

Exploration of Social Injustice in Mulk Raj

Anand's Untouchable

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Abstract

The present Research is a modest attempt to analyze and evaluate the theme of exploitation in *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. In these novels. Mulk Raj Anand tries his best to free the working class from the inequities and inequalities, in a caste-ridden society. He presents the social, political, and economic problems which India faces today. Mulk Raj Anand against superstition, feudalism and imperialism. he has committed himself to the welfare of the down-trodden. Moreover, he insists that all people must have education, economic equality which enable man to ameliorate from the clutches of poverty, violence, greed, jealousy, suppression and narrow mindedness. The Novel analyses Anand's portrayal of the suffering of the untouchables and their exploitation by the caste-hindus with special reference to *Untouchable*, the first novel of Mulk Raj Anand. Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, portrayed as scavenger, suffers insults at the hands of the high cast Hindus in the cast-ridden Hindu society. In spite of insults, Bakha remains optimistic and his optimism is highly portrayed by Anand. The centers on an analysis of Anand's second novel *Coolie*. In which Munoo, the protagonist, experiences sufferings and undergoes onslaught at the hands of the haves. Anand tries to project a social reality of the time past, present and future as well. Ruthless treatment and merciless exploitation of the poor at the hands of self-complacent British planters. The power conflict exhibits the forced character of both cultural and socio-political adaptation and underscores the role of coercion, segregation and discrimination in the dominated group at the bottom rungs of the societal ladder.

The plantation workers in the novel reveal a growing psychological stamina to survive in the face of exploitation. The novel *Coolie* portrays the abominable condition of social degradation, sub-human treatment, bureaucratic high handedness, imperialistic and capitalistic design of wealth grabbing and exploitation of the unorganized labour which constitute the politics of poverty as portrayed by Anand in this novel. The summation of study mainly focuses on Anand's positive approaches and his explicit and implicit suggestions for the eradication of exploitation. The exploitation of the poor caused by moral and social make them understand the meaning of life. Anand's heroes struggle, suffer, and prove their worth. Man's feeling of nothingness leads him toward a quest for meaning of existence. After a long and tedious search, Anand's protagonists reach some sort of culmination of their efforts, and there appears a streak of hope in them. Reading Anand's novels will always be a rewarding experience, and indeed, he has found a niche for himself in the annals of Indo-English fiction.

Key Words: Social Injustice, Inequalities, Victimology, Untouchables, Down Trodden, Marginality, Dalit point of Views, Oppressed Caste, Depressed Community.

Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand occupies one of the top most positions in Indo-Anglian literature and his rank among the novelists is very high indeed. Anand is famous chiefly as a writer of social novels. His novels deal with some of the most glaring social evils which include untouchability and the exploitation of labourers. His creative writings are no doubt, saturated with the element of protest which is inseparably connected with his view of life. The novels *untouchable*, *coolie*, and *Two leaves and a Bud* are emphatically novels of protest, as are Anand's subsequent novels. Anand derives his fervent socialistic faith and his vision of a modern egalitarian society from the European tradition. His numerous novels form a fictional chronicle in which his eclectic humanism and humanitarian compassion for the underdog are persistent themes. To his Indian past however, Anand's attitude is ambivalent. On the one hand, he is indignantly critical of the deadwood of the ancient Indian tradition. He takes up

cudgels against its obscurantism and fossilization. But, then he has had also a lifelong interest on ancient Indian art. His intuitive understanding of the mind of the Indian peasant, in his writings indicate that he is equally aware of the finer and enduring aspects of the Indian way of life.

Mulk Raj Anand is a writer with an axe, and his fiction may appropriately called “a literature of protest.” It is a kind of literature, which Anand holds in high esteem because it strikes hard at the roots of sectionalism, caste conflicts, snobbery, contempt. Anand’s works are not mere exercise of intellectual, Marxism, as we believe, but they are spontaneous expressions of human misery. As a committed humanist, he heralds a revolt and a creative struggle to bring about a new society. He does not indulge in violent attack with words but makes a constructive protest. With a sense of satisfaction, Anand recalls:

Even without a reference direct or indirect to Narayan, we can see that Anand has taken literature absolutely serious. It is a vehicle for him to put across to his readers. His faith is comprehensive humanistic philosophy, as Dr. Balarama Gupta says: “Anand’s fiction as well as strong undercurrent of a broad-based philosophy of humanism. Anand frankly writes about the poor, the economically deprived and the down-trodden with whom he has close observation and contact.

Anand tries to uproot the existing evil-distinctions of caste, creed, class, status, outworn, outdated traditions, and conventions, specifically the exploitation of the poor down-trodden people by the so called caste-hindus and economically well to do people. So, Anand straight forwardly works to eradicate the economic imbalance and class distinction from the society. Anand, a committed humanist, finds fiction as the most suitable vehicle of his genuinely new ideas and realities. He rather writes of the ‘pariahs’ and the bottom dogs than of the elite and sophisticated. He extends his fictional writing to the area that had been widely desolated till then by others. Among the Indian writers in

English, Anand is the one who brings us the realistic picture of the working class people. Moreover he sees man's inhumanity to man, and about the atrocities, committed by the Hindus on the harijans the so called untouchables. There is no glimpse of the upliftment by the politicians. Political promises to ameliorate their suffering are just a lip service (i.e. empty promises), i.e., mechanical way of cleaning the latrines, on all the cities and villages of the country.

Mulk Raj anand has chosen to write in English language because only through it, he could convey the problems of exploitation to the world. The themes are wide ranging geographically, historically and socially. The only common denominator in his novels is the suffering of the working class in this respect one could find a similarity between him and Dickens. Both of them deal with social evils in their works. Anand's novels are poems of suffering portraying impassionately the pathetic life of the poor. His heroes are the victims of rebels. He introduced a sweeper as the hero of his first novel. The second novel presents a coolie, as the protagonist and a plantation labourer is the central character in the third novel. The underlying pattern of all the novels is uniform. The destruction of a human victim in India, inspite of his goodwill, innocence, and aspirations to a better life, is brutally carried out but the socio-economic system of the country. Anand's who famous novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie* deal with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for a better life. Almost all his subsequent novels are a variation on the same theme and intended to bring home to the reader the plight of the over-burdened peasant who is powerless to fight against superstition and social convention and is baulked at every step in his aspirations for a better life.

Untouchable was Anand's first attempt at novel-writing and it proved to be a great success in the long run. The theme of the novel is the evil of untouchability in India; and the novel records the experience of an eighteen year old sweeper boy in the course of a single day in a town to which Anand has given the name of bulandshahr. This novel shows Anand's sympathy for the

under-dogs in India, and his humanitarian and reformist zeal. Evidently, Anand wrote the novel to awaken the conscience of the upper-caste in the country. Srinivasa iyengar speaks of the novel's photographic fidelity that convinces us at once though it also overwhelms us by its cumulative ferocity of detail.

The novel *Coolie* is much longer than *Untouchable* and its action extends over two years. The protagonist here is a boy called Munoo who goes through a series of experiences, most of which are of the depressing and disgusting kind. This novel brings us into contact with many segments of the Indian society, and the general effect is panoramic. The evil in this novel manifests itself in the form of selfishness greed and cruelty, through the root of the evil in poverty.

Review of Literature

Meenakshi Mukherjee classifies the novels written between 1920 and 1950 into two categories the novels of existence and destiny, and the novels that deal directly with the national experience which analyses the cause and effect of man's problem in the present day society. All of Anand's novels are typical products of the thirties in that they deal with nationalistic movement using its experience as the background to a personal narrative.

There is an overwhelming impact of Tolstoy and Balaze on Anand in his comprehensive grasp of life, and of Tagore, Dostoevsky and James Joyce in his analysis of moral and psychological motivations. Anand ha also been influenced by hume, Marx, Kabir, Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar, and Gandhi. To Hume, Anand owed the concept of the beauty in man, and to Dickens, his sense of realism and humanism. Anand has been considered as one of the most controversial writers in Indian now. More than half a dozen critical studies of his writings have appeared. Critics like Marlene Fisher and Dr. Riemenschneider hail Anand as great writer, and at the same time, he is treated as a mere propagandist by Indian critics like Meenakshi Mukherjee. Commenting on Anand's qualities as a novelist, Srinivasa Iyenger writes: "As a writer of fiction.

Anand's notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actually. He is a veritable Dickens for describing the inequalities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy" Dr K.N. Sinha writes: "Anand is firmly and centrally rooted in the Indian tradition of fiction. Although he has ranged widely, read absorbing alien cultures and traditions, he has returned to India, believing that the future is potentially in the East."

Dr K.K. Sharma writes: "Anand is averse to the artificiality of prose style. The purpose of writing is to communicate and hence the writer should write in simple, natural, direct and honest prose" Dr. Harish Raiza thus describes his reaction to Anand the novelist: "What gives Mulk Raj Anand a distinctive place in the Indo-English fiction is the high value he attaches to his vocation as a writer(61).

The novel *Untouchable* (1935) is Mulk Raj Anand's first and powerful proletarian novel. Anand is a staunch believer in the Buddhist concept of compassion that, he devotes his fiction to a communication of pity to the underdog. He has keen insight into the problems of the people, men, women, farmers and clerks, and such people, who stand on the bottom rungs of the social ladder. Anand, the lover of the underdog, not only highlights the problems of untouchability but also offers a solution. He sympathizes with the poor and the exploited and champions their cause. It was Mahatma Gandhi, who had asked Mulk Raj Anand in 1930 to write a pamphlet on untouchability, but instead of writing a tract, Anand wrote this social and realistic novel, dealing with the problem of untouchability. Anand skillfully delineates the plight of the outcasts, especially the untouchables of India.

The hero of the novel, Bakha, is a young sweeper-boy. The novel describes an action, packed single day in his life. Bakha is woken up early morning by his lazy father, Lakha: "Get up, oh you Bakha, you son of pig" (5). So that he may start his daily routine of cleaning latrines. He thinks of the fine mornings he used to have with his mother when she was alive. But suddenly,

someone from outside abusively shouted at him; “Oh, Bakha Oh, Bakha ! Oh, you scoundrel of a sweeper’s son! Come and clean a latrine for me” (7).

Bakha abruptly awoke, and yawning and rubbing his eyes hurried to the door. Bakha picked up his brush and basket and went to clean one for the Havildar. There are three rows of latrines he has to clean. He shows surprising efficiency and quickness in doing this job. The Havildar, seeing his efficiency and his uniform, promises that he will reward him with a hockey stick; “Come this afternoon, Bakha. I shall give you hockey stick” (9). Bakha feels elated at this and shows his gratitude. Hard work makes Bakha tired and thirsty. He returns home. He felt like taking tea. His sister, Sohini, was trying to light a fire between two bricks. Bakha helped her blow fire. When the damp sticks began to blaze, he put the little earthen pan on fire. She told him that, there was no water in the house. Sohini meekly went to get some water.

The untouchables were not allowed to draw water from the well because, it was reserved only for high caste Hindus. When, Sohini reached the well, she saw about ten outcastes waiting for water. There was none to give her water. Patiently, she sat in a row with here fellow sufferers. Describing her condition the novelist writes:

She was blowing hard at it, lifting herself on her haunches as she crouched on the mud floor. Her head almost touched the ground, but each puff from her mouth succeeded only in raising a spirit of smoke and was beaten back by the wet wooden sticks that served as fuel. She sat helpless when she heard her brother’s foot steps. Real tears began to flow down her cheeks.(50)

After a long wait there comes Pandit Kali Nath, one of the priests of temple of the town. At the request of all the outcastes, the priest comes forward to help her. Actually, he helps her not out of sympathy but out of constipation. He thinks that drawing water from the well will relieve him

from constipation. He draws a pot full of water and pours into the pitcher of Sohini because he finds that, she is the only most beautiful girl among the outcastes. He asks her to come to his house in the afternoon to sweep it. Sohini, with gratitude, agrees to do so. She is peerless in beauty and physical charms:

She had a sylph like form, not thin, but full bodied within the limits of her graceful frame, well rounded on the hips, with an arched narrow waist from which descended the folds of her trousers and above which were her full, round globular breasts, jerking slightly, for lack of a bodice, under her transparent muslin shirt.”(14). Sohini’s matchless beauty tempts Pandit Kali Nath, and he makes an attempt to molest her. Gulabo, the washerwoman, is jealous of her beauty and calls her immodest, corrupt, “wanton” and “prostitute” in order to defame her in the locality. (17)

Rakha, the younger brother of Bakha, is introduced to complete the pathetic picture of the family of untouchables. He is the product of his environment and uncongenial surroundings. Rakha is a foul to his elder brother Bakha, the protagonist of the novel. Unlike, Bakha, who is dutiful and hard-working. Rakha is lazy and a work shirker. He does not help his brother or sister in their work. He plays with the children of the outcastes and abuses freely. He is uncultured. His only work is to bring food from the barracks. Describing the impact of environment on his character, Anand writes:

His tattered flannel shirt, grimy with the blowings of his ever-running nose, obstructed his walk slightly. The quizzical, not there look defined by his small eyes and his narrow, very narrow forehead, was positively ugly. He had wallowed in its mire, bathed in its marshes, played among its rubbish-heaps; his listless, lazy,

lousy manner was a result of his surrounding. He was a friend of the flies and the mosquitoes, their boon companion since his childhood. (75).

Lakha is an important character in *Untouchable*. He represents the type of old, uncultured, sickly and servile sweepers, the class which is now on the verge of extinction. Lakha, Bakha's father, has been "the jemadar of all the sweepers in the town and the cantonment, and officially in charge of the rows of public latrines which lined the colony by the brook side." (30).

Lakha is old and weak, and his behaviour with his children is rude and grumpy. He badly abuses them. Although he abuses and ill-treats his children, he is kind at heart. He is fond of delicious dishes such as pickles, maize flour bread, fried bread, vegetables, curries, sweets and leftovers from the plates of high caste Hindus. Lakha impresses upon Bakha that some of the caste Hindus are kind and generous to them. Anand says: "He had never renounced his deep-rooted sense of inferiority and the docile acceptance of the laws of fate" (74).so, Lakha has no sign of self-respect.

Bakha as a Victim of Social Injustice

Bakha after finishing his breakfast goes out, for the first time, to sweep the roads in bazaar. On his way to the bazaar, he meets delicate, young schoolboys and requests the elder son of Babu to teach something for him. After a long hesitation, the boy agrees to teach him. In those days, the teachers would not teach the untouchables because their fingers which guided the students across the tests should touch the leaves of the outcaste's books and thus be polluted. Here, one can easily notice Bakha's higher sensibility and yearning for education of which he was deprived.

Low caste people and the "pariahs" are not allowed to attend school and sit with the caste-Hindu children. Even the teachers in the school hesitate to touch the finger of the outcastes because they thought that their body will be polluted. The

reason behind Anand's choice of education is that, Anand himself has been a victim of this educational system and so his attack is vehement:

If education is the transmission of life from the living, to the living, to the living, then we do not know how to describe the system of teaching that prevails here. It is carrying death from the dead, through the dead, to the dead. (5)

Bakha is very much elated by the sights of the bazaar. His mouth waters when he sees rasgulas, gulabjamoons, ladus. He knows certainly they are not cheap. He buys four annas worth of jelebis. He puts four nickel coins on the show board for the confectioner's assistant who washes them and takes them up. The confectioner wraps jelebis in a torn piece of paper and throws at him like cricket ball. The warm, sweet and syrupy jelebis satisfy him.

Bakha's joy could not linger long. In the delicious taste of the syrup of jelebis he is full of pleasure. He forgets that he is an untouchable. In the market, Bakha, the untouchable, whose shadow pollutes the caste Hindus, unconsciously touches a Brahmin. He abuses and beats him. Bakha finds himself in the midst of mocking, jeering and cursing crowd. This traumatic experience upsets him. Then he begins to herald his approach as he moves along the road: "Posh, posh, Sweeper coming (42).

Bakha reaches the big temple of the town where great insult waits for him. He goes to clean temples outer part. Out of curiosity, he ascends a few steps to see how the worship is going on inside it. Being a sweeper, his entry is prohibited into it. The devout worshippers shout, "polluted, polluted". Bakha jumps down from there. A crowd at once gathers there. Bakha is again trembling in fear. Some orthodox people, who have noted Bakha on the stairs, begin to scold him loudly and discuss how the temple can be purified after Bakha's climbing some of its steps. Then they see that, it is Pandit Kali Nath who had raised the alarm. He is angry and outraged at getting touched by an untouchable girl. Bakha sees Sohini, his sister weeping and silently standing a

little behind the shouting priest. Sohini tells him how the priest had tried to molest her. The incident pains Bakha very much. Bakha wants to teach a lesson to the Brahmin dog but he cannot.

Bakha goes to the silversmith's lane for food. There again he receives abuses and insults. Although, he wants food for the work done, the woman there are unwilling to give him any good. He has to cry at the doors like a beggar: "Bread for the sweeper, mother. Bread for the sweeper" (59), but to little avail. A hypocritical and good-for-nothing Sadhu gets much better attention and respect. A woman finally throws a chapatti down her roof for Bakha. It falls on the damp and dirty place below, where some child is defecating. He picks it up and, without further trying to collect food from other houses, starts for home. Pandit Kali Nath, the hypocrite, whose design to molest Sohini has been frustrated and also shouts.

Bakha forgets the agony and humiliation of his nightmarish experiences in the enthusiasm of playing the hockey match. He goes to Havildor Charact Singh to receive from him the promised gift of a hockey stick. He happily comes to the playground. The match begins and Bakha scores a goal. The goal keeper of the Punjabi's loses his tolerance. He spitefully strikes a blow on Bakha's legs. Chota tells his friends to throw stones at their opponents. The boys of the both sides attack each other and in their intense excitement, they forget the presence of the little boy who stands between them. A stone from Ram Charan seriously injures his skull and the back of his head profusely bleed. Bakha takes pity on him, and picking him up in his arms, he takes him to his house. His mother, an orthodox Hindu woman, meets Bakha face to face. She abuses him for defiling her house: "Oh, you eater of your masters! What have you done? You have killed my son! Give him to me! Give me my child! You have defiled my house, besides wounding my son" (106). The reward that, Bakha get for his act of generosity is humiliation and insult. He starts for home. At home he is received with hysterical abuses from his peevish father who

curses him badly. Bakha, the sweeper boy, represents the outcastes and other inferior segments of the Hindu Society.

The English soldiers, usually called Tommies, live in barracks in cantonments and serve as a model for the ordinary young people. In *Untouchable*, the Tommies live in near the town Bulandshahar. Bakha is caught by the glamour of the white man's life. He loves and respects them, because the Tommies have been kind to him. Anand says: "The Tommies has treated him as a human being and he had learnt to think of himself as superior to his fellow outcastes"(2).

Bakha is highly impressed by the life of the Tommies. Like the Tommies, he wants to drink wine in tin mugs, and desires to go to the bazaar with cigarettes in his mouth and a small silver mounted case in his hand. He tries to copy them in order to become a Sahib. A Tommy gives him a pair of trousers. Describing the impact of the Tommies on his life, Anand writes;

He knew, of course, that except for his English clothes there was nothing English in his life. But he kept his form, rigidly adhering to his clothes day and night and guarding them from all taints of Indian quit, though he shivered with the cold at night. (4)

Colonel Hitchinson, chief of the local Salvation Army, meets Bakha and offers the first solution for untouchability. Seeing Bakha in trouble, Colonel Hutchinson sympathizes with him and tells him to "come to Jesus in the girja ghar" (115). In order to impress him, he recites a number of quotations from church hymns and the Bible. He leaves him confused and confounded. Thus Christianity is not a sure solution of untouchability. Returning from Colonel Hutchinson. Bakha sees Mahatma Gandhi addressing a vast audience on the play ground in Bulandshahr: advising them Gandhi says:

They claim to be Hindus, they read scriptures. If, therefore, a Hindu suppresses the underdogs, others should understand that the fault does not lie in the Hindu religion, but in those who profess it. In order to

emancipate themselves, they have to purify themselves. They should receive grain only - good, sound grain and not rotten grain - and that too, only if it is courteously offered. If they are able to do, all that I have asked them to do, they will secure their emancipation. (138-139)

Bakha is deeply influenced by the speech of Mahatma Gandhi. He advises all sections of the Hindu community to clean their own dirt and also advises to realize their own importance in the society. The Muslim youth is outwitted by the poet, who agrees with the Mahatma on the issue of untouchability. The poet says:

When the sweepers, change their profession, they will no longer remain untouchables. If the machine is introduced which clears dung without anyone having to handle it the flush system, then the sweepers can be freed from the stigma of untouchability. (146)

The critic Mr. Bashier, represents the influence of British culture on the elite. He too, hates the Indian way of life and believes in imitating English manners and modes of living and thinking. He calls himself "a Dest Sahib" (26). He says;

Gandhi is a humbug. He is a fool, hypocrite. In one breath he says he wants to abolish untouchability, in the other he asserts that he is an orthodox Hindu. He is running counter to the spirit of our age, which is democracy. He is in the 4th Century B.C. with his "Swadeshi" and his spinning wheel. We live in the 20th century. I have read Rousseau, Hobbes, Bentham and John Stuart Mill. (141)

English education had developed snobbish mentality among the elite, and it is portrayed in the character of Mr. Bashir. Being an outcaste, Bakha has to suffer humiliation, insults, and indignities. Both inside and outside his home, he is abused, insulted and humiliated. At home his old father, Lakha, bullies him and outside the home, he is victimized by the caste Hindus. Bakha's mind is a battlefield of conflicting emotions. His heart burns with the desire of

shaking off his customary slavery. He wants to rebel against the caste Hindus who exploit him but social convention and forbearance come across his path Anand says:

A superb specimen of humanity he seemed whenever he made the high resolve to say something, to go and do something, his fine frame rising like a tiger at bay. And yet there was a futility written on his face. He could not overstep the barriers which the conversion of his superiors had built up to protect their weakness against him. He could not invade the magic circle which protects a priest from attack by anybody, especially by a low caste man. So in highest moment of his strength, the slave in him asserted itself, and he lapsed back, wild and torture biting his lips, ruminating his grievances. (56)

Bakha is a product of his environment. He feels melancholic, isolated, and unhappy. He is sick of the uncongenial and unhygienic place where he has to live in. His happiness knows no bounds when he gets an opportunity to go out of the: "odorous, smoky world of refuse" (22).

The novels records a day's events in Bakha's life. It mirrors the pathetic condition of the untouchables from the lower stratum of society in the caste ridden Orthodox Hindu Society. The *Untouchable* thus provides three solutions to the problem of untouchability. The synthesis of the last two suggestions is the best means to eradicate the evil of untouchability. E.M.Foster, the famous novelist, agrees with the Muslim poet's suggestion and contents that, it is a prosaic, straight forward solution and considered in the light of what has gone before in the book, it is very convincing:

The sweeper (Untouchable in this case) is worse off than a slave, for the slave may even become free, but the sweeper is found forever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others when he touches

them. They have to purify themselves, and to rearrange their plans for the day. Thus he is a disquieting as well as disgusting object to the orthodox as he walks along the public roads, and it is his duty to call out and warn them that he is coming. No wonder that the dirt enters into his soul and that he feels himself at moments to be what he is supposed to be. (2)

The novel *Untouchable* explores the possibilities of the interpersonal relations between untouchables and high caste Hindus considered in existential terms. Untouchability cannot possibly be eradicated from India unless the Indian are informed by the philosophy - "man with man." Anand shows a sure grasp of the psychology of both the caste Hindu and the Untouchable. In his dealing with the latter, the caste Hindu is armed with the feeling of six thousand years of social superiority, a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that, the untouchable is a human being.

Anand has realistically portrayed the character of Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, *Untouchable*. It is obvious that the novelist in his childhood might have fronded a sweeper boy, who has been portrayed as Bakha in the novel. Bakha represents the poor, depressed, and exploited segments of Indian society who were not allowed even to share fundamental rights and liberties. Anand's picture of Bakha and his life has thus a clear ring of authenticity about it. As E.M.Foster remarks:

Untouchable could only have been written by an Indian, and 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. And no untouchable could have written the book, because he would have been involved in indignation and self pity. (1)

In the novel *Untouchable*. Anand pictures some of the problems of the out-castes. He not only delineates the problem in the artistic manner, but also suggests some of the ways so as to eradicate the untouchability, casteism, class distinction. At the end of the novel *Untouchable*, Anand gives three possible solutions of the problem of untouchability - conversion to Christianity or any other religion, that treats the untouchables equal to all other beings; Gandhism that recommends the social and economic up liftment of the “Harijans”, and the introduction of flush out-system. The last one is more acceptable to Bakha.

The author realistically shows the plight of the *Untouchables* and offers solutions to the social evil. It is not an exaggeration to say that *Untouchable* is Anand’s best novel. It is an example of sustained poetic realism. Although it employs a low mimetic form of fiction, it also has esoteric poetic flights, and a breath of metaphor uncommon to such a form. His close association with the underdogs and his passionate observation of their woes has given this novel a rare cogency and an intimate quality of felt life. Bakha represents not only of his own, but also of the people like him. As Dr. Balarama Gupta says:

The climax of the novel, the incident wherein Bakha ‘touches’ the Lallaji, is especially significant for the slap dealt on. Bakha’s face is symbolic not only of all the cruelty to which untouchables are subjected, but of the scornful treatment meted out to the underprivileged all over the world as, for instant, the Negroes in U.S.A. (28)

In the novel *Untouchable*. Anand not only protests against the caste system but also against the doctrine of “Karma”. It is a horror to think that, men like Bakha, suffer in the world inevitably i.e., they must have done some bad deeds in their previous birth. It is equally preposterous to plead that they must endure sufferings in this world patiently in order that they may merit a better deal in their next birth. Anand does not believe either in the caste system or “karma” or heaven or hell. All that he constantly believes is in the mundane

existence, and nothing more. No where can we find Anand as a believer of “karma.” On the contrary, he suggests at the end of the novel a solution for the problems such as casteism, the doctrine of “karma” etc. He suggests that untouchables can be uprooted by man himself - may be through Christianity, or Gandhism or Machine. Anand’s humanism implied in this novel is that man is the master of his destiny; it is controlled and shaped by the society and men rather than by God. To support this view M.K.Naik writes:

Anand rejects all institutions in favour of as a convincing solution could be found in man ‘the maker and the breaker of worlds’. That is why with great religious zeal, Anand repeats in his novel ‘I believe in Man.(2)

Anand’s main motive is to picture the exploitation in all its facets - the practice of religion is one. Hypocritical sainthood is common in our hoary land. He looks at the priests of different religions - Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity with contempt because they have reduced religion to rank religiosity and cross communication. In the novel *Untouchable* the hypocrisy of the priest is exposed. For instance, one of the priests of the village temple, Pandit Kali Nath, makes improper suggestions to Bakha’s sister, Sohini, when she is cleaning Kali Nath’s house. Kali Nath shouts as if he has been polluted because Sohini thwarts his attempt to molest her.

Besides this incident, Bakha is also blamed when he enters the temple. It is believed by the orthodox caste- Hindus that “a temple can be polluted according to the Holy Books by a low caste man coming within sixty-nine yards of it, and here he was actually on the steps, at the door” (70). Anand’s denunciation of religion has its origin in his very philosophy of life:

To me there is one vast universe, with man, woman and other living beings, face to face with the elements and others alone but seeking human solidarity. There are not two worlds, heaven above and the earth below. There is no ‘spiritual’ world separate from the

material world. The soul is body and the body is soul. The possible emergence of human beings as individuals, through the struggle for illumination, exercised through the will, and through continuous experience, and through the search for every creative possibility, may lead to the making of the individual, to destination Man.(5)

Thus, Anand distinctly pictures the corruption in the religious system. Wherever Anand finds the anti-social elements, he never fails to bring it to the notice of the public. Anand turns his attention to the subject of Indian education. As far as Anand is concerned education in India is powerless, unrelated to the life of the Indians. It will never help to build a powerful India in the future. The sapless bookish knowledge does not offer much help and as recruitment for jobs is made on the basis of recommendations rather than on merit, the country faces the twin problems of unemployment and underemployment.

Anand, the representative of the out-castes, pictures in his novels the predicament of women too, another victim of the social order. At home the women are made to act as unpaid domestic servants. They are being crushed by the superiority of men. They are treated as inferior creatures, pleasure giving commodities or child-bearing machines. Anand impartially presents both docile and revolutionary women. In the novel *Coolie*, while Gujri represents the bad-tempered and violent woman. Prabati represents docile and devoted wife. In the *Old Woman and the Cow* the heroine, Gowri is a gentle, meek and nice character. She tolerates all the insults and injuries given to her.

Anand may be influenced by the doctrines of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Gandhiji. He writes about the lowest and poorest people rather than the rich and elite. It is all about the hero's one-day events, and he admirably maintains the unities of time and place. *Untouchable* is a realistic portrayal of

pain and miseries of untouchables, and a fierce attack against high caste-Hindus who perpetuate inhuman atrocities against the helpless and downtrodden. Anand's picture of Bakha and his life has thus a clear ring of authenticity about it. Since, Anand understands the psychology of both the untouchable and the caste-Hindu, his picture of the relationship between them is objective and balanced. Bakha longs for a dream in life which is not to be a caste Hindu but to be a white Sahib.

Technically speaking, of all Anand's novels, *Untouchable* is the least flawed in form and structure. The narrative technique itself is a thing of perfect unity and chiseled finish. The whole action, takes place during twelve hours from dawn to dusk, shows three clear stages of development. In the first stage, at the end of which suddenly comes the traumatic experience of pollution in the marketplace. The first stage occupies a little more than the first one-third of the book. The second stage covers slightly less than half of the book, and shows the graph of Bakha's spirits going through rapid fluctuations. The third and the last phase balance the one third of the novel. During this stage, the three possible solutions to his problem are suggested to Bakha. Each stage ends on a dramatic note and the fact that Bakha's course on this momentous day goes continuously through ups and downs together ensure that suspense is maintained throughout.

Professor Anniah Gowda says that, the reality Anand presents in his novel is not merely photographic, but frequently expressionistic. Further, he quotes an incident in the novel to support his statement that, 'untouchable' is unrealistic'. He says that Anand should have made Sohini demand an appropriate fee and then accept the priest's proposal. But, this charge is firmly opposed by Dr. Balarma Gupta and he says that this is a curious argument because it appears to pre-suppose that all low-class women are loose in their morals: "It is tenable because Sohini has been depicted in the beginning as a shy, docile, and good girl, not as an amorous coquette. So Professor Gowda's charge is absolutely baseless" (31).

After the attainment of independence in August, 1947, a radical amelioration has taken place in the condition of the untouchable. The fundamental rights and basic freedom, which were formerly denied to them, have been constitutionally extended to them. In the changing context, the realistic depiction of the condition of the outcastes in the *Untouchable* has to some extent, become outdated. But the novels importance as a work of art will never cease and it continues to occupy an important place in the realistic novel in the Indo-Anglian literature.

In village and remote places the members of the scheduled castes are still treated with hatred and receive the same kind of treatment as is revealed in Anand's *Untouchable*. Anand supplies three solutions, to the problem of Bakha, with which the book closes. The first solution is that of Hutchinson, the Salvationist missionary: Jesus Christ. But though Bakha is touched at the hearing that Christ receives all men irrespective of castes, he gets bored, because the missionary cannot tell him, who Christ is? Then follows the second solution, with the effect of a crescendo: Gandhi. Gandhi says that all Indian are equal, and the account he gives of a Brahmin doing a sweeper's work goes straight into the boys' heart. Hard upon this comes the third solution, put into the mouth of a modernist poet. It is prosaic, straight forward, and is considered in the light of what has gone before in the book and

it is very convincing. No god is needed to rescue the untouchables, no vows of self sacrifice and abrogation on the part of more fortunate Indians, but simply and solely the flush system. Water closets and the drainage system may be introduced throughout India, and all the wicked rubbish about untouchability will disappear. It is the necessary climax and it has mounted up with triple effect

Conclusion

Bakha returns home, thinking of the Mahatma, and now of the machine. His day is over and the next day will be like that, but on the surface of the earth, if not in the depths of the sky, a change is at hand. Anand has exposed

social evils in its myriad manifestations and has evocatively presented different layers of human experience in his fiction. His wide reading and travel enabled him to view humanity at large in a proper perspective. His close association with the underdogs and his passionate observation of their woes has given this novel a rare cogency and an intimate quality of felt life. Anand, the lover of under-dogs sigh lights the exploitation of poor in the novel.

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