



ISSN: 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Anand's Realism In Indian Novels

Joe George Emmatty

Lecturer In English, Thiagarajar Polytechnic College
Alagappanagar P.O., Thrissur (District), Kerala, India

Abstract:

Untouchability is so deep rooted in the Indian society that we can still see the effects of it on the fringes of modern India. On the face of it everyone acts as if they do not discriminate, but where do the Hindus go with a century of consciousness and conditioned mind that lived in the society where the caste system is still rampant. Change is coming, not in the offing, but slowly and Mulk Raj Anand was able to bring out the subject of this discrimination which prevailed in the Hindu dominated India.

Bakha is a young man, proud and even attractive, yet none the less he is an outcast in Hindu Indian caste system: an Untouchable. In deceptively simple prose this groundbreaking novel describes a day in the life of Bakha, sweeper and toilet-cleaner, as he searches for a meaning to the tragic existence he has been born into - and comes to an unexpected conclusion.

*Mulk Raj Anand in his first novel *Untouchable* (1935) has shown that none of the western theoretical models of attaining social justice are successful in the Indian context. The Rousseauistic, the Hegelian and the Marxist models, were not appropriate in theorising the tragedy of Bakha's deterministic existence and the stubborn order of the Hindu caste system that is responsible for the creation of the Bakhas of society. Ironically, the 'lowest dregs' of mankind in western literatures can at least rebel, but Bakha as an untouchable by birth, cannot even dream of it. Munno, the 'hero-anti-hero' of *Coolie* (1936), being a 'Kshatriya' who is not enslaved by caste, can at least fight back. While Bakha's complicated existence as an untouchable is based on the 'varnashram' structure of Hinduism, Munoo's fate as a rickshaw-puller is tied to his dehumanising work as a coolie. The fact remains that both Bakha and Munoo are helpless labourers whose work has been permanently devalued and misappropriated. However, Anand was capable of stretching the metaphors of untouchable and coolie to a universal scenario suggesting that the predicament existed universally. In other words, still the major part of humanity comprises either untouchables or coolies. Thus the two metaphors can undoubtedly be considered as collective metaphors of sociology, history and metaphysics of human suffering and man's inhumanity to fellow man. The query is, how far can art address the moral problem of human slavery, indignity and suffering.*

Key words: Labour, untouchability, consciousness, justice, casteism, humanism *Untouchable*

1.Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand's first novel is a highly charged intellectual discourse on the illusion of infallible relationship between work and untouchability, and *Coolie* is a humanistic discourse on the subject of human labour. It may be argued that the central issue in either case is the philosophy of work and that untouchable and coolie are analogical metaphors of human enslavement, subjugation and oppression. While the setting of both the novels is in the backdrop of caste dominated colonial India, the two metaphors, as developed by Anand, have a much more comprehensive meaning and context, perhaps too much larger than could possibly be carried by the respective narratives or even allowed by the tenuous scope of history. It is indeed true that Bakha, the protagonist of *Untouchable*, is an Indian sweeper and Munoo of *Coolie* an Indian coolie, but they are universally accepted and have become global figures. The two metaphors provide a heartbreaking commentary on man's inhumanity to fellow man in the history of the human race, especially on the formation of collusive centres of power and the unprecedented complexity of these hegemonies structures in controlling human beings.

The novels by Mulk Raj Anand reflect nationalism, social concerns, and Gandhian ideology and Nehruvian socialism. Anand's novels are recognized as an instrument to see the history of the Indian novel in English. His experiments with social realism and the exuberance of North Indian dialects, laid the foundation for linguistic and cultural representations in future novels. The classic foreword to *Kanthapura* has been recognized as a manifesto for the path Raja Rao had opted and preached for Indian Writing in English. He resolved the dichotomy of foreign (English) language and methods of Indian story telling tradition through a systematic

indigenisation of English and a spirit and tempo of Indian life. He deviated from the sacrosanct structure of European novel and shaped it on the lines of the epic tradition of India. He complemented Anand's effort of introducing North India to Indian English Novels by bringing in

An unusual blend of South Indian – French cultural outlooks and realities.

2.Social Realism

An image of hegemony rather than of the invocation of spirituality. The swastika never represented Dalit aspirations but rather Aryan hegemonic aggressiveness which stand against the culture and aspirations of the Dalit-Bahujan masses. Trishul a weapon of violence. Historically was a weapon for use against the Sudras, Chandalas and tribals by the Hindu upper castes.

Hinduism as a religion and Brahmins as the priestly class never distributed books of the other religions like Christianity and Islam distributed books like the Bhagavad Gita to low castes.

In the battle plan that the brahmanic upper castes have generated, the Dalit-Bahujans are to be used as the trishul-wielding foot soldiers. In the political realm they want the Dalit-Bahujans to the Hindus for purpose of vote enumeration and electoral victory by without any right to rule brahmanic Hindus. Several organic productive Dalit-Bahujan symbols were constructed around Buddhism. Hinduism has never recognized.

Hinduism never owned such symbols of production and transportation and Hindutva ideologues even today treats Ashoka with contempt. Against Ashoka they projected Samudra Gupta or Vikramaditya who killed thousands of Dalit-Bahujans in war and out of it. These kings lived by constantly oppressing and killing the masses and hence are heroes to the upper castes.

Hinduism constructed symbols that negate productivity, and focus on was. Both the holy Hindu epics centre on wars. The caste system constructed out of violent modes rallied round violence against the low castes.

“The people who were killed and maimed by all the Hindu weapons were Dalit-Bahujans” Sudra symbols like turmeric and neem leaves, the basis of folk medicines, and the plough, spade, pot and wheel could never become spiritually respectable items within the Hindu tradition. ‘useless’ mystic and warlike symbols of Brahminism are not at all families for the low castes.

Giriraj Kishore, 2001, Hindu society cannot afford to do away with the caste system. According to him, the notion of equal rights to all castes will violate the basic rights of upper castes. All upper caste leaders of the Sangh Parivar VHP oppose reservation for OBCs.

The upper castes opposed the entry of OBCs both in government and the private sector employment during the Mandal agitation. The top dwija castes are getting everything without suffering and that is what dharmic Hinduism is. Hinduism is religion that pretends to be essentialist, but is existentialist in its day-today life. When he began to battle with brahminic barbarity, the thought of silencing Manu forever.

Came to the conclusion that in order to rebuild India as a modern nation Hinduism as a religion must be annihilated and in its place spiritually democratic religions must be nurtured. He embraced Buddhism and ended his life in the tradition of Buddha. He wanted to make equality between a Dalit and a Brahmin. The SCs would have become either Buddhists or Christians those who dissociate themselves from Hinduism. Deccan Herald, 14 April 2003.

A new phase of communal between conflicts exists brahminical Hindus and the Ambedkarite-Buddhists. Hindu deity was portrayed as a believer in non-violence nor can the Gita be explained away as a non-violent text. ‘God is created in the image of man’, Hindu Gods were created in the image of brahminical men. Hindutva's historically established behaviour of using threats to control the other. Worked for centuries against the Sudras, Chandalas and Adivasis.

The Brahmins within the RSS did not approve the agreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar as Hindus did not want any emancipation of Dalits. Ambedkar, proposed a theory to annihilate caste based on the Buddhist theory to annihilate caste based on the Buddhist theories of liberty, equality and fraternity. Towards the end of his life realizing that Hinduism was beyond reform he embraced Buddhism. Hindu ideology was rooted in the concept of ‘hegemonization of the other’.

Spiritual fascism was established by the Brahmin neither the rule of Muslim kings, nor that of the British could break the caste system which divided the society.

Through ‘the concept of aham Brahminsmi in Hinduism. The Brahmin self declared itself as Godhood and always stood against the production of food the soil. All Hindu heroes proclaim they are Gods.

One does not find humility in Hindu assertions at all. This ideology of human beings declaring themselves to be God has a strong tendency of spiritual fascism that institutionalizes itself within the ideological sphere of spiritualism. (Page 60)

“The SC, ST, OBCs are victims of this spiritual fascism.” The Sang Parivar, as a brahminical organization, cannot build India as a globally respectable civilized nation because it has no agenda for human equality within its vision of Hindu unity. How do their theoreticians think that the Sudras, Chandalas and Adivasis even now, when they are becoming educated without having the right to occupy the highest position in the spiritual fascists even in this century and millennium. (Page 60)

If these inequalities are abolished, many proponents of the supremacy of Hinduism fear that it could well collapse like a house of cards as a consequence. The inability or unwillingness of the state to resolve such contradictions suggests an institutionalized belief that it is the natural order of things for Hinduism to enjoy privileged and superior status. (Page 132)

A society that hangs on to medieval midnight cold-water baths and leads naked and semi-naked live without protecting the body even in biting winter, where the body and mind become frozen and do not function, cannot produce a powerful spiritual mind, leave alone a scientific one. (Page 146)

Organizing yajnas does not help the growth of science.

In Hinduism ancient and medieval practices of caste continue to exist

Historically, the Brahmins were not only treated as bhudevatas (gods on earth), but even their corrupt practices were treated as divine virtues. Kautilya said in the Arthashastra that a Brahmin bureaucrat is like a fish in the sea – it is futile to verify whether or not it drinks water; so some castes are to be exempted from all punishment. (Page 176)

Hinduism never had the feeling of guilt, even about the practice of untouchability, even now, there is no soul-searching among Hindus and so they consistently opposition reservation for the lower castes.

In *Untouchable*, Anand describes a day in which Bakha, an Untouchable who has worked for a British regiment, comes to a certain level of consciousness about caste-ism. That element of westernization is a necessary precondition for Bakha—he is already set apart by the bits of British clothing he wears, he plays hockey (his joining other players unaware of his untouchability is an important gear in the narrative mechanism), he has been treated differently by the regiment than by those who know him "back home," he has acquired more desires than he can pay for, he has westernized shame over the spitting and hawking in Indian ablutions—he has, we read, invented a new world out of these traces of a different order.

Anand takes no chances with readers' sympathies: the novel operates a simple binary mechanism pitting a favorably marked Bakha against all others' defects or brutality. Not only is Bakha dramatized as a "lion" (15), but many passages mark his strength, nobility, and inherent dignity (18, 24, 61, 73, and 94). Moreover, many incidental traces of caste walls explain daily life from his perspective (caste-bound wells, his regret over exclusion from education, the 'sin' of an untouchable presuming to smoke, the difficulty of shopping when you can't touch or be touched, his ignorance even of religion because of being banned from temples, the taking up by many on the basis of caste prejudices, the difficulty of moving along a street without touching or being touched). We witness extreme examples of prejudice—high caste jokes at Bakha's clothes and cleanliness, women's abuse of untouchables at a well, venomous language over untouchables' request for a raise or simply for walking normally instead of skulking, blame and abuse for defiling a hurt boy whom he carries home from the hockey field

By taking us inside Bakha's emotional life, we are invited to identify with a type of whom Anand's first readers had no deep knowledge. We have, for example, the story of the regimental hat all the Indian boys covet. "The spirit of modernity had worked havoc among the youth of the regiment", particularly the "desire to wear western dress" (13). For Bakha, it has always been the hat, so intensely so that he had once, as a boy, asked for it, but in his maturity could not bring himself to. "'Why is it,' he had often asked himself, '[which] I can't go and ask now but dared to do so when I was a child?' He couldn't find the answer to this. He didn't know that with the growth of years he had lost the freedom, the wild, careless, dauntless freedom of the child, that he had lost his courage, that he was afraid" (14). This brief passage is a microcosm of the contradictions Bakha experiences as a youth and adult, westernized and untouchable, emergent and constrained, and it shows as well how dependent Anand is upon the powerful engine of individualism to enlist sympathies and arouse passion. Anand juxtaposes a westernized self – a utopian ideal even in the west, one free of all markers of class, gender, and ethnicity – with the constructed Indian self of an untouchable. The juxtaposition is not without its difficulties. Note for example this description of his neighbors whom Bakha considers "inferiors" from his westernized perspective

A few other outcastes were busy killing lice from the pleats of their shirts and trousers and too comfortable in the sun to bother to look up. As they sat or stood in the sun, showing their dark hands and feet, they had a curiously lackadaisical lazy, lousy look about them. It seemed their insides were concentrated in the act of emergence, of a new birth, as it were, from the raw bleak wintry feeling in their souls to the world of warmth. The taint of the little prison cells of their one-roomed homes lurked in them, even in the outdoor air. They were silent as if the act of liberation were too much for them to bear (4).

The tone is menaced by the difficulty of showing the degrading effects of housing without being tinctured by the superiority Bakha feels as he walks into the settlement.

A similar danger surfaces in the depiction of Bakha listening to the speeches of Christians, Gandhians, and the poet of technology. The Christians are simply incomprehensible, when the Colonel seeks paternally to save "the souls of the heathen" or we see the blunt racism ("these blackies") of his wife. But Bakha's limitations are also made explicit, presumably to register the extent to which his intellectuality has been stunted, but in terms that risk even more than the description of the "lazy, lousy" outcastes: Bakha "followed willingly," we read, "listening to each word that the Colonel spoke, but not understanding a word" (14). Listening to the Gandhians, Bakha is befuddled by the unknown word "Harijan" (15), he "looked not unlike an ape as he sat" watching the procession (15), and he "didn't understand these words" of Gandhi (words like moral, religious, conscience, 16). And the anti-Brahminical poet who rants after the Mahatma's speech fares no better, for though he advances technology as the cure to the untouchables' dilemma and urges Indians to pick and choose among western traits (17), Bakha "felt that the poet would have been answering the most intimate questions in his soul, if he had not used such big words" (14). Anand marks the most thoroughly failed sense of solidarity with the masses by having Mr. Bashir, a Jinnah-like aristocrat paired with the poet, flourish his "silken handkerchief" as he detaches them from a crowd that has "suffocated" him. Perhaps Anand is not entirely immune to the list of sins we laid at Forster's feet, but it is the containment within a westernized individualist ethic that is most worrisome. We see Bakha register bodily the anxiety produced by these alternative conceptions of his group, flushed, fast-pulsed, and confused (15), and we leave him "torn between his enthusiasm for Gandhi and the difficulties in his own awkward, naive self" (17). Anand's book is to set an agenda, it seems, in which treatments of the untouchables risk eviscerating the need for structural change with the emphasis upon the individual psyches of their protagonists, re-introducing, along the way, trace elements of the privileged position from which the writing comes.

It's worth mentioning that in addition to the Coolie manuscripts, the Ransom Center holds several letters that Anand wrote to such influential literary figures as George Bernard Shaw, John Lehmann, and Henry Treece. The letters demonstrate that his attempts to

promote his writing in England were frequently unsuccessful. In response to Anand's submission, dated February 18, 1945, of a few pieces for publication in England, John Lehmann penciled notes directly on Anand's letter (presumably in advance of composing an official rejection letter).

The debate on caste-ism and untouchability from Gandhi to Ambedkar and to the present times is still very much alive in the post-independent India. It may be argued that the ancient conception of 'Varnashram' does not approve the corrupt historical practices of caste-ism and untouchability. It may be further argued that modern progress will provide legal remedies in achieving social justice and equality. But one may think that the Hindu mind is predominantly caste-conscious, and ask whether it will ever free itself from the theodicy of caste-ism. Bakha's burning desire to go to school and to become a sahib may be a child's fancy, because his father "had told him that schools are meant for the 'babus', and not for the lowly sweepers." Bakha had been painfully aware of the absurdity and cruelty of the upper-caste Hindus who have openly and boldly embraced the tradition of untouchability. The psychoanalytical complexity of Bakha's dream only parodies the western discourse on equality, liberty and justice. The extent to which Bakha's innocence has been violated by social and religious determinism becomes abundantly clear by the ironic enslavement of his desire: all that Bakha dreams is to become a 'babu' or a sahib. Anand's treacherous irony here exposes the colonial-imperialist strategies of doubly colonising the Bakha types. Bakha knows that he is born into a family of sweepers, but he is unable to comprehend the intricate problem of Untouchability. He helps people clean their bodies, but he does not understand how his touch will pollute those who profess purity by birth. What manifests in the minds of the upper class majority is the fear of intermingling and hence of the probable loss of inherited purity. Bakha may very well try to cleanse his soul as adjoined by Gandhi, but the question, "But shall I never be able to leave the latrines?" (7), constitutes the ineffable centre of the discourse and still remains unanswered. Bakha's stark disappointment should be weighed against the illusory hope extended by the poet in the efficacy of the machine: "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 casteless and classless society" (5). But the poet's resplendent vision of the abolition of untouchability and the formation of civil society is dependent on industrialisation – and hence on the full application of modernity. One can readily see Anand's subtle irony here – and E.M. Forster seems to join Anand – for any such work of installing flush systems will depend on the British colonial regime's policy of modernising India. Anand must have been apprehensive of the limitations of western experiment when he put these words in Bashir's mouth: "In fact, greater efficiency, better salesmanship, more mass production, standardization, dictatorship of the sweepers, Marxian materialism and all that!" (15). The tragedy and the stunning paradox are frightfully complex in Bakha's reflective ambivalence – that he will no doubt purify his soul but remain permanently entrenched in the business of cleaning latrines. One might ask if Anand is attempting an assimilation technique whereby all these various ideologies will be conceptually integrated in Bakha's mind. In *Untouchable*, Anand declares, "I meant to recreate the lives of the millions of Untouchables through a single person" (qtd. in Rajan 1). Bakha as a universal representative of all untouchables has been slapped on his face by an upper-caste Hindu for polluting him by his touch. This slap on Bakha's face continues and is symbolic of the insult "as in Dostoevsky's *Insulted and Injured*..." Like other Untouchables, Bakha has been persistently abused, humiliated and rebuked. One must not forget the abusive name-calling at the temple and also the pernicious charge of defilement of the temple by the priest who had molested Sohini (60-64). But it is the slap on Bakha's face that immediately awakens in him the truth of the wretchedness of his humiliating and repelling existence as a sweeper: "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper – untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!" (5). Words "sweeper" and "untouchable" make Bakha realise his position in society.

3. Conclusion

The Novel, as Mukherjee reminds us in the historical chapters of *Realism and Reality*, does stagger a bit as a genre when setting its formal encoding of individualism in relation to a communally defined social body like Indian society. We've seen the effects of three distinct waves in which this tension was articulated. In the colonial past, communities were strategically manipulated factions of a potentially mutinous colonized population, the lower orders dosed with liberally inspired aspirations that set them against a traditional elite itself dosed with carefully measured degrees of partial authority and moderate material rewards

An examination of the *Coolie* manuscripts confirms Anand's ambition to appeal to Anglophone audiences. On the back of page 571 of the handwritten version, for example, Anand scrawled a list of English-language newspapers including *The Times of India*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Sentinel*, and *The People*. It's fair to speculate that these were publications that Anand hoped might review and promote his novel once it was completed and published. The typed version, as well, bears evidence of Anand's networking with British literary and political communities. A hand-printed note to the right side of the cover page reads, "typed 1935 by Celia Strachey." Celia was the wife of the former British Labour Party politician John Strachey; that she typed the manuscript indicates Anand's proximity to and engagement with British Labour and Marxist circles.

4. References

1. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Apology for Heroism: A Brief Autobiography of Ideas*. 1946. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1975.
2. *Coolie*. 1936. London: Penguin, 1945.
3. *Untouchable*. 1935. London: Penguin, 1986.
3. Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. Jane Garnett. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.
4. Avineri, Shlomo. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.
5. Bluemel, Kristin. *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics: Intermodernism in Literary London*. New York: Palgrave, 2004.

6. Burra, Peter. Rev. of Coolie. *The Spectator* 26 June 1936: 1186.
7. Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.
8. Cowasjee, Saros. *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1977.
9. Dershowitz, Alan M. "Mill, On Liberty." *On Liberty and Utilitarianism*. By Mill. New York: Bantam, 1993. vii-xxvi.
10. Forster, E.M. Preface. *Untouchable*. By Mulk Raj Anand. v-vii. Abinger Harvest. 1936. New York: Harcourt, 1964.
11. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon, 1977.
12. Marx, Karl. "Consciousness Derived from Material Conditions from The German Ideology." *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. Ed. David H. Richter. Boston: Bedford, 1998.
13. Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty and Utilitarianism*. Intro. Alan M. Dershowitz. New York: Bantam, 1993.
14. Mukherjee, Ramakrishna. *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company: A Sociological Appraisal*. London: Monthly Review, 1974.
15. Narasimhaiah, C.P. "Mulk Raj Anand: The Novel of Human Centrality." *South Asian Review* 15.12 (July 1991): 18-30.
16. Niven, Alastair. *The Yoke of Pity: A Study in the Fictional Writings of Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinmann, 1978.
17. Rajan, P.K. "A Dialogue with Mulk Raj Anand." *Studies in Mulk Raj Anand*. Delhi: Abhinav, 1986. 95-120.
18. Robertson, R.T. "Untouchable as an Archetypal Novel." *Kakatiya Journal of English Studies* 2.1 (Spring 1977): 5-15.
19. Thomas, Brook. "Preserving and Keeping Order by Killing Time in Heart of Darkness." *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. 2nd ed. Ed. Ross C. Murfin. Boston: Bedford, 1996. 239-57.
20. Verma, K.D. "Ideological Confrontation and Synthesis in Mulk Raj Anand's
21. *Conversations in Bloomsbury*." *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. 105-24. "Indian Writing in English: Structure of Consciousness, Literary History and
22. *Critical Theory*." *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. 1-29.
23. "Mulk Raj Anand: A Reappraisal." *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. 83-103.
24. *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on India Writing in English*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.
25. Viswanathan, Gauri. *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998.
26. Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*. Ed.
27. Thomas Hutchinson. London: Oxford UP, 1966.