



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## The Rebuke of The Marginalised as Seen In The Novel “Untouchable” By Mulraj Anand

Vinila Dani D A ,

PG Student,

Department of English (SF),

Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore, India

**Abstract:** This study has been undertaken to investigate the roots of the history of untouchables and dalit writing. To comprehend the evil treatment and the bad form happened to marginalized and to light out the enduring of the lower caste people. To see how the minimized figured out how to get out of the bad form and enduring, with regard to the novel “Untouchable” by Mulraj Anand.

**Keywords – Lower Caste, Dalit, Sufferings.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Mulraj Anand’s novel, *Untouchable* is called the creative manifesto of Dalits in India. The character, Bakha (victim of social evil) in the novel is drawn from the lowest caste of Indian society. The central figure of the novel Bakha is able to interrogate issues well above his situation in life, such as caste inequities, economic condition and the role of the colonizer. The novel *Untouchable* narrates a day in the life of Bakha an unclean outcaste, who suffers number of mortifications in the course of his day. The novel is about the life of an outcaste boy named Bakha, a young sweeper living in the outcaste’s colony of a cantonment (military station in British India) set in North India. The colony becomes the living symbol of the age old practice of the sin of Untouchability with pseudo-religious vigour. The life in the Town and a Quarters with all colours and smells, the chants and the noise, the fifth and the cruelty, the kindness and the humanity. Anand presented a powerful appraisal of the Indian Caste System and British Colonial domination of India which has increased the suffering of the outcaste.

### II. OVERVIEW OF THE NOVEL

The novel begins with an autumn morning. Bakha is in bed, half-awake, covered by a worn-out, greasy blanket, on faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor in a corner of the twelve feet by five, dank, dingy, one - roomed mud - house. It was too early for him to wake up because the sun has not risen. His younger sister Sohini slept on a cot next to him and his father lakha and brother rakha snored from under a patched, ochre – coloured quilt, on a broken string bed. Night had been cold in the town of bulashah, but days are hotter as night time. Bakha, a young man of eighteen, strong and able - bodied, son of lakha, who is the head of all bulashah’s sweepers.

Bakha’s day starts with his father yelling at him to get out of bed and leave to clean the latrines. The relationship between the father and the son is artificial because of the thought of British continuously intrudes him and because of Lakha’s laziness. His chief duty is to keep the three rows of public latrines clean and out of smell. Bakha has worked in the barracks of a British regiment. He had looked at tommies (British Private Soldiers), with wonder and amazement when he first went to live at the British regimental barracks (Soldiers lodgings) with his uncle. They treated him as a human being and he started to think of himself as a superior being among his fellow-outcaste. Chota, son of leather- worker, who regularly oils his hair and parted it at the centre like the Englishmen on one side, wore a pair of shorts at hockey and smoked cigarettes like them. Ram charan, son of the washer man who tried to imitate Chota and Bakha.

Bakha partially viewed, during his temporary stay there. British Private Soldier’s routine life was like sleeping on low canvas beds covered tightly with blankets; eating eggs; drinking tea and wine in tin mugs; going to parade and then walking down to the bazaar with cigarettes in their mouths and small silver mounted canes in their hands. Whenever Bakha is over powered by the thought of the tommies (British Private Soldiers) he wishes to live their life. He asked one Tommy to gift him a pair of trousers. A Hindu Sepoy, gave him a pair of boots and puttees (bandage). He very well knows that they are white sahibs (lords) and tries to copy them

as much as he could. His father was angry and the boys from the out castes colony cut jokes for the unusual way of dressing, calling him "Pilpali sahib" (imitation sahib). Bakha thinks of his father, and compares himself with his sister and brother.

As he was still lying in bed, Bakha hears his father's shout; "Getup, Ohe you Bakha, Ohe son Of A pig! get up and attend the latrines or the Sepoys will be angry". He is displeased at the abuse of his father as he is already feeling depressed that morning. His mind has fond memories of his dead mother and the days when she was alive. She showed him love and care whole heartedly which warmed his heart. She uses to give him a brass tankard full of a boiling hot mixture of water, tealeaves and milk. It was so pleasing to him and the taste of that hot sugary liquid made Bakha's mouth watered for it on the night before the morning on which he had to drink it, after drinking it he moves to the work happily. Bakha often thinks about his mother and after his mother death the burden of looking after the family fell on him.

Bakha came out of his day dream as he hears the shout; "oh, Bakha! Oh, Bakha! Oh you scoundrel of a sweeper's son! Come and clear a latrine for me!". It was Havildar Charat Singh, famous hockey player of the 38th Dogras regiment. On hearing the call, Bakha took off his blanket off his body and moved to his work. Havildar Singh suffers from piles and blames Bakha for his ailment. Though his job is dirty, Bakha remains comparatively clean and he looks intelligence, sensitive. Singh was thoroughly impressed by Bakha's quickness and efficiency in doing job. "You are becoming a 'gentleman', ohe Bakhya". Singh was feeling kind, and expressed his good - will by giving him a hockey stick to fulfil his secret and long cherished dream, Bakha respected his sponsor and bent down to continue his work. When Bakha was above to complete his work in the third row of latrines for the second time during the morning, he feels a sharp and powerful pain in his back and stretches himself out from the bent posture. After cleaning the latrines for fourth time he was reminded of his next job.

Smoke gushed out of the chimney with a great speed, which made him conscious of his next job. Bakha felt thirsty and lips were dry. He rushed to his house and entered the room, by looking at the utensils he felt he wants to drink tea. Bakha looked around the room and found that his father is still under the quilt and his brother was not in the room. He notices his sister blowing fire in between two woods, he asked for water and finds out that there is no water in the house. Sohini goes to fetch water from the well and outcastes are not allowed to stand around the well. They consider polluted when the low caste draws water and they does not have a well for their own. Sohini reaches the well and waits patiently for a benefactor to offer her water.

Suddenly Sohini sees Gulabo, a fair-complexioned women mother of Ram Charan. Gulabo starts abusing Sohini right and left using abusive words "You bitch! You prostitute! Wonton! And your mother hardly dead". Sohini gave a reply that not to abuse her without any reason. Golabo still abuse Sohini telling "You annoy me with your silence, you illegally begotten! You eater of dung and drinker of urine! You bitch of sweeper women!" Sohini got help from Pundit, he recognised her as sweepers daughter and poured the water into Sohini's pitcher to three - quarters full. Pundit called Sohini to clean the courtyard of his house at the temple. While returning home her father started to abuse her "I thought you were dead and something you daughter of pig!" asked Sohini for tea and bread. While drinking tea lakha faked that he has pain in his side and informed Bakha to sweep the roads instead of him.

Bakha leaves the house taking his tools and going to town he got some candies and cigarettes. A high-caste man brushes against him, high caste man started to shout as "This dirty dog bumped right into me. So unmindfully do these sons of bitches walk in the streets" Bakha stands motionless and hopeless expression a group of people gathered to see what was going on. A Muslim vendor who showed sympathy towards him before leaving the touched man slaps Bakha across his face. Bakha was aware of his beinh as untouchable and starts to announce "Posh, Posh, Sweeper Coming". After roaming aimlessly, he rushed to the temple and suddenly hears a loud cry "Polluted, Polluted, Polluted!" by the priest. Bakha catches sight of his sister Sohini standing at the short distance from him. Sohini informs him that Pundit Kali Nath has sexually assaulted her but the priest attracted the sympathy of the crowd by accusing him of having polluted the premises. Though Bakha feels helpless and takes hold of Sohini in order to go home. After reaching the outcaste colony Bakha remember that his father asked him to collect food for the family.

Bakha goes to the Silversmith's colony and shouts: "Bread for the sweeper, mother; Bread for the sweeper". No one responds to his request he felt defeated and tired, falls asleep leaning against the door. Bakha sees a dream where he finds himself on a railway platform. Again he imagines himself in a small village with narrow muddy streets. Finally imagines him in a school where boys are reading aloud. Bakha suddenly hears a loud shout "Alakh, Alakh," of a half-naked sadhu and the women coming out with chappatis and dal for the holy man. Women got angry when she saw Bakha on the threshold of the house and scolds him. Bakha asks for food, she flings the chappatis as if giving to a dog. He returns home with two chappatis and does know how he would explain the situation to his father. Bakha did not open up anything to his father what had happened to him and Sohini in the town. Lakha scolds Bakha and expresses the hope that is younger son Rakha might bring something to eat. Bakha and the family members starts to eat, but then is disgusted by the idea of eating the leaving of the high - caste people.

Bakha lies to the family that he is invited by Ram Charan to his sister's marriage. Bakha had a desire to marry the sister of Ram Charan but the girl's mother thought it below dignity. Being washerman, they considered themselves superior to Bakha in the hierarchy even among the outcaste. When he reaches the place of marriage, he meets his other friend Chota. After seeing Ram Charan, both of them called him out so that they go for playing hockey. Bakha was lost in thoughts and started to behave strange by not answering to their jovial behaviour. On learning the about the unhappy and disgusting experience, both express sympathy and wonder if they could catch hold of the swine-like Pundit to kill him on the spot. On his way to Singh's house, Bakha once again sees with longing eyes at a sola hat for which he had always longed to own that kind of hat. Bakha ultimately meets Singh, who offered him tea and gives the promised hockey stick. He is filled with deep gratitude for Singh for his kindness and leaves the barracks in a happy mood.

Bakha goes into the hockey game on fire and there he meets the military officers two son. The younger son is not allowed to play the game as they feel that he might get hurt during the game and Bakha scores the first goal. In fact, the younger son does get hurt and is carried by Bakha when he is still bleeding. Officer's wife accuses Bakha of defiling her house by coming there and surprised to see her son injured. This confuses his mind and annoys him. Bakha is ill-treated by his father for wasting time instead of cleaning the latrines. When he is told to leave the house he feels despair and think what he has done to deserve the misery he was experiencing. He says that he would rather prefer dying to being ill-treating both at home and outside. Bakha leaves home and takes shelter under tree far from home.

The chief of the Local Salvation Army, a British man named Colonel Hutchinson according to him Christianity and Christ stands for equality of all human beings. Bakha is overwhelmed by the foreigner's interest in him but is unable to understand what he told about the love of Christ, the Original sin and other related stories. He also cannot bring himself to accepting conversion to Christianity for the sake of equality. The rude behaviour and insulting remarks about the sweepers made Colonel Hutchinson's wife fill Bakha's mind with pain once again and he starts moving aimlessly.

This time Bakha moves toward the town and ends up at the train station. He suddenly hears people shouting "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai" along with the people from all classes and caste together, here he sees a Sea of Humanity. He realises that it was only he who can bring equality among the human beings. Fortunately Mahatma Gandhi speaks on the topic Evil of untouchability in Indian Society. During the speech, Gandhi declares untouchability to be a great sin in Hinduism and tells untouchable to give up their evil habits of drinking alcohol and eating meat. He asks them not to accept the remaining food of high-caste Hindus, expresses the opinion that all wells, temples, roads, schools and sanatoriums must be declared open for the untouchables also. The concluding words of Gandhi "May God Give You Strength To Work Out Your Soul's Salvation To The End!". Bakha is deeply touched by the concluding words of Mahatma's speech which seemed to convey Bakha's own feeling of horror and indignation at the ill-treatment of the untouchable by the caste Hindu. After the leave of Mahatma, pair of educated Indian men has a lively discussion about the content of the speech. One man a lawyer named R.N.Bashir, and other young poet named Iqbal Nath Sarshar discuss about the flush system for sewage disposal and recognising equal rights, privileges and opportunities for everyone as was the case with the legal system.

Bakha feels bewildered and his mind is filled with gloom once again when he is left alone. The conflict in his mind makes him more miserable and he felt a piece of hope in his mind he decides to go home and seek some solace by relating the story about Gandhi's visit and share the speech with his father.

### III. THE UNTOUCHABLE AS THE PINNACLE OF DALIT LITERATURE

Mulkraj Anand, a reformist, who is against the caste system in India. He feels that the caste system should be thrown off from the Hindu Society, he thinks that it is a cruel act. Hindu Society believes that Caste is determined by the birth, an individual's socialization is largely influenced by caste values. He feels karma to be a harmful practice that is prevailing among the high-caste people of Hindu society. It quotes as: all men suffer in their present life because of the wrong deeds in their previous life. He tells that the doctrine of karma is cruel and foolish device. To avoid suffering, Anand has place man at the centre of all things in the novel. Bakha did not suffer because of his misdeeds but because he is treated as an untouchable.

Anand's hero (Bakha), the marginalised, does not suffer from any tragic flaw. He is a victim of the cruel society and his fate is determined by his ancestors. He tries to free himself from the social inequality, injustice, he also seeks his own identity, which begins with the recognition of his position as a untouchable in society and sense of isolation. He has an unquestionable faith in caste discrimination, hypocrisy, cruelty, deceit and inhumanity. In this novel Bakha, suddenly realise his real position in the caste order. It is a moment of 'Self-Revelation' for him. "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable!". That's the word! Untouchable!. I am an untouchable!".

The novel Untouchable is about the life of an outcaste Bakha, a young sweeper's living in the outcaste's colony of a cantonment set in North India. The colony becomes the living symbol of the age old practice of the sin of untouchability with pseudo-religious vigour. The life in the town with all colour and smell, the chants and the noises, the filth and the cruelty, the kindness and the humanity, the shifting scenes in the temple, the market-place and the playground, but we are not allowed time to ponder on the general effect, for we find ourselves constantly shifted and engulfed by a new situation at every turn and confronted with new cruelties and absurdities. Anand gives his message of humanism, socialism, brotherhood, economic freedom and equality.

Bakha is destined to remain a victim of social and religious evils which has bounded him from the birth. Writer powerfully criticised upon the Indian religion and the culture, the caste system and the British Colonial domination. This shows the hardship that he has to face in the course of the day. He does his job efficiently and the hard toil makes him very strong. The technic used is verily a cross-section of the horrible and the holy. The general effect is panoramic, as good and evil are thrown together, as in a real life.

As the novel progress, though he does not find any sign of hope from his miserable situation that he undergoes each and every day, he gets three different solution to problem from three different ways: from a christian missionary to become a christian, from inspiring speech of Gandhiji to fight out untouchability and from the conversation of two young poet who suggests improved sanitation as the only way to drive out untouchability. At the end of the novel, Bakha found, "thinking of everything he has heard, though he could not understand it all". Anand selected the final scene of his novel to show a small piece of hope, self-awareness and self-appropriation of individual in the Hindu society, there is a strong indication of what Bakha has endured throughout his one day's journey has had an enormous effect on the way he appropriates himself within his own culture.

Bakha seeks for freedom in a feudal society which has unquestioned faith in caste discrimination, hypocrisy, cruelty, deceit and humanity. We stand docile and bewildered at the immensity of the horror, hoping for a change. India believes that it has long ago solved the question of untouchability by passing an act all against it in parliament. In the novel Untouchable, at the end part writer has given three different solutions to get out of the social evil.

The first solution to get out of this evil act by converting into christian: Chief Colonel Hutchinson called Bakha to convert himself as Christian so that he can be free from untouchability. Hutchinson tells him that Christianity and Christ stands for equality of all human beings. Colonel started to interact with Bakha and ask him whether he has some problems, he himself gave Bakha a solution for his problem "If You Are In Trouble, Come To Jesus". Bakha was confused, many question raised in his mind like, "Who Is Jesus

Or Yessuh Messih?”. Colonel took him to church and started to tell Bakha about Christ, he led him on the wings of song “Life Is Found In Jesus, Only There 'Tis Offered Thee; Offered Without Price Or Money 'Tis The Gift Of God Sent Free”.

Bakha was struck and carried away by the confusion and proud that he is invited by a Sahib, he again and again raised the same question to Colonel “Who Is Yessuh Messih?”. After while Bakha was bored and asked Colonel, Do They Pray To Yessuh Messih?. With an answer yes, Colonel wanted Bakha to turn into Christian but he was lagging back and found that new follower was losing interest. Colonel again started to sing the next stanza: “O Calvary! O Calvary! It Was For Me Christ Died On The Cross Of Calvary!”(for the transgression of people, he was stricken), Bakha understood that Christ sacrificed himself in cross out of love for everyone, “to help all from the segregation; the rich and the poor, the Brahmins and the Bhangi,”. Bakha realised that there is no differences between rich and poor, high - caste and low - caste in the eyes of Christ. He was happy and eager to know more about Christ. Colonel answered him, “He is our saviour. He is son of God. We are sinners”. Bakha was again confused, “why are we sinners”. Colonel explain about the sin which was committed by Adam and Eve during the creation of heaven and earth, he also asks Bakha to confess all sins, so that he will be forgiven by Christ. Bakha was not able to accept Christ instead he tells hat he know Ram, but not Christ. The idea of Confessing was bit confusing to Bakha and took him to his home to show who is Chirst. This was the first way showed by the writer to Bakha to escape from untouchability.

The second solution to get out of the evil through the speech of Mahatma Gandhi: Bakha hears the speech of Mahatma Gandhi in the platform. Gandhiji appears as a character who speaks about the evils of the untouchability. Gandhiji's life mission is to eradicate untouchability and to uplift the marginalised. Bakha see the sea of humanity, he finds people from all caste and class gathered together to hear the speech of Mahatma Gandhi. He addressed the untouchable has “Harijans”, Bakha wondered what does it means. It was coined and used by Gujarati Brahmin Saint. Gandhi considered as a maoral crime, “if untouchability is not wrong, then nothing in this world is wrong”. In his speech Gandhi advices untouchables not to accept the leftover food from the high – caste, he tells the untouchable to come out of drinking alcohol and smoking. He also tells that untouchable is the greatest blot in Hinduism. He further tells that, “all public wells, school, temples, roads, living place should be declared common to all” . The removal of untouchability requires a basic transformation in the general attitude of common man, “the salvation of the marginalised people will come only when the high-caste hindu people is made to think and is forced to feel that he must alter his ways. I want revaluation in the mentality of the high class”.

The third solution to get out of the evil, he understood through the conversation between Sarshar and Bashir: After the speech of Mahatma Gandhi two educated men discussed about the content of speech. They both discussed loudly about the Gandhiji's opinion and ideas. Bakha was not able to understand the full conversation because of the high language between both of them but some information enters his head. When they start to discuss about the introduction of “Flush System, Water Closet and Main Drainage System” in India to clean the human waste without human handling and to give the untouchable their equal rights in education, medical, religion, social events.

With the above three solutions the protagonist of the novel Bakha feels the smell of relief and hope. Initially Bakha felt he was superior, when Hutchinson invites him to convert into christian. He felt happy and he was eager to know more about Christ when he comes to know that all human beings are equal in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Secondly, when Bakha noticed people from all the caste and the class joined together to hear the speech Of Mahatma Gandhi in the platform. In his life time he sees people standing together without having the idea of polluting. Finally Bakha felt the smell of hope when he lends his ears to the conversation of two educated people, which advocates the introduction of mechanized sanitation in India. At the end we find Bakha “thinking of everything he had heard, though he could not understand it all”.

#### IV. SUMMATION

The novel Untouchable concentrates on the injustice occurring in the life of marginalised. The writer depicted the evil practise in the life of oppressed people. In Indian culture, discrimination is done on the bases of the caste, class, gender and color. The Varna system has played a major role in destruction of our country people. From the novel Untouchable by Mulkraj Anand, we are able to understand the problem faces by the Dalit people. The caste system is deep-rooted in the hearts of High class Hindu people. Untouchable prefer to be called as Dalits but nowadays they are called as “Scheduled Caste”. They are ranked based on their jobs, dealing with death, excrement or dirt- such as butchers, latrine cleaners, street cleaner, leather workers – are polluting to other castes and touching them should be avoided.

On seeing the characters Bakha and Sohini in the novel we can clear understand that untouchables are not allowed to enter the town. They stay outside the village without any basic needs. In the beginning of the novel writers has described the setting of the shelter of the protagonist as One Roomed-Mud House, from this we can imagine they doesn't have a proper house to live. Even in the middle we find the protagonist of the novel goes into Silversmith Colony asking for food, “mother, food for the sweeper”, from the above line we can understand that the sweepers eat the remaining food of the High class Hindu people. We finally understand the condition of Untouchables that they are not considered as human being, when Bakha cries out loudly “Posh! Posh! Sweeper Boy Coming!”.

Sohini is a young girl from Dalit community, younger sister of Bakha, who has a beautiful physical appearance. Normally untouchables are not allowed to get in the temple and go near the public well. Near the well she is abused by Ram Charan's mother for no reason, she waited near the well for a long time so that some high men will fetch them water from the well with sympathy. There she gets help from Pundit Kali Nath and invited to clean the courtyard of his house inside the temple. Sohini is sexually abused by Kali Nath and when she protested the touch of the priest he attracted the sympathy of the people by crying out loudly Polluted! Polluted!. With this incident we understand when the untouchable touches the high class people without their knowledge is a crime and the low caste is touched by the High caste people consciously is not a crime.

With reference to the novel, caste system has existed for around three thousand years, based on the Varna system. Dalits are said to be polluted, impure and unworthy to touch. They work as – cobblers, skinning dead, sweepers, manual scavengers, drummer to bring the new of the dead, landless agricultural labourers. They face different types of segregation in housing; separate tumbler, segregation in seating and food arrangements, Devadasi system, discrimination of health care, segregation of Dalit children in school, restricted access to land, discrimination in access to public places. Traditionally Dalits are not allowed to have their own land. They have land for house and no land to grow food, they only work for them. Some Dalits get the discarded chicken from

restaurant to eat. Many of them suffer from Tuberculosis, Malnutrition, Typhoid. These types of discrimination exist before independence but legally there are no “Dalits” after independence, the Indian Constitution officially abolished “Untouchability”.

The Indian Constitution created three broad categories of underprivileged group as a part to help Dalits through welfare and administrative means. Three groups: 1. Scheduled Caste, 2. Scheduled Tribes, 3. Other Backward classes. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribes comprises about 16.6% and 8.6% respectively, of Indian population. Since Independence, the scheduled caste and the scheduled tribe were given reservation status, guaranteeing political representation. Legislation, programs and reforms have gone a long way towards improving the health, education, political representation and economic opportunities of Dalits. There are laws that guarantee Dalits the right to enter temples and shops. Many Dalits have escaped their low status by converting into Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, in the past century. Other Dalits has shifted to cities from villages so that they can be free from caste system. The best way for a Dalit to free himself from the caste system is to get a government job or university scholarship. Some Dalits are educated in Catholic schools and Jesus missions. The Kasturba Balika school in New Delhi provides education for underprivileged girls most of them Dalit. After eighty years, Dalits have become a powerful political force in India and enjoy greater access to education. Some Hindu temples allow Dalits to serve as priests. Although they still face discrimination from some quarters, the Dalits are untouchable no longer.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes Act, 1989 is an act of the Parliament of India enacted to prevent atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The act is popularly known as the SC/ST Act, POA, the Prevention of Atrocities Act or the Atrocities Act, Prevention of Civil Rights Act 1955 or Indian Penal Code. In August, 2018, the parliament of India passed the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Amendment bill. Till now the untouchability related oppression still continued in villages and remote areas. Nowadays the people follow modern methods of discrimination and inhuman ill-treatment. Modern form of untouchability is by forcing Dalits not to vote.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Untouchable - Mulkraj Anand, publication Penguin Books (1940)
- [2] Intraspection and Retraspection Of Dalit Literature – N.Shanthanik, publication Sarup & Sons Books Publishers, New Delhi (2010).
- [3] Indian Legendary Writers In English – Jaydeep Sarangi, publication Authors Press Global Network (2009)
- [4] Mulkraj Anand Critic Spectrum – Dr. Mrs. Farhana Khan, Shree Niwas Publication (2005).
- [5] Contemporary Indian Writing In English And American Literature – Prof. B.L. Yadav, Mangalam Publication (2010).
- [6] Humanism In Indian English Fiction – T.S. Anand, publication Creative Books (2005).