caste were followed. If Bakha accidentally touched someone, he was publicly slapped which is a physical punishment for breaking a social rule.

As India gained independence in 1947, many people hoped that the old, cruel system of caste would disappear. There was a great sense of optimism that a new, modern India would be fair to everyone. However, by the 1960s this hope began to fade. People realized that while the country was modernizing, the old ways of treating people poorly were just taking on a new forms. Muktibodh, a brilliant Hindi writer, captured this transition from a hopeful, positive outlook to disillusionment in his prose work, *Vipatra*. In this book, the setting moves from the open streets of the village to the cramped, dark offices of the city.

In *Vipatra*, the main character is not struggling with physical 'untouchability' in the traditional sense. Instead, he is struggling with 'bureaucratic alienation'. He works in a modern office, but he feels just as isolated as Bakha did. The term *Vipatra* itself is very important; it means someone who is 'unfit' or 'unworthy'. In the modern city, society still watches and judges the individual, but it does so through a new kind of gaze which is 'Institutional Gaze'. Instead of being judged by a village priest based on his birth, the character is judged by bosses and supervisors based on his 'worth' to the system.

Another major part of this research is translation. Currently, there is a disconnect in how we study Indian literature. Students who study English read Anand, while students who study Hindi read Muktibodh, they rarely talk to each other. *Vipatra* is mostly unknown to English speakers because it has not translated much. By translating parts of this book into English for this project, I am trying to bridge the gap between these two worlds. I will try to keep the original feel and difficulty of the Hindi language in my English translation. This is important because the difficult nature of Muktibodh's writing reflects how difficult and alienated the character's life is.

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

1. Indian literature faces a major gap. English books get much more attention than Hindi ones. This divide hides how social suffering continues over time. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) is very famous. It shows caste pain in villages. Bakha, a sweeper, cannot touch higher castes. People watch him closely and keep him out. Schools teach this book everywhere because it is in English. But G.M. Muktibodh's *Vipatra* (1964) stays unknown to most. It is only in Hindi. There is no good English version. So readers see old village pain but miss new office pain. This tricks us into thinking freedom ended all problems. In truth, the pain just changed form—from caste rules to workplace rules. Sanagam-Synopsis-4.docx
2. *Untouchable* is easy to study. Bakha feels trapped by watching eyes and touch bans. Scholars praise Anand's stories about poor people. E.M. Forster helped him to publish it. But they often skip how society's gaze acts like a prison. *Vipatra* tells of a clerk who feels unfit. Files and bosses judge him every day. The Hindi style is rough, like his troubled mind. Critics like Namwar Singh focus on Muktibodh's poems. They ignore his office tales. English studies and Hindi studies do not connect. No one compares street shame to desk shame.
3. *Vipatra* needs rough English to keep its strange feel. Lawrence Venuti calls this foreignization smooth versions hide the man's discomfort. English readers miss how offices create new untouchables. Papers now decide your worth. Boss stares replace priest stares.
4. India's story looks wrong without this link. In the 1930s, fights targeted caste and British rule. Gandhi pushed to end no-touch ideas. Anand captured that. By the 1960s, city jobs grew. Poor farmers moved in but felt lost. No caste laws remained, but office ranks shamed them. A file mistake brings the same

cold looks as Bakha's touch slip. Michel Foucault's Panopticon explains it—a system where you feel watched all the time. Village eyes became office eyes.

5. Critics keep the split alive they see Anand as simple and Muktibodh as complex. Few use Foucault to join them. In 2026, job stress hits low workers hard. It echoes old pain.
6. This paper fills the gap it offers a true *Vipatra* translation. It matches street hits to office stares. Pain adapts but never dies. We must bridge languages to see India's full struggle.

II. OBJECTIVES

This study sets five simple goals. They help connect old caste pain from villages to new office pain in cities. Each goal builds the paper step by step.

1. The first goal is to make a new English translation of key parts from G.M. Muktibodh's *Vipatra*. The Hindi words are rough and hard. The translation will keep that feel. Readers will sense the clerk's sadness and unfit place in his job.
2. The second goal is to find clear matches between the two main characters. Bakha from Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is pushed out by touch rules. The clerk in *Vipatra* is pushed out by office rules. Both feel watched and small.
3. The third goal is to show how society's watch changes over time. In the 1930s, village eyes enforced caste. By the 1960s, office eyes enforced ranks. The watch stays the same but wears new clothes.
4. The fourth goal is to use Michel Foucault's ideas on power and watch. His Panopticon fits Indian offices. Desks, files, and bosses trap people just like priests and streets did before.
5. The fifth goal is to test translation's power. It brings Hindi pain to English readers. This helps compare stories across time and languages.

These goals guide all chapters. They lead to one big idea: social pain adapts but never ends. Translation and theory make old and new struggles clear. The paper uses them to fill gaps in Indian literature studies.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study uses four clear research questions. They explore social control and inner pain in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and G.M. Muktibodh's *Vipatra*. These questions map how India's outcast moves from village streets to office desks.

1. How does the "Social Gaze" link physical exclusion in *Untouchable* to institutional alienation in *Vipatra*?
This question sees the Gaze as power, not just looks. In Anand's 1930s world, high-caste eyes watch Bakha's body to stop "pollution." In Muktibodh's 1960s office, the Gaze hides in the system. The study asks if bosses are new priests. They use files instead of faith to watch and control.
2. How does the shift from village streets to office hallways change religious power into bureaucratic power?
This question looks at spaces of pain. Bakha walks narrow town lanes. The clerk traps himself in tight cubicles. Rules change from purity and pollution to merit and work speed. The study checks if new office ideas hide old caste biases.
3. What language problems arise when translating Muktibodh's thick Hindi into English that shows "unfit" feelings (*Vipatra*)?
This question covers translation work. Hindi words like *Atmavidroha* (self-rebellion) or *Vipatra* (unfit) need right English. The goal keeps the rough Hindi style. This makes English readers feel the character's inner unrest.

4. Can we call the modern office a "Paper Panopticon" that creates mental untouchability? Using Michel Foucault's ideas, this asks if offices work like prisons. Files decide your worth. The study sees if this makes new outcasts—not by birth, but by labels of "unworthy" from the system.

These questions guide the comparison. They show how control adapts but stays strong across time and places.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review builds a clear connection between the social realism of the 1930s, the psychological modernism of the 1960s, and modern theories of power and control. By examining existing scholarship on Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and G.M. Muktibodh's *Vipatra*, this section identifies gaps and proposes a new way to understand how social oppression evolves across time. The review shows that while traditional criticism treats these works separately, they actually tell one continuous story about India's marginalized people from village outcasts to modern office workers.

Scholars have long recognized Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) as a landmark in Indian protest literature. In his book *So Many Freedoms*, Saros Cowasjee highlights Anand's "unflinching realism" that forced upper-class readers to confront the brutal realities of the caste system. Similarly, M.K. Naik emphasizes Anand's blend of Gandhian humanism and Marxist social awareness. These critics appreciate how Anand makes readers feel the daily humiliations faced by Bakha, the young sweeper whose mere touch pollutes higher castes. However, most traditional scholarship views Bakha mainly as a symbol of class struggle or caste reform. This study expands that perspective by applying the concept of surveillance. The village in *Untouchable* functions as a tightly controlled space where high-caste members use their "Social Gaze" to constantly monitor Bakha's movements. This gaze forces him to perform untouchability within strict physical boundaries, turning everyday spaces like streets and temples into invisible prisons.

In contrast, academic discussion of G.M. Muktibodh centers almost entirely on his Hindi poetry. Namwar Singh, in *Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman*, celebrates Muktibodh's ability to capture the post-independence middle class's inner turmoil and nightmares. While Singh acknowledges Muktibodh's prose, works like *Vipatra* (1964) receive little attention from English-speaking scholars. This research positions *Vipatra* as an essential social document recording India's disillusionment after freedom. Unlike Anand's rural caste exclusions, Muktibodh portrays an "institutionalized injustice" where modern offices inherit traditional society's habits of rejection. Religious notions of purity give way to bureaucratic standards of "worthiness," but the effect remains the same marginalizing individuals through constant judgment.

The theoretical foundation comes from Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, particularly his analysis of the Panopticon. Foucault explains how this prison design creates permanent visibility, making inmates internalize surveillance and police themselves. This framework unites *Untouchable*'s external village gazes with *Vipatra*'s internal office alienation. Both environments rural "purity" rituals and urban "efficiency" demands operate as control systems that limit human dignity.

Additionally, Lawrence Venuti's translation theory supports the project's methodology. Venuti's "foreignization" approach insists on preserving the source text's difficulty rather than smoothing it for target readers. Applying this to Muktibodh's dense Hindi ensures English readers experience the clerk's alienation through jagged, unfamiliar language that mirrors his psychological state.

Overall, existing scholarship fragments these authors like Anand as political realist, Muktibodh as introspective poet missing their shared theme. This review demonstrates continuity: the modern "unfit" clerk descends directly from the "untouchable" laborer, as oppression shifts from religious to administrative forms while retaining its power to exclude and dehumanize.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a simple, clear approach to compare two books: Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and G.M. Mukhtibodh's *Vipatra*. The main work is translating key parts of *Vipatra* from Hindi to English. The goal is to keep the original Hindi's rough and hard style. This makes English readers feel the clerk's sadness and out-of-place feeling, just like Hindi readers do. The translation follows Lawrence Venuti's idea of "foreignization." This means not making the English too smooth. Instead, keep some strange Hindi words and sentence twists to show the man's troubled mind.

Next, the study applies Michel Foucault's ideas from his book *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault talks about the Panopticon, a jail where people feel watched all the time. They control themselves because of invisible eyes. This idea fits both books. In *Untouchable*, village high-caste eyes watch Bakha openly. He stays away from others. In *Vipatra*, office bosses and files watch the clerk quietly. He feels unfit and small. The study uses this to show how watching power moves from village streets to office desks.

The core method is comparing specific scenes from both books. For example, take Bakha's moment when he touches someone by mistake and gets hit. Compare it to the clerk's moment when he makes a small office error and faces cold stares. Both show rejection. Both make the man feel shame. The study picks 4-5 such matching scenes. Side-by-side reading shows the pain stays the same, even if the place changes.

Data comes from the books themselves as main sources. Extra help comes from history books about 1930s India and 1960s offices. No surveys or interviews. Just close reading of texts. The paper includes 20-30 pages of *Vipatra* translation in one chapter. Other chapters analyze history, streets, offices, and final thoughts.

This approach is straightforward. First translate, then compare scenes, then use Foucault to explain the watch pattern. No complex steps. The goal is clear: show how caste pain turns into office pain. Translation makes Hindi pain reach English readers. Scene matches prove the link. Theory explains why it happens. This builds a strong case step by step.

VI. ANALYSIS :

This area explains the main findings from comparing *Untouchable* and *Vipatra*. The data comes from key scenes in both books, the new translation work, and ideas about power and watching. Clear patterns emerge. Social pain shifts from village life to office life, but its core stays the same.

First, the Social Gaze connects the two stories. In *Untouchable*, Bakha accidentally touches a high-caste man. The crowd stares at him. Their eyes fill him with shame. He runs away. In *Vipatra*, the clerk drops a file by mistake. Bosses give him cold looks. No one hits him, but he feels small and wrong. Both cases use eyes to control people without touching them. Village stares turn into office stares.

Second, spaces limit freedom in both books. Bakha walks narrow streets. He cannot enter temples or homes. High walls and rules keep him out. The clerk sits in small cubicles. Files stack high around him. He feels trapped inside four walls. Streets and desks both act as prisons. Old touch rules become new work rules, but the trapped feeling remains equal.

Third, translation uncovers hidden pain. *Vipatra*'s Hindi uses rough words and twists. This shows the clerk's troubled mind. The English version keeps words like "Vipatra" (unfit). It stays jagged on purpose. Readers feel his lost sense, just like Bakha's body shame from stares.

Key scene comparisons show the pattern clearly:

- **Rejection moments:** Street touch leads to slap in *Untouchable*. File drop brings stares in *Vipatra*. Both create deep shame from eyes alone.
- **Watch sources:** Village crowd watches Bakha openly. Office bosses watch the clerk through hidden ranks and reports.

- **Final results:** Bakha's body stays outside society. The clerk's mind feels unfit inside the system. Both lead to self-control from fear.

Foucault's Panopticon idea explains it best. People feel watched all the time. Bakha cleans extra hard because eyes follow him. The clerk files papers perfectly from fear of bad reports. Files judge worth now, like priests judged purity before.

This topic explores deep social issues that affect India today. Socially, it shows power stays unfair over time. Villages used caste to keep low people out. High groups watched to guard purity. Untouchables lived in daily fear and shame. After freedom, people thought caste died. But offices built new barriers. Poor village workers move to cities for jobs. They face paper tests and rank lists. Bosses watch through files and scores. One small error marks you unfit. This breaks self-respect, just like old caste shame.

Social justice demands real change beyond laws. India needs fair eyes on everyone. Train bosses to value people over papers. Help rural workers learn office skills without feeling small. Schools must teach both books side by side. This creates awareness of past patterns in today's world. Anand and Muktibodh warn through stories. Without action, cubicles breed new untouchables. Justice means breaking the watch cycle. Everyone deserves equal chance, from streets to desks.

Findings prove oppression changes form but holds power. Translation opens language doors. The gaze lives on.

VII. SUMMARY:

This study compared Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and G.M. Muktibodh's *Vipatra* to show how social pain shifts from villages to offices. Key findings confirm the Social Gaze stays strong over time. In 1930s villages, high-caste eyes trapped Bakha with touch rules. By 1960s offices, bosses and files judged the clerk as unfit. Both create shame without physical force. Translation of *Vipatra* brought Hindi pain to English readers. Scene matches proved the link—street slaps equal cold stares. Foucault's Panopticon explained the watch power. It moves from priests to papers but controls the same way.

The unfit clerk is the new untouchable. Oppression adapts to new times. Caste laws end, but office ranks take over. India changed laws after freedom, but hearts kept old habits. This paper fills a gap. English studies ignored Hindi prose. Now both books stand together. They warn modern India about hidden exclusion in jobs.

This research calls for more work. Future studies can look at digital offices today. Translation must continue to bridge languages. India's struggle for dignity goes on—from streets to screens. This paper proves literature shows truth. Social pain adapts but never dies. True freedom needs heart change, not just laws.

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