

Chapter-One

Anand and the Plight of Untouchability in His Work

1.1 Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand is a pioneer in the field of sociological novel. He experiences different types of social and political injustice while staying in different places with his father. Basically, untouchability is one of the great problems in his life and society. Some of the poor peasants, untouchables and labourers with whom he had played in his childhood, draw attention of and he becomes more acutely conscious of the social oppression among untouchables and labourers in India. Anand's interest in the plight of the untouchables dates back to a childhood experience. He puts it in his own words as:

I had known the untouchables in the squalid followers' lanes of the contaminants where my father's regiment was stationed..... one of the sweeper boys, a handsome young man Bakha, had saved my life when I was accidentally hit by a stone on the head during a boy's quarrel. My mother had abused him for polluting me by carrying me home. This episode had left an intangible mark on my naïve child's mind. And Bakha had rendered himself to me by the fact that he was a shining hero, a good hockey player.....who sang Punjabi songs in a melodious voice. One day, he was insulted by an upper caste Hindu as he was walking in the bazaar to go and clean latrines. He had accidentally touched to a caste Hindu, who slapped him on the face. He told us boy's story that day and I had wept to see him sad and crying and I wrote this story of the insult to Bakha. (Cawasjee 17)

Untouchables work in what were seen as unhealthy, polluting work dealing with the dead bodies and animal carcasses, the collection and disposal of bodily waste and other jobs that bring him/her into constant contact with what society consider disgusting and even dangerous.

Anand's writing goes into the depth of the social system and issues. As a contribution to Indo-English novels, he has brought social questions rather than romance and pleasure. He is concerned with the suffering, misery and social oppression among the downtrodden and underprivileged. In this concern Premila Paul remarks:

Mulk Raj Anand has freed the Indo Anglian novel from the narrow confines of romance within which it has come to be posited by its earlier exponents, although he is as much prone to romanticizing as any of them. His novels undoubtedly project a lively image of India, the details of which both reflect and imply his passionate concern with its social reality. They exemplify a realistic sensibility which is capable of plumbing the very depths of human personality and of social structure. (qtd. in Gautam 2)

So-called upper caste people exploit the downtrodden and untouchable in every situation. Untouchables don't get opportunity to join school, to enter the temple and touch the wells. Amuj Kumar Sharma views such social oppression in the name of caste system in the society as follows:

Such segregation accompanied by miserable living conditions and physically injurious to the sweepers becomes mentally and emotionally hurtful as well when they come into social contact with the people of higher castes. (71)

The historical legacy of feudalism also creates the concept of untouchability that results to create humiliation and inferiority complex in different characters of Anand. In the feudal social system the outcastes have no place, so in the case of Bakha in *Untouchable*, his social status as outcaste does not permit him to rise in society and lead a more independent life. It is the caste system which forces outcastes not only to sell their labour but also to do so under conditions laid down by Hindu castes. Bakha represents the group of outcaste who does his regular duty to clear public latrines situated close to the outcaste colony.

Sufferings of untouchables from many social oppression and restrictions certainly shatter the idea of a harmonious society. By revealing the discrimination and class antagonism, Anand in *Untouchable* is voicing for the social emancipation and the transformation of hierarchical society through his characters. The writer is making an urgent call for equality, justice and freedom for all so that the harmony and unity of the society can be maintained.

Untouchable, which is Anand's first attempt at novel writing deals with the evil of untouchability in India; recording the oppressive experiences of an eighteen years old sweeper boy Bakha, in course of a single day in a town. He has been portrayed with great sympathy so as to arouse in the readers a strong resentment against the caste system. He represents the entire class of untouchables who had been treated for ages worse than animals. All the incidents take place on one single day, beginning at dawn and ending with nightfall. The story is dominated by the action of Bakha where he slowly transforms to emancipation from social oppression.

Emancipation is the consciousness in feelings, attitudes and perception that changes a person to the sublime thought. The interest and eagerness to understand oneself is a fundamental characteristic of emancipation.

The protagonist, Bakha's maturity in *Untouchable* develops through the confrontation of the catastrophe of 'touching.' The critical faculty rises in him and makes him able to question himself. His participation in Mahatma Gandhi's speech shows that he is introspective to solve the problems imposed on untouchables.

The awareness Bakha generates and the feeling of protest and rebellion he develops against the social oppression in the novel symbolizes the awareness among untouchables in the community and the entire social emancipation in the days to come.

Anand basically writes about the real life condition of the people of lower strata: suppressed, oppressed, untouchables and labour class. He wrote life of troubled people. He wrote for the creation of awareness and made novels a means of social change. This is the reason why he is supposed to be the writer of underprivileged and downtrodden people against domination and hegemonies.

1.2 Anand's Biography and Major Works

Mulk Raj Anand is regarded the most prolific, vocal, committed, widely read and the widely traveled Indian writer in English. He is one of the founding fathers of Indo-English novels along with R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Born in 1905 in Peshawar (Punjab) in a family of coppersmith, he graduated from the University of Punjab, Amritsar in 1924. Although his father did not encourage and assist him; he went to England for further education with the support of his mother. When he went there, he realized the lack of appropriate base for the higher education in India. He attended University College and Cambridge University in England, where he studied English literature and forged friendships with members of the Bloomsbury Group, including E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf. Under the guidance of G. Dwas Hicks, the famous Kantian scholar and co-editor of the *Hibbert* journal, he received his PhD

in Philosophy from London University in 1929. After getting his doctoral degree, he did not return to India promptly but remained in England for few more years. He lectured at the 'League of Nations' School of Intellectual Cooperation in Geneva and between 1932 to 1945, with the Workers' Educational Association in London. He also worked for BBC Eastern Service from 1941 to 1944 as a broadcaster and scriptwriter. During in England, he was very much influenced by the Marxist progressive movement as he had read Marx's *Das Capital*. From England too he kept himself apprised of India through *New York Herald Tribune*.

While in India, Anand had seen his country entering its most intense phase of freedom movement after Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915. He had been jailed in 1921 for his participation in the Civil Disobedience Campaign against the British. He had even taken part in 1926 coal miner's strike. In the same way, in 1935 he went to Spain to express his commitment and support against Civil War. After the World War II, he returned from England to India and fully engaged in writing for the rest of his life. After returning to India, he joined Gandhi's crusade for national independence from British rule.

Anand's first novel, *Untouchable* was published in 1935 and included a preface by Forster. He held several teaching positions, including the first Tagore Professorship of Fine Arts at the University of Punjab from 1963 to 1966 and even served as an editor of the Indian quarterly arts magazine *Marg* since 1946. He is recognized with a number of awards including the Sahitya Academy Award in 1947, the World Peace Council Prize in 1952 and Padma Bhushan Award in 1968.

Anand started writing at an early age. He wrote his first prose in reaction to the trauma of the suicide of his aunt who had been excommunicated for dining with a Muslim woman. He began his career as a writer in England by publishing short notes

on books in T.S. Eliot's magazine *Criterion*. Among his friends were such authors as E.M. Forster, Herbert Read, Henry Miller and George Orwell. The most important influence upon Anand was Gandhi, who shaped his social conscience.

Anand's greatness as a novelist lies on realizing and exposing the suffering, poverty, misery and injustice perpetrated on the subaltern people of Indian society such as peasants, coolies, workers, untouchables, and so on though he does not belong to that group. In his book *Apology for Heroism*, Anand reveals that his realization about the problems of subalterns is a secondary humiliation:

I could not, of course, sense the suffering of the poor directly because I had always been comparatively better off. No, mine was a secondary humiliation, the humiliation of seeing other people suffer. (116-17)

About Anand's empathy with common people's destiny and his subaltern concern, Penguin Books India makes a publisher's note on behalf of the publication while publishing Anand's first novel *Untouchable* as:

His main concern has always been for 'the creatures in the lower depths of Indian society who once were men and women: the rejected, who had no way to articulate their anguish against the oppressors.' His novels on humanism have been translated into several world languages.

(i)

He believes in struggle and suggests those who are being exploited. As Anand himself acknowledges in the preface written in *Apology for Heroism*:

Always I believe in the struggle of men to free themselves and to expand freedom to others to sustain the ever expanding areas of consciousness, to make man truly human. (25)

Through the novels like *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Anand has shown the deep feeling for the deprived. Walsh William in *Indian Literature in English* generalizes:

His fiction is of course, exclusively concerned with India. He is passionately involved with the villagers, the ferocious poverty, the cruelties of caste, and the wrongs of women and with orphans, the untouchables and urban laborers. He writes in an angry reformist way, like a less humorous Dickens and more emotional Wells of the personal sufferings induced by economic injustices. (64)

The development of Mulk Raj Anand as a novelist follows a definite pattern. His earlier novels show a sense of horror and disgust against social and economic ills. The novels of middle period show a great concern for and with the human heart, and the later novels show the passion for social justice and they sound greater emotional depth. Before 1932, Anand's view of literature and arts was mainly concerned with religion and philosophy but after 1932, his literary perspective changed substantially.

Anand is a committed writer with a social purpose. He primarily deals with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for better life. He has always been conscious of the need to help raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies, and other suppressed members of human society. In the words of Saros Cowasjee:

Anand is deeply concerned with social problems and that he is committed to the eradication of the evils which infest modern society. Is this a deplorable aim of an artist? '*Untouchable*' a propaganda because it reveals the exploitation of the poor by the rich? Propaganda

is a term given currently by the bourgeois critic, and loosely used in India to caption any work where the author's intention is plain. (21)

His novels - *Untouchable* (1935), *The Road* (1961), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), and *The Big Heart* (1945) are based on social theme.

Untouchable, Anand's first novel narrates a day in the life of Bakha, who suffers a number of humiliations in the course of his day. It is based on an incident in his own life. Injured by a stone, the young Anand was carried home by the lower caste Bakha, who was abused by Anand's mother for polluting her son. *Untouchable* conveys all of these facts and it is a chilling expose of the day to day life of a member of India's untouchable caste. His second novel *Coolie* is centered on Munoo, an orphan boy who dies of tuberculosis brought by malnutrition. Here, Munoo is not an untouchable but he is just as much victim of the unfairness of Indian society as he finds himself at the mercy of his various employers. *Two Leaves and a Bud* is a story of Gangu which shows the misery of Indian workers in the hand of colonizers. In *The Road*, Anand dramatizes the destiny of an untouchable called Bhikhu who is new Bakha in a changed situation.

Anand, as a cultural critic, vehemently exposes all evils in human society which militate against culture. He thinks that literature aims at promoting culture which implies enlightenment, rational thinking and the recognition of the dignity of man. His novels are suffused with cultural consciousness. He envisions an era of cultural renaissance in India in which myopic considerations of caste, community, religion, provincialism etc. would have no place. The dignity of man as man would be accepted. Some of his novels like *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), *Gauri* (1960), *Lament on the Death of a*

Master of Arts (1939), *Death of a Hero* (1963) etc. cover the entire cultural perspective of India.

The Sword and the Sickle (1942), *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), *Death of a Hero* (1963) etc. also have vividly depicted contemporary political situation of India.

His autobiographical novels narrate the novelist's varied experiences, ideologies, love affairs and the cross currents in contemporary age and society. His four autobiographical novels - *Seven Summers* (1951), *Morning Face* (1968), *Confession of a Lover* (1976) and *The Bubble* (1984) form four volumes of his ambitious autobiographical work *The Seven Ages of Men* which was intended to be written in seven volumes.

Apart from these works, he has also written several short stories such as the *Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1942), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959) etc. Besides the book specified above, he has also written numerous articles including *How I Became a Writer* and *What Shakespeare Means To Me*.

He died in the Jehangir hospital Pune, on September 3, 2004 due to his old age complication.

Anand stands unrivalled as a humanist in Indo-English novel. Man is the centre of his novels right from *Untouchable* to *The Bubble*. All his novels are novels of responsibility, of involvement, of creative tension and its resolution, of profound humanism and moral values. Anand's prime aim is to reveal an ideal humanistic vision of life. He writes with the single aim to help raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies. . . to human dignity and emancipation. His novels

show a happy blend of idealism, revolutionary socialism and a comprehensive historical humanism which is rare in contemporary novel.

1.3 Statement of the problem

In Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Bakha the protagonist, in course of a single day passes through harsh and the most degrading experiences of bitter insult and humiliation one after another. He is compelled to accept the worst way of his life. Why does he seem weak and helpless in action? Are not high castes Hindus imposing orthodoxy, humiliating unjust social oppression to the untouchables? How can untouchables be emancipated socially? These are some issues raised in the study.

1.4 Hypothesis

When Bakha realizes himself that he is a sweeper and therefore an untouchable, he grows spiritually from innocence to awareness. The awareness develops in him the sense of rebel and protest against Hindu caste system. It is a symbol of social emancipation of entire untouchables.

1.5 Critical Review of Literature

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is a chilling expose of the life of member of India's lowest and the most abhorred caste. The story of a single day in the life of Bakha, a latrine cleaner and the protagonist of the novel, who accidentally meets a member of a higher caste, is critically acclaimed worldwide. Writing of Anand, Shreedhar Gautam in *Essays on Nepali, Indian and American literature* remarks:

“He was not a liberal humanist in the simplest sense opined by many but was an essentially a hard-boiled rebel with socialistic views” (4).

E.M. Forster, whom Anand met while working on T.S. Eliot's literary magazine *Criterion*, writes in the preface of *Untouchable*:

Untouchable which describes a day in the life of a sweeper in an Indian city with every realistic circumstances [.....] Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution, it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it. (v)

Anand's novels reveal his heartfelt compassion and sympathy for the oppressed like the untouchables and working class people in India. One realizes that the dismissals of his novels as propagandist literature or as sociological tracts are both unjust and unfounded. In this concern, Goyal writes:

His novels are expression of a deeply felt anger against the contradictions and oppressions of the Indian society of his explosive rage against the iron grip and debasing impact of man made institutions racking of exploitation, aggression, greed, selfishness, stupidity and violence. (70)

Many critics have charged Anand for his strong support of socialistic philosophy and his view that literature should be written for social cause rather than flying in an imaginative world. They are of the opinion that *Untouchable* is a social protest against the tyranny of the caste system and Anand is taken as a writer of social reformation. Social oppression in the name of caste is always disgusting act. R.T. Robertson also points out:

Anand is undoubtedly writing a message for his own culture in *Untouchable*; much of the novel contrast the innate decency of Bakha with the gap between the protestation and practice of untouchability among caste Hindu in India [...] chiefly in hypocrisy of the priest who claims Bakha's sister had defiled him when he himself fondled the young girl's breasts, but also in other scenes where it suits them, as in

the meeting which Gandhiji addresses. He also contrasts the rigidity of Hindu beliefs with the human relations which can develop casually between the Harijans and other lesser breeds without the law such as Havildar and other Muslims and among the boys who play hockey together. (10)

The book is simply planned but it has a form. The action occupies in one day and takes place in a small-area. The great catastrophe of the “touching” (46) occurs in the morning and poisons all that happens subsequently. It may be due to Bakha’s new feelings emerged out of social oppression.

Commenting on the novel, reviewer K.R. Srinivasa Iyegner in *Indian Writing in English* views:

.....all are evoked with an uncanny accuracy so that *Untouchable* strikes us as the picture of a place, of a society and of certain persons not easily to be forgotten. (339)

Here, he views that the novel depicts the objective reality of the social milieu similar to visual pictures.

Caste system is taken as an evil because it creates classes and clashes in the society. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar with similar views writes:

In *Untouchable* the evil is isolated as caste. (341)

Untouchable is the reflection of social evil of contemporary Indian society. This book has focused on the picture of society which is smeared in the evil practice of caste system. Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, represents the problems of untouchability. Cowasjee makes his remarks as:

At such moments he appears, we are told, a ‘supers specimen of humanity’ his fine form rising as a tiger boy. But he is a tiger in a cage,

securely imprisoned by the conventions of his superiors have built up to protect themselves against the fury of those whom they exploit. The instinctive anger gives way, and the slave in him asserts itself. (52)

Commenting on the plot, presentation and the action of the character of the novel, reviewer D. Riemeshchneider writes:

The conflict between a low-caste boy and the traditional society has been analyzed in *Untouchable* much more convincingly and comprehensively. (47)

Similarly, Saros Cowasjee praising the character of the novel further makes his remarks:

So strong indeed is the identification with his hero that for the best part of the novel we forget the presence of the novelist. (53)

His view is that the novelist achieves a total identification with his hero and delineates the hero's experiences as he himself sees them.

Every society is not successful in every condition. Anand also shows social evil of Indian society like social oppression, exploitation, suppression and caste system. There are many other writers too who point out these ideas very critically.

R.S. Singh explains Bakha's role effectively as follows:

He was aware of the limitations of the given social structure, and was also ready to acknowledge the rebellion within him, but in the absence of any perceptible alternative, he was unable to translate the protest into action. That moment came only at the end of the novel when he saw three alternatives to the same problem of untouchability. (41)

Untouchable, with its fabulist narrative structure dramatizes the tragedy of its central character Bakha by using the device of character situation interpretation

which is the typical Western story telling mode. This method accentuated by the Joycean structural synthesis of a single day's stream of consciousness, which firmly shapes the novel right from the beginning. R.T. Robertson terms it as “an alternating pattern of experience and introspection” (9).

Anand delineates the spiritual growth of his hero from innocence to awareness. The birth of a new enlightenment in Bakha results from the central dramatic situation in the novel that is Bakha accidentally touching a caste Hindu and getting bitter scold and a slap. It is the representation of reality by means of symbolic method. In this concern Cowasjee writes, “The incident of the slap that Bakha received for accidentally touching a caste Hindu” is “a highly dramatic situation” (162). He embodies the tragedy of a whole community of untouchables of a particular historical epoch. In Anand's own words:

In *Untouchable* I meant to recreate the lives of the millions of untouchables through one single person. In only one incident. The slap on the face of the hero. Now the slap on the face evoked all the human relations.....of the sixty-five millions of people whom the hero represents, against the millions of caste Hindus. (qtd. in Rajan 32-33)

From the moment of the slap on his face, Bakha gets transformed. The author makes him rebel against his hostile situation. He disagrees with the view of high caste Brahmins that the sweepers are dirt. His feelings of protest against social values under Hindu caste system can be analyzed as the foundation for social emancipation.

1.6 Methodology

This research seeks to develop theoretical framework based on Subaltern Resistance demonstrating the voice raised against social evils of casteism in Hindu society. The ideas are also associated with Michel Foucault's theory of "Discourse and Power." Primary focus of the study is given on the textual analysis of *Untouchable*. This study is accomplished along with library consultations, internet sources and critiques on *Untouchable*. Besides this, the instructions and suggestions from the Faculty of the English Department are profound sources of inspiration and support for the work.

Chapter-Two

Casteism and Subalternity in Indian Writing in English

2.1 Indian Writing in English

Indian Writing in English refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of Indian Diaspora, especially people like Salman Rushdie who was born in India. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature-the production from previously colonized countries like India.

Indian Writing in English has a relatively recent history; it is only one and a half centuries old. The first book written by an Indian in English was by Sake Dean Mahomet, titled *Travels of Dean Mahomet*; Mahomet's travel narrative was published in 1793 in England. In its early stages it was influenced by the Western art form of the novel. Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian.

The story of the Indian novels in English is really the story of a changing India. There was a time when education was a rare opportunity and speaking English was unnecessary. The stories were already there-in the myths, in the folklore and the umpteen languages and cultures that gossiped, conversed, laughed and cried all over the subcontinent. India has always been a land of stories, the demarcation between ritual and reality being very narrow.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyegner in his book *Indian Writing in English* writes:

Indian English literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread its mellow light,

now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the in-exorable vicissitudes of time and history, ever increasingly up to the present time of Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghose and bids fair to expand with our and our humanity's expanding future. (13)

Among all forms of literature, fiction is the most flexible and popular form of literary expression and it occupies the pride in Indian Writing in English. As Iyegner says, "Indian Writing in English has been acknowledged abroad with the novels of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Mulk Raj Anand, Khuswant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Malgaonkar" (25).

The Indian novels in English erupted in the fiery talks of Henry Derozio, the spiritual prose of Tagore and the pacifist dictums preached by Gandhi. With the coming of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, the Indian novel in English had begun its journey. Writing on twentieth century novels in India, Shreedhar Gautam in his book *Essays on Nepali, Indian and American Literature* writes, "The Indian English novels is a twentieth century literary phenomenon as the major pioneering novelists acclaimed in India and abroad are the products of this century. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao are regarded as the founding fathers of Indian novelists in English" (44).

Anand's novels *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Gauri* (1960) reveal his concern for the downtrodden and underprivileged in India. In fact, Anand, Narayan and Rao gave the novel in Indian English its true Indian character in style, structure and content. Comparing Anand with Narayan and Rao, Iyegner in his book *Indian Writing in English* writes:

A prolific writer than either of the Mulk Raj Anand is engrossed in many 'underdogs' of Indian society, and his *Two Leaves and a Bud*,

Coolie, Untouchable and *The Village* (1939) treat them, not patronizingly, but with the sympathy and even the respect due to them as human beings. The sweeper, the peasant, the plantation labours, the city drudge, the sypoy, all emerge alive from his novels anguished and hungry, yet human, superstitions and self-divided, vividly realized in spite of their thwarted purposings. (45- 46)

With the emergence of Anand in English literature in India, novel gains a wide currency. Anand's burning anger at all the ills of man made class and caste and his deep sympathy for the underdogs have been subjected in a series of brilliant novels. In his well-known novels, the vitality of his creation can be traced. Variegated richness of his total comprehension and the purposive energy of his narratives carry all before them. His main contribution to literature has been his realistic depiction of Indian life in his major novels. He shows in his novels a real suffering, poverty, misery and injustice of common people of Indian society.

R.K. Narayan is also a prolific figure in Indian Writing in English. Most of his works starting from his first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) is set in the fictional town of Malgudi, which captures the Indian ethos in its entirety while having a unique identity of its own. *Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The English Teacher* (1945), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1959) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) are his other popular novels. The novels of R.K. Narayan show a sense of comedy in addition to his awareness of the tragedy of the human situation. Comparing Anand with Narayan, Iyegner in his book *Indian Writing in English* states:

Like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan too has somehow managed (with what difficulties and trails we do not know) to remain a writer. Anand at least has, it would appear, some political axes to grind, though these

do not offensively intrude into his creative writing. But Narayan has no less axes of any kind he is that rare thing in India today, a man of letters, pure and simple. (358)

Kanthapura (1938) by Raja Rao describes the impacts of the ideas and the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi on the people of a small and unknown Indian village. His other novels are *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965). Prof. Walsh holds the view: ‘‘If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as the metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist’’ (1).

The early novels in India were not just patriotic depictions of Indianness. There were cynics. Nirad C. Chaudhuri viewed India without the crown skeptically. He discarded the fiery patriotism and spiritualism and mourned the absence of colonial rule. As India grew out of her obsession with freedom and viewed her own streak of imperialism during the emergency, the Indian idiom began to change. Now with the Indian Diaspora being a reckoning force in the publishing world, Indian Writing in English speaks a global tongue.

The freedom struggle resulted in a revolutionary brand of writing that voiced sentiments against the British Empire. The English language became a sharp and strong instrument in the hands of Gandhi, who edited and wrote for papers like *Young India* and *Harijan*. He also wrote his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*, which is known for its literary flair. Gandhi, however, was not just a writer, but also a doer (*karma yogi*). His ‘Constructive Programme’ envisaged India which particularly embraced its poorest and those who were oppressed by the pernicious caste system. It aimed at moral, economical and spiritual rejuvenation of all.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) stands out as another prominent leader who excelled

in writing prose. He is particularly remembered for his *Glimpses of World History*, *Discovery of India* and *An Autobiography*. (1936)

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is Indian in terms of story telling qualities.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the translations of his own works into English. Dhan Gopal Mukherji was the first Indian author to win a literary award in the United States. Nirad C. Chaudhari, a writer of non-fiction, is best known for his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* where he relates his life experiences and influences.

Later novelists like Kamala Markandaya (*A Silence of Desire*, *Two Virgins*), Manohar Malgaonkar (*Distant Drum*, *The Devil's Wind*), Anita Desai (*Fire on the Mountain*, *Clear Light of Day*) and Nayantara Sehgal captured the spirit of an independent India, struggling to break away from the British and traditional Indian cultures and establish a distinct identity.

In the 1980s and 90s, India emerged as a major literary nation. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* became a rage around the world, even winning the Booker Prize. The worldwide success of Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* made him the first writer of the Indian Diaspora to enter the sphere of international writers and leave an indelible mark on the global literary scene. Other novelists of repute of contemporary times include Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, Amitav Ghosh etc. The latest Indian writer who took the world with a storm was Arundhati Roy, who's *The God of Small Things* won the 1997 Booker Prize and became an international best seller.

Very major advances have taken place in recent years in histories of subordinated caste and gender both obviously stimulated by current socio-political development. To take possibly the most striking instance: Feminist influences and

scholarship have rescued the narrative of 19th century middle class ‘social reform’ from a stale ‘renaissance debate’, and helped to transform it through a new focus on women’s writings and degree of self-activity or agency of those being sought to be emancipated by reformers.

The novels of Anita Desai, Chitra Devakurni, Nayantara Sehgal and the host of others provide a significant forum for voicing the personal and political concerns of women. While some are overtly political like Sehgal’s *Rich Like Us* and *Plans for Departure*. Others self-consciously engage in the task of subverting social structures that attempt to subordinate women in the name of tradition. Mahasweta Devi’s vision of subaltern population is not merely ‘demographic’ different from the Indian citizen throughout the country, but also different in socio-economic conditions. Her novel *Operation? - Bashai Tudu* represents the voice of the tribal, small peasant, landless and debt-bound agricultural labourers who comprise the majority of population of India.

The themes of the Indian English novel are many and varied like portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions; examination of the survivals of the past; exploration of the hybrid culture, of the dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half-hearted industrialization, conflict between tradition and modernity etc. This writing has been enriched by such internationally recognized figures as Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Jawaharlal, Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi etc and a number of eminent Indians such as R.K. Narayan, Mul Raj Anand, Raja Rao continue to write in English and Indian English literature continues to grow and flourish and attain higher and higher peaks of excellence. It has indeed a bright future.

At present, the most significant feature of the modern Indian literature in English is a respect of emergence of the underdogs as a major literary force. It is the movement for the upliftment of untouchables. This movement criticizes the Brahminical orthodoxies in its robustness. It gained the momentum around 1920 with the leadership of B.M. Ambedkar. Since then the continuous efforts have been made through writings to remove the social evils like caste system. Now, the new kind of literature has introduced a new world of expression and potentiality of the language of down-trodden people. The writings speaking for the oppressed marginalized and under-privileged have produced the issues of casteism and subalternity.

2.1 Casteism in Hindu Society

The Hindu religion is conducive of exploitation because of its deep-rooted concept of untouchability based on hierarchical caste system. The system of castes, based on the division of labour in its earliest day, becomes different in practice in latter days and turns into the cause of untouchables' pain. About the caste system or four *Varnas* as *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*, each of which emanates from a particular part of the body of *Purusha* – 'The lord of being' or 'the creator of the world'; one of the holy books of Hinduism, Rigveda says in following way:

When they divided *Purusha*, in how many different portions did they arrange him? What becomes his mouth, what of his two arms? What were his two thighs and his two feet called?

His mouth became the *Brahmana*; his two arms were made into the *Rajanya* (*Kshatriya*); his two thighs *Vaishyas*; from his two feet the *Shudra* was born. (Rigveda x, 1990:11-12, qtd. in Quigley 6)

According to Rigveda, the four hierarchical orders of *Varnas* begin from the top part of the body of 'the lord of beings' and ends at bottom part of the body which means the *Brahmana* at the top of the hierarchy and the *Sudras* at the bottom. This hierarchical caste system is based on the division of labour and four castes have been assigned different works or duties. The *Brahmana* as the highest caste is regarded as the spiritual leader of the whole community and his duty is to study, teach, sacrifice, and to give and receive gifts. The *Kshatriya (Rajanya)* having second position in the order is supposed to protect the people, sacrifice, and study or he is considered as the warrior of the whole society. The *Vaishya* placing third position in the order, his duty is to handle business, trade, to breed cattle, to lend money etc. or he belongs to the business community but he sacrifices and studies too. The *Shudra* at the bottom or as the lowest class his duty is to serve the three higher classes. Though the four classes have been assigned different or unequal duties, this division states that a *Brahmana* becomes *Brahmana* because of his work not of his birth as well as *Shudra* becomes *Shudra* because of his service to the society. But another Hindu scripture, *Manusmriti* shows incompatible attitude to the *Shudras*. The *Shudras* community comprised of lowest class of people including people like weavers, washermen, leather-workers, barbers, water-carriers, grass-cutters and sweepers. Among the *Shudras* also the sweepers and the scavengers (chamars) are at the very lowest step of the ladder of the casteism. Therefore, the plight of chamars and sweepers is more miserable than other *Shudras* in the cycle of the caste system. About them, Manu, a codifier of the laws of organized Hindu religion in the *Manusmriti* says in following words:

Chandals and sweepers should live outside the village, should use earthen pots instead of utensils, should have dogs and donkeys as their

property and should put on clothes taken off from the dead bodies. They should take their meals in separate pots and wear the ornaments of iron. They should move from place to place everyday. One should not talk to them during religious rites. Their lending and borrowing should be confined to their own community. One should offer them food through another person in broken pots. They should not move in the villages and towns during the night. (qtd. in Sharma 28)

In this way, this very law of Manu marginalizes the *Shudras* basically chandals, sweepers and chamars or the *Manusmriti* shows othering tendency towards the lowest level people of the society and labels them as untouchables. Since the days of *Manusmriti* because of its code of conduct, the upper castes people (*Brahmins, Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*) even do not touch the people like sweepers, chamars, etc. because they are outcastes or untouchables. Upper castes people of Hindu society believe that they are polluted if they are touched by the so-called untouchables and then they should take bath and sprinkle gold-touched water to purify them even if they are accidentally touched with the outcastes.

This concept of the untouchability-the prejudice of the caste Hindus against the untouchables like sweepers and the scavengers has existed in a society for ages from the time of Manu to present days of twenty-first century. Even in this present era of twenty-first century, people are following the evil of the untouchability and they do not want to rethink about the ill-practices of the society in the name of religion because of which large number of the human beings like sweepers and chamars made up of same blood and flesh are still suffering. So, caste system in the Hindu society is seen as the cause of disharmonious relationship between the people inside it.

The beginning of the twentieth century is seen as the beginning of the realization of suffering of low caste people. They were embarrassed because the outcaste people have been located in the hierarchical structure fixed forever. They found it extremely difficult to reconcile the untouchables to Hindu organizations with the ideas of equality. Many reformatory writers began to write on the subject of underprivileged and untouchability. Some writers argued that the lower caste should get chance for vertical mobility because that would be justice for them. Thus writing on caste theme emerged from all sides has reached into a new zeal. In this regard, Sisir Kumar Das writes:

The inequality generated by the caste system is a recurring theme in Indian literature to which almost all major writers have responded seriously. We cannot think any writers defending the system though a very few could actually visualize the caste free society. (301)

Caste system has been deeply rooted in the Hindu society. Though the system has been formed according to the respective occupations, it has been fixed forever. Higher caste people have made the stereo type images of the lower caste people. Untouchables have been oppressed and ruled by caste Hindus. Thus, the society has been divided into the two main classes.

Hindu casteism is criticized negatively by critics and scholars. The professor of Social Anthropology at Queen's University of Belfast, Declan Quigley compares caste system with a Pandora's box (Pandora was a character of Greek myth whose box is famous for bringing problems and miseries): "If ever there was a Pandora's box, caste is it" (158).

While talking about the religion-based social exploitation, Saros Cowasjee finds Hindu religion as the responsible factor for the segregation of people in the name of casteism:

The Hindu religion is responsible for this fiendish segregation of humanity: the waste products of the body are unclean; therefore those who carry them are dirty and obnoxious. (51)

Similarly, Ambuj Kumar Sharma views the religious conservatism as the instigating force for the exploitation and enlightenment as against of it:

Social exploitation is in direct proportion to the exploiters' conservatism in religion and in inverse proportion to their enlightenment. (58)

In this way, conservative caste Hindus who have become blind in the name of religion without rethinking about its evil practices and also blind in the case of humanity, are main hindrance for bringing the low class people into the mainstream of the Hindu society.

2.3 Discourse and Power in Casteism

Discourse is the way of presenting something. It is a major point in society that affects how we speak, act and interpret things. It is formative and action oriented. It helps power holder to control people. The people have to believe on presented truth. Michel Foucault in his essay "Truth and Power" views:

Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances with which enable one to distinguish true and false statement, the means by which each is sanctioned; the

techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth;
 the status of those who changed with saying what counts as true. (1144)

Discourse is not merely a sign but it is a set of practices that constitutes the object in which it is speaking of. Most importantly it is a system of constraint or exclusion which sets boundaries for what can and cannot be said or done in our everyday lives. The experts define the situation and then divide the line between reason and unreason for society. The system of discourse in regard to everything constantly changes within years, decades and centuries according to who has the power. And power holders use the discourse according to their benefits.

Any form of discourse is considered to be a source of power, because it tells us to speak and act in certain ways. Almost every facet of social life is taken over the rules and rituals of discourse and the expert that carry it out within society. The rulers use their knowledge of power, inherent in the mastery of discourses, to manipulate and keep the ruled ones under control. Discourse is a root of power and in any case, power works through discourse and discursive formation. “Discourses work like Gramsci’s *hegemony* and Althusser’s *ideology*: we so completely internalize them that they even ‘induce pleasure’. Discourses organize the way we see the world for us. We live and breathe discourses and function unknowingly as links in a good many power chains” (Bertens 157).

Power cannot exist without truth and it is unstable because it is he who controls the power also controls the discourse. “We obey power, are loyal to it, even to the point of policing and repressing ourselves, because it makes us feel what we are” (Bertens 153). Power and discourse are very much interrelated. To get hold of discourse it is necessary to be in power and to make that power more powerful and durable it is necessary to take the help of discourse. Foucault is in the opinion that

‘‘Truth’’ and ‘‘Power’’ are interrelated. The knowledge of religious books gives the high caste Brahmins and temple priests in the casteism the authority to exercise the power by means of religious discourse as Foucault in his essay ‘‘Truth and Power’’ describes. He says:

Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it [...] it induces and which extends it. A ‘regime of truth’ (1145).

This is to say that discourses are embodiment of power and it is the discourse through which speaks the power of ruling class. According to Foucault, ‘‘the modern Western world is in the grip of so-called discourses that regulate our behaviour because we have internalized them and for all practical purposes police ourselves’’ (Bertens 168). Discourses can also possibly be misused to strengthen the power.

Similar to the idea of Foucault, religious discourses are also the product of religious power. Temple is the power house in Hindu religion. Temple priests are the rule makers and they make the rules and laws to dominate the lower caste people with the help of religious discourses. These rules and laws are supposed to be the ‘Truth’ ordained by the supremely God. Thus temple is involved in misuse of power by means of religious discourses. There are refined rules and regulations to support and continue the existing caste system which in reality are created by Brahminical thoughts.

Caste system is the theory of the high caste elites to dominate the lower caste. It has been traditionally served as the hegemonic purposes. The presentation of the untouchables as the dirt, impure, uncouth, unclean, who eat lowly things, drink alcohol and live in a dirty place, is a form of caste Hindus’ image and idea. Such

allegories given to the untouchables are supposed valid. They are developed mainly to prove them inferiors.

The power holder set the various rules and norms for the smooth holding of their system without any resistance from the oppressed. The temple priests and high caste worshippers make the rule that a temple can be polluted by a low caste man coming within sixty-nine yards of it. They make the barriers of superiors and inferiors, touchables and untouchables, and high castes and low castes to protect their weakness against them. Justice for untouchables becomes vain in the world of caste system.

The untouchables are created by the high caste Hindus giving them various identical characters. In fact, casteism in Hindu society can be taken as a body of knowledge in which untouchable is a kind of high caste Hindus' projection and will to govern over the outcastes. Kancha Ilaiah rightly remarks:

All the Gods and Goddesses are institutionalized, modified and contextualized in a most brazen anti-Dalit bahujan mode. All Hindu Gods were opposed to Dalit bahujans. The religion, from its very inception, has a fascist nature. To suppress the revolts of Dalit bahujans, the Brahminical forces instigated their Gods. (qtd. in Sastry)

The relation between touchables and untouchables is a relation of power and domination and of varying degrees of what Gramsci calls 'a complex hegemony.' Similarly, a diverse culture can be ruled or dominated by one group or class, that everyday practices and shared beliefs provide the foundation for complex systems of domination, Gramsci calls it 'a cultural hegemony.'

Casteism in Hindu society is a means of cultural hegemony. High caste Hindus have created and recreated an outcaste to be unclean, uncouth, dirt and

impure and perhaps more than this, immoral. But ironically, the pundits or the priests of the temple themselves are dirt and immoral. Pundit Kali Nath in *Untouchable* tries to molest Sohini an untouchable girl, but he is highly respected in the society. And surprisingly, he blames Sohini that she has polluted him:

‘Polluted, polluted, polluted!’ shouted the Brahmin below. The crowd above him took the cue and shouted after him, waving their hands, some in fear, and others in anger, but all in a terrible orgy of excitement. One of the crowds struck out an individual note.

(*Untouchable* 53)

Nobody believes that a priest can fall into such a low behaviour. Even Lakha, Bakha’s father does not believe it. Lakha does not believe that a priest, any priest can seduce a girl who belongs to the low caste family. This is how the power operates. Untouchables on the other are always regarded to be dirt in the eyes of caste Hindus. Even the untouchables themselves think that caste Hindus are superiors to them.

The author in *Untouchable* shows the high caste Hindus’ nature and the untouchables’ reactions to it. The high caste Hindu scholars have corrupted the minds of outcastes in such a limit that an untouchable could hardly think a caste Hindu as a savage and unkind. Lakha is an example of it. The conversation between Bakha and Lakha proves it:

‘He might have killed me,’ Bakha commented. ‘No, no,’ said Lakha.

‘They are really kind. We must realize that it is religion which prevents them from touching us.’ He has had never throughout his narrative renounced his deep rooted sense of inferiority and the docile acceptance of the laws of fate. (74)

Thus casteism in Hindu society stands as a means of exercising power by the upper castes to the lower castes.

2.4 Subaltern Resistance

Different scholars have emphasized that the focus should be given for the development of consciousness of exploited ones or lower caste people to eliminate the evil of casteism. The scholars of Subaltern Studies Group spearheaded by Ranjit Guha, have categorized all suppressed, oppressed, exploited and marginalized people as subaltern, which is a word coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to denote the politically unrecognized and economically disadvantaged popular mass.

Subaltern Studies Group historians have included lower caste people in subaltern group due to their marginalized position and the situation of being exploited in society. The scholars of this group in their writing seek to assemble a counter-history of popular form. They write their works from the perspective of marginalized ones. Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty for the first time feels the voice of subaltern in her inner sense and raises the question of subalternity. In her essay “Can Subaltern Speak?” she writes:

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced centre) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribal, the lowest strata of the urban sub-proletariat. (78)

Spivak turns her attention towards the large majority that has left no marks upon history. The majority was not allowed to make their voice audible or they could not make their voice heard by themselves. “Millions and millions have come and gone under the colonial dispensation without living a trace: men, but even more so women” (Bertens 211). Many critiques and theorists have moved ahead with the

issues of subaltern people with a new concept which is known as “Subaltern Studies” that deals with the emancipation of the subaltern groups.

The first emancipatory act that the Subaltern Studies project is to restore the tribes, lower castes or other such groups as the historical beings. For Spivak, writing about subalterns is to create counter-history including all minor incidents and discontinuities and form the perspective not of colonizers and power holders but that of the marginalized and exploited people. In this connection, she observes:

Their project is to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspective of the discontinuous chain of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation. (24)

The subaltern should not be treated as passive beings in history. Instead, they should be portrayed as active as the modern relations in which they try to defy the domination imposed upon them. Veena Das rightly comments:

.....what made an event in colonial history was focused around the question of ‘law and order’, its consolidation and breakdown. Thus, to construct the moment of defiance is also to construct the form of legal-rational domination. (314)

Partha Chatterjee, a member of Subaltern Studies Group, in his essay “Caste and Subaltern Consciousness” asserts that caste plays a vital role for the construction of subaltern consciousness; he regards subaltern consciousness as common sense and with the reference to Gramsci defines common sense as contradictory unity of resistance and submission:

Common sense therefore, is the contradictory unity of the two opposed elements: One the autonomous element which express the common understanding of the members of a subaltern group engaged in practical

activity of transforming the world through their own labour often at the behest and certainly under the domination of the ruling group, and the other element which is borrowed from the dominant classes and which expresses the fact of the ideological submission. (170-71)

For Chatterjee, common sense consists of two opposite elements: one common understanding of the subaltern people of the socio political situation which inspires for resistance and another borrowed element from dominant class which leads them towards submission. The duality is the reason why subordinate or subaltern people cannot instantly revolt against exploitation. These two elements are not fixed but get changed with the changing philosophy and science and according to the historical process of bringing dominated and dominant group into relation each other.

The subaltern people are being exploited and oppressed in different forms by the elites or power holders of the society. Exploitation in the name of caste is one form of exploitation. Because of the dualistic mentality of resistance and submission lower caste people are being unable to revolt instantly. Although their one side of mentality inspires them for revolt, another side leads towards submission. For their betterment their own awareness is essential. In Hindu society, caste system plays a vital role for the construction of subaltern consciousness. It provides the dominant or exploiters authenticity with the reference of religion and other worldly doctrines. If we see the situation of lower caste people in present Hindu society they are suppressed and exploited with the support of casteism.

2.5 Subalternity in Anand's Writing

Anand is much concerned about creating a new awareness among the neglected and ignored sections of the mass; the subalterns. He has a pity towards low class people who live in a miserable life even after hard labour. He has always written to glorify the essential dignity of men and to inspire compassion in the hearts of men for the oppressed and the down trodden. His pattern of writing generally is that, when his protagonists are born in economically poor, underprivileged, down trodden family, they start realizing the contemporary exploitative situation. They quest a favourable situation because they disagree with the prevailing norms and values of the society. Finally, either they defy or alienate or die and their alienation or death creates sympathy towards them and make the general people aware.

Common understanding of the subaltern people of the socio political situation inspires them for resistance; where as the borrowed element from dominant class leads them towards submission. Anand in *Gauri* has become successful in the mission to change the society overthrowing the traditional values. It is the novel of Anand where the protagonist succeeds in the mission to overthrow the oppressor and lead a life of independence and dignity. Margaret Berry notices that Gauri's rejection of old values leads her to a new society:

In only one case is the Indian wife shown as rejecting identification with her husband's interests in favour of a 'revolutionary' ethnic. Emancipated by her experience with the 'enlightened' Doctor Mahindra, Gauri of *The Old Woman* leaves her husband for good, presumably to take up a life of dignified independence as a nurse in a modern clinic. (59)

For Margaret Berry, Gauri emerges as a symbol of the new woman rejecting the brutality and rigidity of the Hindu social ethos that reduced women into helpless victims.

Pointing out the subject matter of Subaltern Studies Veena Das writes:

Subaltern Studies make an important point in establishing the centrality of historical moment of rebellion in understanding the subalterns as subjects of their own histories. (312)

In this sense, Anand's *Untouchable* and *The Road* are the efforts to create the history of lower caste people. In *Untouchable* and *The Road*, the society is divided into two classes, the oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors impose their exploitation over the oppressed. But oppressed have ambivalence in their mentality and behaviours. Ambivalence is the condition of continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction and repulsion from an object, person or action. In psychological term, ambivalence indicates a state of mind in which there is the simultaneous existence of contradictory tendencies, attitudes or feelings in the relationship to a single object especially the existence of love and hate.

Dualism in the mentality of subalterns; submissiveness and resistance is due to the oppressive situation. Submissiveness is the theological nature of submission to the authority where as resistance is the endeavor to create their own history. In this concern Gautam Bhadra rightly comments:

...defiance is not the only characteristic of the behaviour of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance is another. It is these two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality. It is on account of this combination that the poor

and the oppressed have time and again, and in different histories, made voluntary sacrifices in favour of the rich and the dominant at least as often as they have rebelled against the latter. (54)

Bakha and Bhikhu, the protagonists in *Untouchable* and *The Road* respectively act to create the history of their own. They cross the boundary created by the high caste people and break the rules and laws of casteism.

Bakha in *Untouchable* leaves the records to the history. He resists the imaginative construction created by the caste Hindus that untouchables are dirt. He disagrees with the view that untouchables should not touch the caste Hindus. He also constructs the way of resistance because he had the potentialities of doing so right from his childhood. Anand writes in *Untouchable*:

He remembered the time in his early days when he used to come to the health with all the other boys, to fight battles for imaginary fort they had built by fixing a flag on the top of the hill. [...] How enthusiastic all the boys used to feel about him then! They had made him their jernel (general). (84)

Submissiveness is not only the voluntary sacrifice in favour of elites. It is also a means of resistance against them. Lakha in *Untouchable* is an example of this kind of character. He is the father of Bakha. The event, how he manages medicine for his son Bakha when he was a small child, is very interesting. He visits the house of Hakim Bhagawan Das in his town to call him for Bakha's treatment. Because of being an outcaste he cannot enter into Hakim's house. He makes his requests to so many passers-by but nobody cares him. In *Untouchable* Lakha's own words go like this:

So I ran back to the Hakim's house. Your mother shouted and said: "What is the good of medicine now?" But I ran and ran. When I got to the Hakim's house I just lifted the curtain and went straight in. I caught the Hakim's feet and said: 'Still there is a little breath left in my child's body, Hakim ji, I shall be your slave all my life. The meaning of my life is my child. Hakim ji, take pity. God will be kind to you' (72).

What is significant here is that, if Lakha does not cross the boundary to call Hakim ji, it will be impossible to save Bakha's life and if Hakim ji does not treat Bakha, he will prove himself as a mean person in the elites' history. Thus, Lakha makes Hakim ji treat Bakha breaking the existing social norms and values. What Gautam Bhadra says in his essay "The Mentality of Subalternity" is rightly applied here. He says that:

.....from recent researcher it can be shown that time and again, the subordinate classes have risen in rebellion because of their faith in some moral order, out of an urge to restore justice.....(90)

Anand wrote *Untouchable* and *The Road* with the same purpose as Spivak's subaltern theories. Both of them are motivated by the desire to save the subaltern from the misrepresentation and misinterpretation and above all they want to establish subaltern as the historical beings. Prabhakar Machwe writes about Anand's subalternity: His fiction means "a new awareness about the neglected and ignored sections of the mass" (172).

At depth, Anand in his various novels like *Untouchable*, *The Road*, *Coolie*, *The Big Heart*, *Gauri* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* stands as a critique dealing with casteism, peasant revolts, Indian nationalism, power relation within the community, social oppression, emancipation, elite historiography and subaltern consciousness.

Chapter-Three

Social Oppression and Emancipation in *Untouchable*

3.1 The Story in Outline

Untouchable narrates the story of a day in the life of Bakha, an eighteen years old sweeper boy, who suffers a number of humiliations in the course of his day. He has to lead a hard life because of his extreme poverty, the nature of the work which he has to do, and the kind of treatment which he receives from the caste Hindus. Bakha lives in the outcastes' colony outside the town which is inhabited by caste Hindus and by others who do not belong to the category of untouchables. A caste Hindu would feel that he had been polluted if he was touched, even by chance, by a sweeper. The first incident in Bakha's life on that particular day is the abuse which he receives from a caste Hindu when Bakha happens to touch him purely by chance. Then follows similar other incidents, each of which means more degradation for him. The only two incidents which to some extent, consoles and cheers Bakha are his meeting with a Christian missionary by the name of Colonel Hutchinson and his listening to a speech of Mahatma Gandhi and the comment made upon Mahatma Gandhi's view by a young Hindu poet, Iqbal Nath. The story has a message both for the sweepers and for the caste Hindus; and the message is clear. With the introduction of Flush system in the toilets, the sweepers must not continue their work of scavenging and removing human dung with their hands; and the caste Hindus must realize their duty to uplift the so-called untouchables by what ever means possible.

3.2 Casteism and Social Oppression in *Untouchable*

In *Untouchable* Anand shows caste oppression in various respects. The behaviours of characters like Bakha, Lakha, Rakha, Sohini... are guided by the Hindu Religion and its casteism. Bakha as a hero of the novel represents the pain and torture, loss of self identity of low caste people.

Caste oppression is the social problem of Hindu society. We feel great sympathy for the sweepers and scavengers in the course of our reading this novel. *Untouchable* realistically presents Indian society where untouchables are dominated by high caste people.

The novel *Untouchable* begins with the connotation of a sense of separateness. As the *Manusmriti* has prescribed separate dwelling place for lower castes, the novel also opens with the similar description of an outcaste colony where the protagonist, Bakha lives. It is said “‘morning shows the day’” the lines mentioned below indicate the miserable life condition of the characters in the novel, which is caused by long lived system called feudalism and casteism as a part of this system.

The outcastes' colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, outside their boundaries and separate, from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. (1)

With this description of the isolated colony, the novel introduces the protagonist, his family and his poor hut. The protagonist, Bakha is an eighteen years old sweeper boy who lives in the outcaste colony situated outside the town of Bulashah. His duty is to clean public latrines of the town. These latrines are used by

upper-class people of the town and the men of the cantonment but not by Bakha and other lower castes. This is a very incompatible situation where a man cleans the latrines but cannot use because of being a lower caste.

Anand's creation of the setting of the novel is symbolical:

A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the order of the hides and skins of deep carcasses left to dry on its banks, the deep doings of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes, and the biting, choking pungent fumes that oozed from its sides. (1)

As in many other literary works, 'brook' symbolizes separation. So there is separation between the outcastes and caste Hindus. As deeply analyzed by Nirad Chandra Chaudhary in his essay book, *An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, in the beginning of civilization there was not caste system in 'Vedas' it was developed later on by polluted Aryans. In the similar way the river was 'crystal once' but now soiled by dirt and filth of feudal system created by the caste Hindus. This system has made the society an uncongenial place to live in.

Bakha's daily activity begins from the dawn of a cold day. He is in half-sleep state in his rag bed and the time for starting the work in the public latrines has come. At the same time, Bakha hears abusive words from his father, Lakha: "Get up, oh you son of a pig" and "Get up attend to the latrines or sepoys will be angry" (5).

Here, Lakha abuses his son because of fear of the superior people not because of his anger towards the son. The fear of Lakha shows the oppressed condition of the lower level people in the society.

For a while, Bhaka tries to forget the words of his father but he constantly flings the blanket off his body as he listens to another insulting voice from Charat Singh out of his muddy hut: “Oh, Bakhya! Oh Bakhya! Oh you scoundrel of a sweeper’s son! Come and clear a latrine for me!” (7).

This insulting epithet of Charat Singh towards Bakha shows the much degraded social position of the untouchables. Charat Singh is a *Habildar* (head constable) in the 31st Punjabis regiment and is an excellent hockey player. Though he shows his liberal attitude towards Bakha in the latter parts of the novel, his very rebuke in the morning to Bakha indicates that yet he has not come up of caste Hindus’ instinct of superiority and cleanliness.

After the shouting of the *Habildar*, Bakha starts performing his duty. He continues his work at the latrines for a few hours. After finishing his morning work, he returns home expecting tea from his sister Sohini. But, Sohini tells him that there is no water in the house and she goes to the direction of the well to fetch water. When she reaches at the well, she finds about ten other outcaste women already waiting because there is no caste Hindus to give them water. These outcastes are not allowed to draw water from the well because their touch makes the well impure. Sohini is in a hurry because her brother is thirsty after the long time work in the latrines for the caste Hindus. But, there is no sign of anyone passing that way who could be a possible benefactor. The famous English proverb ‘Water water everywhere but not a single drop to drink.’ seems true seeing this helpless situation of the outcaste women where even they are not allowed to get water from the public well.

Not only this, Sohini also becomes victim of internal practice of caste superiority among the outcastes themselves. Sohini being the lowest caste among the

outcastes is belittled there by Gulabo, the washerwoman, in following way: “Think of it! Think of it! You bitch! You prostitute! Wanton! And your mother hardly dead! Think of laughing in my face, laughing at me who am old enough to be your mother. Bitch!” (17).

Gulabo further bullies Sohini and also humiliates her as being an inauspicious symbol: “On the day of my little daughter’s marriage too! This inauspicious sweeper woman has started my auspicious day so badly!” (18). Against the cruel treatment of Gulabo, Sohini does not make any reaction just she laughs helplessly.

Such internal practice of superiority and inferiority creates the wider chasm among the outcastes themselves and their liberation process is pushed back. Showing this internal practice in *Untouchable*, Anand intends to show it as the hindering factor for the salvation of the untouchables and calls for their unity at first.

Amidst the insulting and bullying, a sepoy appears in the well. The outcaste women beg water with the man: “Oh, Maharaj! Maharaj! Won’t you draw us some water, please? We beg you. We have been waiting here a long time, we will be grateful” (18).

What a pathetic condition of outcaste women is here though they address a simple sepoy as majesty, he passes by without heeding the request of the women. There is water in the well but they are not allowed to draw water just for the reason that they are of inferior caste and their touch defiles water of the well. Can water be defiled by a human touch? This is an orthodox and conservative thinking of the Hindu society.

However another man, Pundit Kali Nath arrives there as a possible helper. In the same way, the women repeat their plea to the pundit. He sometimes draws water for them not because of his kindness, it is because of his realization that the exercise

of drawing water at the well might do some good to the chronic constipation from which he suffers. Then the Pundit in disgusted manner at serving them draws water only for Sohini for being patient as he calls it “‘The reward of patience’”(21).

Actually he is not rewarding her rather his luscious eyes fall upon her. After receiving the hypocritical favor and being offered to start cleaning the courtyard of his house near the temple in the town, she comes back to her house and prepares tea for her brother.

After having some tea with a piece of bread, Bhaka picks up a big broom and a basket and sets out for the town where his father used to go to sweep the roads and the streets, because his father is not feeling well on the day. On the way to the town, he meets his friends Ram Charan and Chota. He also meets two young sons of a *babu*. Bhaka requests to the elder son of the *babu* for English lesson and the young elder *babu* agrees to give him the lesson at the rate of an anna per lesson. Bakha is not only interested to learn to read and write but also speak English like sahibs (whites). However he has wished to go to school since his childhood, there is no school which admits him. Here Bakha, the representative of all downtrodden people being a refused in the public school indicates the menacing position of the low caste people in the society. And, the refusal seems to be the stumbling block for developing consciousness of untouchables which makes them aware of their social dignity and leads them towards the path of emancipation from all kinds of social bondages. In this novel neither the government nor any caste Hindus makes practical effort to welcome untouchable in public institution. That’s why the salvation of the lower castes becomes difficult.

When Bakha reaches at the gates of the town, he buys a packet of Red-Lamp cigarettes from a betel-leaf-seller’s shop. The shopkeeper shows such a treatment to

Bakha as if he were an animal not a human being. Even the seller dashes some water over the coin to purify it which Bakha has placed as per his order. Anand in the novel portrays this harsh treatment in following way:

The betel-leaf-seller dashed some water over it from the jug with which he sprinkled the betel leaves now and again. Having thus purified it he picked up the nickel piece and threw it into the counter. Then he flung a packet of 'Red-Lamp' cigarettes at Bakha, as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing round the corner of his shop. (34)

Caste system has thus, become a machine to make a person feel foreign. Due to this caste system, human beings are feeling stranger to each other. The so-called high class is unfamiliar to the low class. They are becoming remote to each other.

Though Bakha becomes victim of underdog treatment, he does not react against it rather he picks up the packet and moves his way to the town. After that, the further he moves the more he is defamed, degraded and dehumanized. He does not find any place where he is received as a human being, where he can walk with total freedom though he finds a little consolation in the latter part of the novel.

A little later, Bakha feels to buy some sweets from a sweetmeat-seller. The sweet seller not only shows same animal-like treatment to Bakha as earlier cigarettes-seller did but also cheats him not weighing the sweet fairly. The sweet-seller also throws the sweets at Bakha because he does not wish to be polluted touching a sweeper. Bakha knows that he has been cheated and treated as an animal but he dares not to oppose it because of being an untouchable. This plight of Bakha reflects the defenseless position of the untouchable in the Hindu-feudalistic society for ages and centuries.

Carrying the sweet Bakha goes further on his way to the town. On the way he happens to pass close to a caste Hindu. Then the man after being almost touched by a sweeper boy makes an outcry and starts outburst of abusive words at Bakha: “You swine, you dog, why didn’t you shout and warn me of your approach! Don’t you know, you brute, that you must not touch me!” (38). The outcry gathers a big crowd and the crowd adds fuel to the fire or the crowd encourages the man to curse Bakha more. After that, the man becomes more aggressive and slaps on the face of Bakha. In this miserable condition too, Bakha cannot utter even a single word. Such situations point to the endangered position of the untouchables in the society. In such brutal and dehumanizing situation of Bakha, Anand in the novel visualizes the pitiable condition of Bakha as follows:

Bakha’s turban fell off and the jalebis in the paper bag in his hand were scattered in the dust. He stood aghast. Then his whole countenance lit with fire and his hands were no more joined. Tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. (41-42)

The above mentioned lines show that he is very angry with the ill-treatment but he is helpless and just weeps in state of reaction. Then wiping the tears off his face with his hands picks up his tools and walks on to the substitution work of his father. Here, anyone who has a soft heart feels to weep after realizing the plight of Bakha. The tear in the eyes of Bakha is the shock for whole humanity and the slap on his face represents the slapped face of whole lower caste people.

Now as Bakha moves ahead begins shouting “Posh keep away, posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh, sweeper coming!” (42). Bakha is blowing horn for noticing his approach to the people so that the caste Hindus would

not be defiled and he would not be disparaged again. Is Bakha a bus, a truck or a car? So that he should blow horn to save caste people from the possible accident.

Such a hostile situation of Bakha displays the rotten moralistic value of the Hindu society and the insecure status of the untouchables.

Afterwards, Bakha enters the street where a Hindu temple is situated. He has always felt a deep respect for the Hindu deities, the images of which were installed inside the temple though he is always belittled in the name of religion. Bakha starts attacking work in the temple courtyard. He hears the orthodox Hindu worshippers and priests singing the names of their gods. Then he is overcome by his desire to take a sight at the images of the gods and goddesses. He climbs up the stairs which leads to the door of the temple. But, before he could see anything, he is disturbed by a man's raising of shout of "Polluted, polluted, polluted" (52). Bakha becomes completely unnerved; his eyes are covered with darkness. He cannot see anything. He wants to utter a cry of fear, but his voice fails him. He thinks that the man is shouting on seeing him standing very close to the temple door, but the actual reason for the man's cry is quite different. The man is pundit Kali Nath who is in-charge of the temple in the town. By the pundit, Bakha catches the sight of his sister Sohini, a few steps below him. By now the worshippers in the temple has assembled on the stairs where Bakha has been standing. The crowd starts making hue and cries and swears at him (according to the Holy Books, a temple can be polluted by a low-caste man coming within sixty-nine yards of it):

Get off the steps, you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service, you have defiled our temple! Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony. Get down, get away, you dog! (53).

Bakha runs down the steps, past the Pundit below him, to his sister. He has two impulses - that of fear for himself for the crime he has committed by stepping up the stairs to the temple and of fear for his sister for the crime she might have committed, since she stands speechless. At the time, the Pundit turning to the crowd charges Sohini for making an effort of defiling him by contact: “You people have only been polluted from a distance I have been defiled by contact” (53). After this false and cunning blame over Sohini, the hypocritical Pundit vanishes from the crowd. Bakha turning to Sohini finds her in tears. He asks her that what has really happened and the cause of her weeping. She reports that the Pundit had called her to clean the courtyard and the latrine in his house and when she was cleaning the lavatory, he came to her inside and tried to molest her. After knowing the reality Bakha is extremely angry and disgusted. Seeing the outburst of his anger even the crowd flies back. Being madly angry Bakha searches the Pundit in the flying crowd but does not find. Therefore, against the immoral and criminal activities of so-called holy people like the Pundit, Anand lively shows Bakha’s anger and disgust in following words:

His eyes flared wild and red, and his teeth ground between them the challenge: I could show you what that Brahmin dog has done!
He felt he could kill them all. He looked ruthless, a deadly pale and livid with anger and rage. (54)

In the further inquiry of Bakha, Sohini replies that the Pundit caught her and held by her breasts. Now, he becomes more furious and utters his rage to the Pundit: “The son of a pig! I will go and kill him!” (55). Then he blindly rushes to the Pundit but Sohini stops him from going.

Anand through the medium of Bakha, shows his own anger and disgust against the feudal-colonial India not seeing the way out for untouchables' liberation.

Bakha and Sohini now come out of the temple premises. Bakha comes to know from Sohini that there is no food in the house and he must collect some food from the houses of caste Hindus. Suggesting Sohini to go back home, he goes to the direction of an alley where he could ask for food from the caste housewives. He renders from house to house calling out to the housewives for bread: "The sweeper has come for bread, mother!" (59).

However nobody hears him and feeling more tired than disgusted because of the very bad day, starts dozing off on the steps of one house. He goes on dreaming too, but his dream is disturbed by the voice of a *Sadhu* asking for alms. Then one of the housewives who were earlier deaf for the request of Bakha comes out and gives the *Sadhu* some alms with respect while she rebukes Bakha using dirty words "You eater of your master.....may the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! Get up, get up! You eater of your masters! Why didn't you shout if you wanted food? Is this your father's house that you come and rest here?" (63).

After cursing him she goes to upstairs and throws breads at him from the fourth storey of the house as if Bakha were a bird and she were throwing grains at the bird. Poor Bakha picks up the thrown breads and returns home. This underdog dealing of the housewives to Bakha denotes the degenerated and demeaned social status of the untouchables because of their low economic status.

Bakha reaching home narrates his all the bad experiences of the day to his father. At first his father, Lakha becomes furious with him for bringing only two breads. But, later on he tries to console Bakha with the logic that the castes Hindus

ill-treat them because of the compulsion of their religion. The old Lakha also tells Bakha that some of the castes Hindus are kind too.

So, in one way or another, Lakha compromises with the evil practice of the Hindu society for the sake of religion.

The miserable livelihood of the outcaste people also becomes transparent when Rakha, younger brother of Bakha, comes with basket of left over food. Anand writes:

He seemed a true child of the outcastes' colony, where there are no drains, no light, no water; of the marshland where people live among the latrines of the towns-men and in the stink of their own dung scattered about here, there and everywhere, of the world where the day is dark as the night and the night pitch-dark. 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 surroundings. (75)

After eating, Bakha goes to Ram Charan's (washerman's son) house to observe the marriage of his sister although Bakha cannot enter the house because of being the lowest caste among the lower caste.

In the afternoon, Bakha joins Chota and Ram Charan to participate in the hockey match against the boys of the 31st Punjabis. However the game turns into a quarrel because of a dispute occurred between the teams. The younger son of a *babu* is hit by a stone hurled by Ram Charan at the members of the opposite team. The boy is injured and starts bleeding from the back of his head. Bakha picks the boy up in his arms and takes him to his house in the hope of receiving thanks for the help but the boy's mother starts cursing him for defiling her son:

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).

This maltreatment of the woman makes Bakha further depressed and dismayed. After her curse, he returns home being afraid of his father. No sooner does Lakha see him, starts chiding at Bakha for wasting time playing when there are all the works to do at the latrines. Lakha scolds at Bakha because sepoys have been shouting at him for the work. So, Bakha prepares to go to the work but being severely angry Lakha sends Rakha to the work and drives Bakha out of the house:

Get away, you swine, run away from my presence Don't touch that broom or I shall kill you. Go away! Get out of my house. And don't come back! Don't let us see your face again! (109).

Thus, Bakha experiences unjust social oppression one after another in his journey. He is appreciated nowhere, he is only humiliated, dominated and subjected to brutality. Even his own father criticizes him because he is the son of a sweeper, an untouchable, he is only to clear dirt, serve high caste people and he cannot play as the children of the *babus*. Being homeless and insecure everywhere he feels utterly desolate and despair. He is defeated by the dirty realities of the society and being pessimistic wishes to die: "What a day I have had! Unlucky, inauspicious day! I wish I could die!" (111).

3.3 Emancipation in *Untouchable*

Untouchable is the story of Bakha, the protagonist on one single day, beginning at dawn and ending with nightfall. The story is dominated by his actions and reactions where he slowly transforms to emancipation from social oppression.

His journey from dawn to dusk is the journey from social oppression to emancipation.

Emancipation is the consciousness in feelings, attitudes and perception that changes a person to the sublime thought. The interest and eagerness to understand oneself is a fundamental characteristic of emancipation. The spirit of emancipation in *Untouchable* seems to have been greatly influenced by Marx and Gandhi.

Bakha's reaction from the inner level of his mind against Hindus' caste oppression is related with sentimentality. It is the initial process of philosophy that paves the way to emancipation and freedom. There are a number of incidents in the novel which show Bakha getting emancipation. He reacts against the dominating, oppressive and exploitative behaviours of caste Hindus in the form of emotions. His emotions are presented with the help of stream of consciousness and interior monologue.

The novel opens quietly on an autumn morning and through the sweeper boy's stream of consciousness of a single day, the author brings into focus the ups and downs in the drama of his soul so that "by the time the evening approaches the author has been able to build round his hero Bakha....a spiritual crisis of such breadth that it seems to embrace the whole of India" (qtd. in Rajan 28).

Anand delineates the spiritual growth of his hero from innocence to awareness and his emergence from the anonymous mass into the quick of his individual life.

The birth of a new enlightenment in Bakha results from the central dramatic situation in the novel; Bakha's touch to a caste Hindu and being slapped with much inhuman treatment before a crowd of people. He happens to break the laws of the ancient Indian caste system by touching a caste Hindu named Lallaji and is punished for the sin he has done unknowingly. Lallaji says that he has been defiled by the

nearness of the sweeper boy, Bakha and rebukes sternly for not announcing his approach. Lallaji abuses Bakha calling him 'swine' and 'a cockeyed son of a bowlegged scorpion'. Lallaji says that he has to go and take a bath to purify himself. Bakha is overcome by a sense of humility and servility. Now Bakha feels a smouldering rage in his soul. The narrator in *Untouchable* further writes:

His feelings would rise like spurts of smoke from a half-smothered fire, in fitful, unbalanced jerks when the recollection of some abuse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes of remorse inside him. And in the smoky atmosphere of his mind arose dim ghosts of forms peopling the scene he had been through [...] 'Why was all this?' he asked himself in the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions, which was his usual way of communicating with himself. 'Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him!' (42-43).

It is the fateful accident that opens his eyes for the first time and lets him have vague glimpses into the real meaning of his own self, his own place in society:

For them I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable. Untouchable!

That's the word; Untouchable; I am an Untouchable! (43).

This moment is the central point of *Untouchable*; as in most of Anand's novels, it becomes "a crucial moment of realization when the main character fully understands his place in the social order" (qtd. in Rajan 31).

Anand describes the drama of this new enlightenment as follows:

Like a ray of light shooting through the darkness, the recognition of his position, the significance of his lot dawned upon him. It illuminated the

inner chambers of his mind. Everything that had happened to him traced its course upon this light and got the answer... (43).

From the moment of self-realization, which is a testing step towards maturity, begins the hero's spiritual emancipation. The inevitable result of this is in the words of Jack Lindsay, "the gradual, confused but persisting sense of new human values" (qtd. in Rajan 31).

Thus, Bakha's maturity in *Untouchable* develops through the confrontation of the catastrophe of 'touching'. The critical faculty rises in him and makes him able to question himself. The very incident arouses awareness in Bakha and he generates the feeling of protest and rebellion against the caste oppression. This awareness in the novel symbolizes the awareness among untouchables in the community and the social emancipation of entire untouchables in the days to come.

Bakha sees a well-dressed old Hindu touching a stinking bull but he does not understand the meaning of it neither the old caste Hindu. The caste Hindus only know that they are polluted in the touch with a human being like Bakha. When a Brahmin touches a brahminee bull, Bakha puts forth a remarkable logic here.

The narrator sketches the scene skillfully:

The bull moved a yard or two away munching the mouthful of vegetables it had purloined, and then it renewed its attack on the shop as soon as the keeper had turned his head away. 'How queer, the Hindus don't feed their cows although they call the cow "mother"!' Bakha thought. 'Their cattle which go to graze at the brook side are so skinny and feeble. Their cows can't yield more than two seers of milk a day' (45).

It is because of emancipation, Bakha also breaks the laws of caste system when he is overcome with the desire to see the temple gods and goddess. He moves towards the step of the temple but is stopped to move forward with the cries of 'polluted, polluted' rung through the air. But Bakha is not only the person who breaks the laws of caste system. Pundit Kali Nath, a temple priest also breaks the Hindu laws of caste system created by himself. He tries to seduce an untouchable girl, Sohini. But she protests herself from him and tells her brother, Bakha, pointing to the priest, "That man, that man, [...] that man made suggestions to me, when I was cleaning the lavatory of his house there. And when I screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled" (53).

Nobody would know that a priest can fall into such low behaviour as to molest an untouchable girl. But more of it, nobody would believe it. Even Lakha, Bakha's father, would not believe it. Lakha could not believe that a priest, any priest could seduce a girl who belongs to the low caste family. But Bakha believes the truth that the pundit did such a thing. And his belief and reaction on this, can be analyzed as the outcome of his emancipation. The narrator in *Untouchable* describes Bakha's reactions on the priest's misbehaviour to Sohini:

His fist was clenched. His eyes flared wild and red, and his teeth ground between them the challenge: 'I could show you what that Brahmin dog has done!'

He felt he could kill them all. He looked ruthless, a deadly pale and livid with anger and rage. (54)

Bakha vehemently protest the injustice imposed upon untouchables. However, the protest is always internal and uttered with a silent voice because of his low position. The narrator further describes:

All the accumulated furry of the morning was Bakha's soul and the rage of his fresh insult. [...] A subtle heat was mounting from his spine, drying the blood in his body and shrinking his face. 'I wish that hadn't happened at the temple,' he said to himself. 'Then Sohini would have come for the bread. Why did I come to the lane? He moved in a short of trance. Black and filthy, yet orderly with that dignity and decorum which his exotic dress gave him, he was possessed by a curious fire. 'I shouldn't have picked up that bread from the pavement,' he said, and sighed. That seemed to relax him. (65)

Bakha wants to break the conventional mode of his life under which he is born where there would be no caste discrimination. He represents modern world whereas his father Lakha, represents traditional world. Lakha has a submissive nature towards the caste Hindus but Bakha wants to revolt against them. Bakha disagrees with the view of his father and reacts:

They would ill treat us even if we shouted. They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt. That pundit in the temple tried to molest Sohini and then came shouting: 'Polluted, polluted.' The woman of the big house in the silversmith's gulley threw the bread at me from the fourth storey. I won't go down to the town again. I have done with job. (70)

The voice of protest posed by Bakha towards high caste Hindus is certainly due to his acquired spiritual emancipation. He feels that the untouchables themselves have to make their voice audible.

Bakha is a leading character of protest through the novel *Untouchable*. Anand in *Untouchable* describes the rebellious nature of Bakha as:

He resolved to tighten himself. He gnashed his teeth. A warmth rose to his ears. He felt a quickening in his blood. Then came the sweep of his ever-recurring emotions. He boiled with rage. 'Horrible, horrible,' his soul seemed to cry out within him. He felt the most excruciating mental pain he had ever felt in his body. He shivered. His broad, impassive face was pale with hostility. (89)

Untouchables are treated unjustly by caste Hindus. Anand gives an impression that within the present social structure, the problems can be solved with the active help of the high castes people. It can be done by changing people's attitude and hearts as all men are not created equal in a society ordered in a hierarchy of castes. Bakha at first seems to believe the view that their problems could be solved by changing high caste people's hearts. But Bakha feels insulted time and again. The narrator in *Untouchable* further describes:

He felt dejected, utterly miserable. Was the pleasure of Charat Singh's generosity only to be enjoyed for half an hour?..... He loved the child. He had been very sorry when Chota refused to let him join the game. Then why should the boy's mother abuse him when he tried to be kind? She hadn't even let him tell her how it all happened. (106-07)

Bakha scores the goal in the game, but quarrel starts; the quarrel which leads him to another insult. His feelings to be free from the curse of untouchability become more vigorous with every insult he suffers.

The protest of the principal character with his hopeful venture in emancipation is presented in *Untouchable*. It is realistic and expressionist drama of struggle between the fictional ambitions of hero to emerge from the depths of degradation. The new hero, the anti-hero is deliberately uplifted into a classical world and

presented in allegory in modern fiction. Bakha is kept within the framework of personal experience in a time bound world. He may become a symbol of struggle and may later appear as a new mythical figure representing new generation and urging for emancipation. Bakha is a new hero struggling at the dawn. The narrator in *Untouchable* states:

Before now, Bakha had often borne the brunt of his misery with a resigned air of fatalism. He had quietly suffered his father's abuse and satire, and even occasional beatings with a calm that betokened his intense docility and gentleness. He would never lift his head, or his hand, to defend himself against anyone. Today, however, he had had more than enough. The spirit of fire which lay buried in the mass of his flesh had ignited this morning and lay smouldering. A little more fuel and it flared up like a wild flame. (109)

Bakha encounters with Colonel Hutchinson, the chief of the local Salvation Army. For the solution of Bakha's worries, the Colonel suggests him for the conversion into Christianity where is no discrimination of caste. He further requests Bakha for the confession of his sins to be forgiven by God which according to the Colonel ends the troubles: "You confess your sins to me before I convert you to Christianity" (120).

But here, Bakha just like a matured man does not wish to be converted into different religion. He also does not like the idea of being called a sinner while he has committed no sin yet which he could remember. Later he finds preach of the Colonel ironic. He is also struck seeing an ill-natured wife of the Colonel who insults him saying *bhangis* and *chamars*. Thus his rational responses over all these show that he is conscious about the things happening.

Bakha is deeply impressed by the sympathy of Gandhi for the scavengers and sweepers like himself. He also feels great comfort from his speech in *Golbagh*.

“Therefore I prayed that, if I should be born again, I should be so, not as a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, *Shudra*, but as an outcaste, as an Untouchable” (138).

His listening to Gandhi’s speech shows he is sensitive about the problem he is facing and the efforts for solution. He admires Gandhi putting forth the solution of untouchability:

They should now cease to accept leavings from the plates of high-caste Hindus, however clean they may be represented to be. They should receive grain only-good, sound grain, 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. (139)

This is also the way of emancipation which is somehow related with non-violence struggle. And that is more to Bakha’s preference as well.

As Bakha acquires a critical mind, he is able to react the Colonel’s gospel and even Gandhi’s speech. This newly acquired maturity is dramatized with a great force towards the end of the novel when Bakha stands reflecting on the word of Gandhi, “But now, now the Mahatma is blaming us, Bakha felt. That is not fair!” (139). This kind of development of Bakha towards maturity takes him to emancipation.

Towards the end of the novel, it is because of emancipation, Bakha’s rationality develops and he agrees to Poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar’s views that all people are equal in this world.

Some of us are born with big heads, some with small, some with more potential physical strength, some with less. [...] But essentially, that is to say humanly, all men are equal “Take a ploughman from the

plough, wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom'' is an Indian proverb. (145)

In fact, Bakha the protagonist breaks old tradition to search a new way of life. This is why he meets the poet who suggests scavengers to change their profession. The poet further says that the modern sanitary system, the flush system, will bring about the change. The poet concludes that the sweepers can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status. With the introduction of the flush system, change seems to be inevitable. E.M. Forster claims:

It is the necessary climax, and it has mounted up with triple effect.

Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now 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 the depths of the sky, a change is at hand. (Iyegner 338)

Besides all pricks and pinches, the novel ends hopefully where Bakha is delighted to know the introduction of machine, which clears dung and change his and his fellows' life. Both the Mahatma and the young poet create in him a new desire to know more about the path to his salvation. Anand concludes the novel *Untouchable* with a note of faith and idealism. As Bakha returns home his mind is raised with the hope that soon the flush system would come then the sweepers ''can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society'' (146).

With the advent of dawn, Bakha is emancipated spiritually. He fervently hopes for his work to be calculated in the society without the tag of 'untouchable.' In fact, the manifest plea in the novel is also for the total abolition of untouchability.

Chapter-Four

Consciousness as Emancipation in *Untouchable*

With the support of religious power the Brahmins and the priests have imposed their discourse upon the outcastes and downtrodden. They have developed the heterogeneous images of untouchables to be dirt, squalor, unclean, uncouth; hence unable to sustain their own lives by themselves. The casteism and Brahminical norms and values have marginalized the untouchables.

It is because of consciousness; the Indian Writers in English writing from the perspectives of subaltern brought the movement for the emancipation of untouchables in the literature. This movement criticized the Brahminical orthodoxies and concentrated basically on the experiences of anger, agony and revolutionary hope. They have tried to understand the world of poverty and untouchability in terms of metaphysical dismay over the nature of human relationship and dismantle all types of stereotypical images of the untouchables that have been generated by the high caste Hindus and the temple priests in the traditional Hindu society. They are making various efforts to re-study and re-write the history of marginalized people. The subjects of writing for the Indian writers have been the lower class people, their misery, exploitation and the emancipation.

Anand's *Untouchable* deals about untouchability, exploitation, caste discrimination, protest and the question of emancipation. Bakha, the protagonist in the novel wants the Indian untouchables to shake off the slavery of the untouchables and achieve the emancipation.

Emancipation is an internal process. It involves a process of liberation of the self from the old internalized prejudices. In case of untouchables, the ultimate goal in this process is dissolution of untouchability and a construction of cultural tools

required for alternative modes of thinking. The necessity of change of mind is not just a matter of untouchable consciousness. Change is needed as well among those high castes who believe they are born leaders. The old discrimination barriers enclosing untouchables in their multi-faceted submissive status must be broken.

Consciousness of the self produces the love for human dignity. It is consciousness that leads untouchables to independence and freedom from the submissive mentality. Self-confidence is a way to make a separate identity where they identify them from others; they become strong enough to decide their behavior and action. Strengthening self with the positive image of the self is an internal phenomenon that promotes the features like independence, self-assertion and self-awareness.

Untouchable shows a firm belief that by observing human values and creating awareness among all, many of the problems faced by the untouchables in existing social system can be solved. Bakha is forced to visit the town which is full of evils of caste discrimination and which needs immediate social reformations and the cause of these evils are the Brahminical orthodoxies. The novel is a realistic and expressionist drama of struggle of a hero to emerge from the depths of degradation towards emancipation which represents the struggle of entire new generation struggling for freedom.

At first, the protagonist has been depicted as a simple, innocent, direct in his responses, and he is engaged in a straight conformation with society. He is a victim and accepts sufferings with meek submission. He does not take a conscious and creative role in changing his destiny. Pessimism envelops his life.

In the middle of the novel, after the havoc of 'touching', he becomes the man of action and the man of destiny. The vivid drama of his inner feelings show human

mind in all its contradictions. The mature hero always has been engaged in an inner struggle to sort out right and wrong.

Again, in the third and final phase, the hero has been developed into a symbolic figure. He becomes a viable symbol of India's New Age. This kind of development of the main character is an indication of the process of maturing towards emancipation from social oppression.

Thus Anand's *Untouchable* shows the hero's gradual growth from the simplicity and directness to the depth and complexity and a rebellion. He becomes the leading figure to rebel against the old Hindu caste system. He tries to convince his father about the injustice of caste system. He tells it to his friend Ram Charan and Chota. He even takes part in the speech by Gandhi in *Golbagh*. The development of the story in the novel shows him as an active hero and his wish to create a new casteless, classless society.

As a matter of fact, Bakha's journey from the dawn to the dusk symbolizes a journey from social oppression to emancipation.

Emancipation is a fearless situation where one has familial love, social inspiration, self-awareness, and freedom to work in the public field, within the limit of social ethos. Liberation brings happiness and realization of self. Self refers to the inner being of a person, which directs and controls his/her social interaction.

Serious consciousness of self-existence makes persons protest against any condescending behavior from the oppressors. The consciousness inside them of having inner-capacity enables to ask questions and take decisions for themselves.

Because of Bakha's consciousness developed within him, he stands reflecting critically on an old Hindu's reverent 'touching' of a brahminee bull (immediately after the slap scene). He advances towards the temple gate fearlessly. He tries to

avenge the priest's misbehaviors towards his sister Sohini. He regrets of having picked up a loaf of bread from the pavement thrown to him by a Hindu house wife.

The new consciousness of Bakha is again dramatized in the novel with the contrast between him and his father from the reaction to priest's reported attempt to molest Sohini. And later in the evening, when he stands faced with three distinct possibilities, he has acquired a critical mind sufficiently mature to discern the irrelevance of the Colonel's gospel to his situation and to react with instinctive discretion to the highly appealing words of Gandhi. This newly acquired maturity is dramatized with great force towards the end of the novel when Bakha stands reflecting on the words of Gandhi. And at length, when he walks back home at sunset to tell his father all that Gandhi said about them and what poet has said about the machine, he is a different person, much different from what he was when he walked in the morning towards the town to sweep the main road.

After a long critical analysis, this researcher has come to the conclusion that Anand's *Untouchable* demonstrates a journey of Bakha, the protagonist, from social oppression to emancipation. This kind of situation, however, is not of Bakha's only; it is the representation of the situation of the entire untouchables. Anand has shown Hindu casteism, a means of social oppression and his portrayal of Bakha's emancipation through the emergence of consciousness in him (Bakha) is a kind of spiritual emancipation. It symbolizes the new generation of untouchables and the oppressed entering into emancipation and freedom in the days to come. For further emancipation of untouchables and to create harmonious society, consciousness of the high caste people towards the problems of untouchability and their upliftment are equally essential.

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