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Abstract

In Anand's vision, there are no fixed boundaries between the criminalities of the colonialist authorities and the brutalities of the indigenous tyrants-feudal lords, money lenders, scheming priests, among others. In his first novel Untouchable (1935), Bakha –the protagonist occupies a position of subalternity in more than one scheme of exploitation: caste, class and colonial subjugation. Anand conceptualizes the entire complexity of the colonial condition by describing a day in the life of Bakha. Anand portrays him as a symbol of the psychological slavery that pervades the colonized society.

Keywords – Subalternity, Colonialist Authorities, Psychological Slavery

Growing up during the high day of the colonial rule and writing as a colonial and post-colonial, Anand stays close to the historical encounter of British rule in India. The colonial experience is a live experience to him, and his writing is therefore linked to this theme directly or indirectly. The phenomenon of setting up a colony in another country is called colonialism and the duration of such stay is called as colonial period. Colonialism is an event which can be identified and defined through its effects and characteristics as they reveal themselves in a given nation, among different cultural and social groupings. It is a totalizing event that needs to be seen in terms of the relationship of the colonized to the colonizer, the margin to the center. The colonized were enslaved, lynched, exploited, deceived, abused and oppressed.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the pioneers of Indian English Literature. His works have received international acclaim. He realistically depicted the struggle of the poor people of India in his novels such as Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) and The road (1965). In his fiction the protagonist are victims of capitalistic exploitation ,poverty, caste system ,gender discrimination etc. His novels express his philosophy of life of humanism and naturalism. They convey the message that poor people are the integral part of the society, they are the pillars of the society. Their social and economical status can be reformed by humanism

,love, empathy and education. The sufferers are not the victims of Fate or God based on their karma of previous birth but of injustice done to them by man-made society. We can hear the echoes of Wordsworth's cry for sufferers 'What man has made of man' while reading Anand's above novels ,Untouchable (1935) in particular. It has been said that "art cannot be separated from its creator (artist).While reading Anand's Untouchable ,one can witness the history of India during colonial period. The ' British Indian Army cantonment ','Tommies' the british officers those who only treated "Bakha" –the protagonist as human being ,the khaki uniform and neat ,clean elegant residences of "Gora Sahibs' where Bakha used to go regularly along with his uncle to clean latrines ,portrays the picture of Colonial India where untouchability was common among Indians based on caste system. But when we analyse the concept of untouchability we find that it was observed for hygiene. Its true that its unjust to compel anyone to clean latrines of other people's house only because he or she is born in a particular caste. The Hindu Varna vyavstha was completely misinterpreted and misused to satisfy the greed of power for a group of people .In Hindu varna vyavstha ,one can born in any caste can shift to other caste based on his habits, actions ,behavior and efficiency which he or she can acquire through knowledge and experience. But since the education system, medical facilities, trade and economy was in control of few people they were scared of loosing their power. So they propagated that caste cannot be changed since it's the reward one received from God on the basis of karma's of past life. From here onwards the injustice begins .The concept of 'punarjanma, 'rebirth "brought lots of confusion in the minds of poor ignorant people of society. They stopped thinking and starts believing in their so called Religious leaders such as priests and pundits. The main reason behind this superstition was illiteracy. Poor people were illiterate specially the women. Women were pre-occupied in giving birth to children, looking after them, cooking food ,feeding serving and nursing due to early child marriage and lack of contraceptive .The life of poor women in those period of colonial India under British rule was unimaginable. The writers like Mulk Raj Anand felt the pain of the victims and portray them as the protagonist of their creative expression. Anand was born in Peshawar (now in Pakistan)on December 12,1905 .his father Shree Lal Chand Anand was a craftsman in Amritsar ,later he joined the British Indian Army.Anand's mother was a religious lady from a reputed peasant family of central Punjab. He studied at the Khalasa College at Amritsar where he met Iqbal, the poet- philosopher who influenced him as a writer. He went to London on a scholarship to obtain Ph.D. Anand studied many philosophers

but he was mainly influenced by three writers namely, Darwin(“The origin of Species”), Freud and Jung. He started writing for Eliot’s Criterion during his stay in England. In England he studied Indian Art and Philosophy .In 1932 he returned to India and stayed with Gandhiji for some time in Sabarmati Ashram. It was here that he wrote his first novel “Untouchable”.’Untouchable is a social document. It was rejected by many publishers and finally published in 1935 .It is a narrative which describes the happenings of a day in the life of a sweeper (one who cleans latrines by profession and not to be touched by other people) ‘Bakha “ who is around 18 years of age and strong built, young, energetic boy. The main theme of the novel is untouchability as a social problem of Indian Hindu society. The novelist showed it as a sin as well as crime against humanity. The novel begins with description of a untouchable’s colony which is ironically dirty as compare to cantonment area and other colonies of the city , although untouchables are the cleaners of the dirt but they were paid very poorly that they can not keep their surroundings clean and they were so busy in cleaning other people’s houses that they didn’t have time and energy to clean their own homes. Bakha has a father whose name is Lakha who is a typical old, poor Indian father who scolds his children for work and leave all responsibilities on the shoulders’ of his eldest son. Bakha also have a sister Sohini who is younger to him and who cooks the food and cleans the house on her mother’s behalf who is no more alive. In the morning when Bakha returns from his cleaning work he found that Sohini is not at home she was gone to the well of the village to fetch water. She met pundit Kali nath who offered water to her and asked her to clean his house courtyard. When Sohini went there Pundit Kali Nath tried to molest her .She shouted and Bakha came to rescue his sister but in stead of saying sorry Pundit Kali Nath abused both siblings and blame them for touching him. Bakha was aware of the injustice but he was helpless .He returns home and bitterly tells his father: “ They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt “.1 In the afternoon bakha attends the marriage of his friend Ram Charan’s sister-the girl of high caste whom he couldn’t marry. Ram charan the washerman’s son,Chota the leather worker’s son and Bakha forget the caste differences during playing hockey. Havildar Charat Singh treats him affectionately and gives him a new hocky stick. Bakha was champion who scores a goal playing hocky against 31 st Punjabis. Here we find the superiority of Bakha over other boys of his age. But people around him can’t digest his smartness. He was brutally abused by his friend’s mother whom Bakha helped to reach home safely after the quarrel at the end of the match on ground. The little boy’s

mother blamed Bakha for touching her son. The injustice and humiliation was absolutely unbearable for Bakha. Bakha meets Colonel Hutchinson, the Christian missionary who offers him help and assures that there is no caste system for followers Christ. Changing his religion from Hinduism to Christianity was the solution offered to him. Then the wife of Missionary came and shouts on her husband for spending time and energy on untouchable boys .Its ironical that although British people don't believe in caste system but they treated Indians poorly . On the basis of The color of skin, the language and culture they discriminate Indians and treats them as inferiors. So changing religion was not the appropriate solution for Bakha. Because he was not assured whether he will be treated as equals by the Christians .He runs away in fear due shout of Missionary's wife and eventually reached to 'Gole Maidan' where he speech of Gandhiji who addressed untouchables as "Harijan" - the people of God." He also listens to the views of the poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar ,that the problem of untouchability can be sloved if modern flush system in latrines is introduced.Then the sweepers can be free ,the poet concludes 'from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society".² Bakha is impressed and feels more hopeful of the future than at any time since the day dawn ,and returns to his house to tell his father about the Mahatma and about the machine that will " clear dung without anyone having to handle it "³ Defending this epilogue in his foreword to the book, E.m.forster rightly says :

" It is the necessary climax ,and it has mounted up with triple effect. Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed ,thinking now of the mahatma ,now of the Machine .His Indian day is over and the next day will be like it ,but on the surface of the earth ,if not in the depths of the sky ,a change is at hand."⁴

Thus untouchable is a social document which reflects social reality and plight of the underdogs. The novel is very relevant even today. The slum areas of any big city and poor people still exists. The crime rate is very high due unemployment and economic disparity. Although machine is introduced to clean the dirt and school education is free for all. All governments are committed to give equal opportunity to people of economically and socially poor background. It proves that the social problems are changing forms only. The human civilization was never free from social evils. The traditions were different but the main problem lies in the power struggle. Those who rule the society by trade and commerce or knowledge or warfare they didn't want to loose the grip. They wish to pass on the power to their progenies. It's a human tendency which is the root

cause of all social evils. Untouchable(1935), Coolie(1936), Two leaves and a Bud (1937).one after another anand was exposing the social evils of colonial Indian society. In modern days might be Anand could have written novels and short stories and screenplays on cyber crime, struggles of modern working women, problems faced by old age people due to change in family structure or on themes like drug addiction in young girls and boys .So when we read Anand we find a social reformer, a social realist who is unhappy and wish to change the poor lot of sufferers. After 75 years of independence we still find many Bakha's around us. Those who dream big but whose wings are not free to fly and touch the sky .Although the scenario is changed to some extent. Changing one's lot is a collective responsibility, the society, parents and individual himself/herself plays a crucial role. Bakha was committed for his personal growth. In the very beginning of the novel anand establishes the superiority of Bakha over other untouchables by referring to his dislike of dirty atmosphere of the sweeper colony, his love for fashion, his deftness and skill at work:

“He worked away earnestly, quickly, without loss of effort. brisk, yet steady, his capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like constant water in a spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like glass.”(18)5. By bestowing such dignity and grace on Bakha, Anand preents him as different from other untouchables. Bakha's cleanliness leaves the high -caste Hindu Charat Singh spell – bound. The Latter's amazement speaks out in his thought :

“Here was a low-caste man who seemed clean!6(19) Bakha's clean ways of work and his exotic dress win him an offer of a hockey –stick from Charat Singh. Bakha's superiority is further revealed in his sensitiveness to injustice meted out to him and his kind. Unlike his father, he is not complacent with what he has. He does not accept his fate passively. No doubt, he cannot rebel openly against the centuries-old taboos, but at least he wants to retort. Every humiliation inflicted on Bakha leaves a deep impression on his sensitive mind; his realization of his position is keener but at the same time the desire to liberate himself from disgraceful position is stronger. Bakha fails to rebel openly against the injustice meted out to him due to inhibitions and humility. He can only hope for a change in the attitude of people towards untouchables. He was waiting anxiously for the flush system to be introduced. He responds with great modesty and humility whenever some generous hindu treats him with love. How grateful he feels for Charat Singh's kindness is well revealed in his one thought:

“For this man, I wouldn’t mind being a sweeper all my life. I would do anything for him”⁷.(118)

When Bakha actually gets a hockey stick, Anand tells us :

‘He (Bakha) was grateful , grateful, haltingly grateful, falteringly grateful, stumblingly grateful, so grateful that he didn’t know how he could walk the ten yards to the corner to be out of the sight of his benevolent and generous host “⁸. (122)

Such humility is further revealed when Mahatma Gandhi speaks for the untouchables .When the Mahatma says that he will like to be born as a scavenger if he should be born again, Bakha is full of admiration for him. He is ready to sacrifice anything for him: “ He adored the man. He felt he could put his life in his hands and ask him to do what he liked with it .For him he would do anything .He would like to go and be a scavenger at his Ashram”⁹.(165). All these incidents reveal that Bakha is one with his father, brother and other untouchables though with a difference. But he could not be blamed for such humility because of heredity and age old traditions and taboos. His sensitiveness was further revealed by his love and admiration for nature.

Bakha was fond of natural surroundings. He enjoys the heat of the sun in the open maidan. He was very sensitive and dynamic. In Bakha Anand presents the conflict between potentialities and circumstances. He himself clearly reveals the predicament of his protagonist:

“It was a discord between person and circumstances by which a lion like him lay enmeshed in a net, while many a common criminal wore a rajah’s crown. His wealth of inner experience , however, was extraordinary...But it wanted the force and vivacity of thought to transmute his vague sense into the superior instinct of the self-conscious man “¹⁰(105-06).Such conflict between person and circumstances has been emphasized in the novel a number of times both on the physical and the spiritual level. On the spiritual level his experience was vague .Since he was born in a lower caste and didn’t have education, he was ignorant of his own self as a human being. His identity was shaped by the behavior he received from others, the upper caste people like priest in specific .He thought that he has to live this life as a punishment of past life sins .The concept of karma was introduced in Hinduism to set the right code of conduct but it was misinterpreted and wrongly used by many people for their greed of power. Its human nature and the Hindu priests’ were no exception. But the innocents like Bakha were the victims. The novel Untouchable is not criticism of Hinduism rather its document on social injustice to untouchables due to misinterpretation of it. Many saints like Kabir,Nanak,meera interpreted life in a much simplified way .Gandhi himself was a philosopher –social reformer was aware of the social

reality of India under British Rule. British Rulers have taken advantage of it. They targeted on the weaknesses of Indian society and succeeded to rule by applying their policy of “divide and rule’. Untouchable is a social document as well as a case study of untouchables. The psychoanalytic approach, stream of consciousness technique has been used by Anand to describe vividly why Britishers‘ were succeeded to rule India for almost 150 years. The SWOC analysis of then society we can do while reading Untouchable. One after another incidents prove that Indian society was very weak and can be victimized easily. Britisher’s did the same with upper caste people of India. They instilled inferiority complex in Indians by boasting their superiority and over a period of time Indians started believing that Indians are inferior to Europeans. The education, language, culture everything Indian imitated and since that was the masters’s culture, language and education they believed that its superior to native Indian culture. Even today in India many people believe that speaking English is sign of intelligence and those who speak native vernacular language are layman. The impact of Colonial Rule is seen in many scenes of the novel. Bakha was inspired by the British cantonment residences and Tommies way of living. The color of there skin, the language they speak and wealth and lavish lifestyle made him feel that britisher’s are superior to Indians .The reality is very different. While reading the novel we can visualize the half- awakened India.

Untouchable not only speaks about injustice meted out to lower caste men but it also shows lower status of women. Sohini, the younger sister of Bakha was 14 years of age and she has to cool the food for the whole family along with other responsibilities of cleaning the household, fetching water from the well and cleaning of latrines when asked by upper caste people. The girl was dynamic ,sharp and beautiful. She surly has a wit and intellect but due to lack of education and opportunity to grow her talent was wasted. The Priest of the town tried to molest her and when revolted she and her brother were abused for touching the priest. Its very unfortunate that in a country like India where women are worshipped as Goddess Laxmi, Durga and Saraswati and Kali and their dignity is not protected. Untouchable is a cry for humanity. Bakha was exploited at first by his father by shouldering all family responsibilities on his shoulder at the tender age of 18, then by the upper caste powerful people and by British Rules .It was a three fold exploitation. While sohini has to protect herself from all wicked men. The change was suggested by the novelist. Use of machine to clean the dirt. Changing Bakha’s religion from Hinduism to Christianity. By abolishing untouchability as Gandhi said in his speech

‘untouchables are the sons of God –Harijan “ The character of Bakha is a representative of untouchable young boys .He tried to rebel and revolt at many times but something within him stopped at every time. The inferiority complex was deeply rooted in his heart that he considered himself as inferior .The inferiority complex we can see in Indians those who think Britishers are smarter than Indians ,since they rule for long and were wealthy and prosperous. Anand has used irony to expose social evil of untouchability .Gandhi’s speech on social evils and calling of untouchables as harijan and poet’s commentary on use of machine to clean the dirt was examples of gradual change in the situation. British presence in India cannot be overlooked. Thus the novel ,in this way is a social document of pre –independent India and reveals the novelist’s empathy towards the sufferers and cry against the social exploitation. At the same it also suggests the possible solutions to abolish untochability by use of machine to clean the dirt. After 75 years of Independence we can see that the machines are introduced to clean dirt and untouchability is abolished. Boys like Bakha are getting education and living a meaningful life. All credit goes to the social reformers ,freedom fighters and writers like Mulk Raj Anand who not only voiced the voiceless but also advocates the justice for the poor people of society. He writes out of an acute social consciousness that is vitally concerned with politics and society. He is convinced of the social obligations of a creative writer that hold that art cannot be divorced from its social functions. A creative writer, Anand holds, should infuse confidence into his fellow men and help to held their heads high. Anand was particularly sensitive to the role of a writer in a transitional society. A writer living and writing in a society fighting for freedom from the shakles of an alien power has to march in the vanguard of the liberation movement. He should help men to take part in the drama of revolt from which emerges the new society. In Untochable Anand portrayed Bakha’s anguish to change his lot by revolting against the age –old customs and taboos. He succeeded to bring out the rebel in Bakha. The the novel depicts untouchability as a social evil. It is a remarkable feature of the novel that Gandhiji appears in person to speak on the evil of untouchability. The novel is not a piece of propaganda. The stream of consciousness technique has been used to narrate the story. It has been translated into 20 world languages. It is a social document of the injustices of Hindu society committed on the social outcastes as well a exploitation of natives by colonial rule by British empire.

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