



## FUTURE OF MULK RAJ ANAND'S BAKHA IN THE PURVIEW OF GANDHISM

**DR. UMESH B. BANSOD**

Associate Professor  
Department of English  
J.M. Patel College, Bhandara  
(MS) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Mulk Raj Anand is one of the greatest Indian fiction writers and his 'Untouchable' is unique and historical land mark novel in the Indian history of Literature. Undoubtedly it is a masterly work by the novelist and indomitable will to say what others never could dare. The novel was published on 1st May 1935 and was welcomed by few and criticized by many. Several newspapers in London criticized it as 'Dirty Work.'. The novel deals with a miserable day in the life of Bakha. The novelist provides series of events in Bakha's life and tries to do his psycho-analysis. The novel is a great success and made the novelist a champion of the underdogs. But unfortunately no untouchable character in any Indian novel comes out as champion. Some options may be but options can not be a rule. Readers expect a lot from the novelist at the end of drama but get no solution except few imaginary possibilities. This leads an investigation whether Gandhian model can change the future course of Bakha's Life? Can we openly discuss Gandhiji's thoughts on Chaturvarna System and eradication of Untouchability? and after reading his thoughts on Chaturvarna System, can we guarantee a change in the practical life of Bakha? What new change could Bakha have experienced after returning home hearing Gandhiji's speech? Can a sweeper like Bakha change social and religious order of orthodox Hindu religion? These and many questions even today finds no affirmative answer. Let us try to anticipate future of Bakha in the light of Gandhian model without any prejudice.*

**Key words:** Untouchability, Gandhism

**DR. UMESH B. BANSOD**

1 Page

## INTRODUCTION

An 18-year-old Indian youth, Bakha is a sweeper and the protagonist of *Untouchable*. Strong and able-bodied, but is a victim of age old mental slavery of caste system and there fore tolerates all humiliations and never dare to react in exchange though he is physical strong. He is fascinated by the life and ways of India's English colonizers. This fascination titillate imaginations but brings no change in his practical life. His position as an untouchable has resulted in high levels of self-deprecation and depression. Bakha can be judgmental and at times helps perpetuate the very system that keeps him oppressed. This what the plot of the novel unfortunately indicates. Paradoxically, he still questions the status quo and challenges a caste system that is supposedly "set in stone. But the novel moves not a single inch ahead from this imaginary world. Neither writer could project any change in Bakha's life not Gandhian model could bring any change in the lives of millions of untouchables in the country. This needs an evaluation ,critical analysis which may invite another debate. But let us hope something meaningful will come out and offer a meaningful dialogue.

### Past of Bakha :

To predict future ,it is necessary to know the past so that evidential comparison can be done. Bakha takes birth and is brought up in sweeper family and inherits untochability and profession of cleaning latrines from his father Bakha though unwillingly. Bakha is also left with no choice and they are the part of forced hierarchy of Hindu Chaturvarna System. Novelist very cleverly projects Mahtma Gandhi in the background of the novel as messiah of untouchables but does not discuss his views on Chaturvarna System and caste system. It would have been more easy for readers to understand future destiny of Bakha. Father Lakha is a creature of habits and customs and accepts The traditional superiority of the high-caste Hindus over the Untouchables. The same slavery is implanted in Bakha, Rakha and Sohini, the next generation. These all characters wanted much more but they could nothing. They accept untouchability as the result of sins of their previous births. This is what Hindu religion ,Varna system and caste system in India projected for several thousand years. Once you mentally accepts slavery, physical strength can not break these shackles. So the past of Bakha is not at all any glorious part of history. The dark shadow of the past also covers his present and the entire story of the novel we know.

### Present of Bakha :

The novel is the series of humiliations in the life of Bakha who use to live at the outskirts of the town where animals also refuse to live. He , from early morning till late in the evening use to sweep and clean the latrines. Mockery is that he is also the part of Hindu religions as claimed and treated as inhuman by the high caste Hindus. High caste people empty their

tummies and orders Bakha to clean their latrines. He cleans of rows of human dung every day without any complaint. This continued in India for several thousand years in the name of religion and caste. If this is religion, what is irreligion. Pt. Kalinath tried to molest his sister Sohini in the temple and charged that she tries to pollute him but Bakha could do nothing. Even Sohini also does not dare to speak truth. The shopkeeper also accepts coin after purifying it by sprinkling holy water. Bakha is beaten badly by a caste Hindu for accidental touch in the market and humiliated for not giving a call 'Posh, Posh, sweeper coming' while passing through the market. For the whole day dirty work Bakha gets nothing but insult. The chapatti is also not given but thrown at him in exchange of cleaning latrines of high caste Hindus. He is frustrated of all day long humiliation and goes to Golbagh to attend a meeting of Mahtma Gandhi. This tiny speech is the important part of the novel and we will try to analyze it to predict Bakha's future.

### **Future of Bakha :**

If novelist prefer to project Gandhiji in the background of the novels, it is his choice. It is the intention of the paper to find out whether Gandhian philosophy can bring any change in Bakha's future life. Past and present of Bakha is the tragic story of decaying caste system of India.

What Gandhiji thinks of caste system also is a valid point to mention here. It was the moral responsibility of the novelist also to mention it here but he did not.

During the crucial period of Yeola conversion announcement by Dr.Ambedkar on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1935, Gandhiji gave his reaction in the Harijan. Gandhiji writes

*"As a reformer of Hinduism, I want to restore the ancient Varnashrama Dharma to its pristine purity. Varnashrama lays down the functions and duties of various classes according to their special aptitude and gifts and has nothing to do with questions of marriage and food and drink."*

*"Belief in and practice of Varnashrama Dharma may be said to be the distinguishing characteristics of Hindu Dharma. I regard myself a Sanatani Hindu, because I try, to the best of my ability, to obey eternal precepts of the faith as embodied in shastras as I understand them."*

*"Both the Brahmin and Shudra who forsake their Swadharma are fallen. In their fallen state, they belong to Varna. They can repair their mistakes by resuming Swadharma, their own calling."*

*“In my opinion, it is not the caste that has made us what we are. It was our greed and disregard of essential virtues which I believe that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration. ... I am certainly against any attempt at destroying the fundamental divisions. The caste system is not based on inequality, there is no question of inferiority; and so far as there is any such question arising, the tendency should undoubtedly be checked. But there appears to be no valid reason for ending the system because of its abuse.”*

This is what Gandhiji believed and practiced till his last breath. His beliefs are the mockery of the democratic country and ridicule the constitutional values of equality before law. Such division can not be supported in any condition and can not stand at the scrutiny of the law. Indian constitution makers also unanimously refuted such philosophy as it is not acceptable.

The short the speech quoted in the Novel can be concluded as follows :

- 1) Gandhi opposed separate electorate to untouchables saying that they are part of Hindu religion and this move will separate Hindu. But he supported separate to Sikhs .They are also Hindu. Here Hindu religion does not divide Hindus. The logic Gandhiji applied is beyond understanding.
- 2) The age old tyrannous untouchability is just a moral and religious issue for him.
- 3) Gandhiji quotes example of Uka , a scavenger who used to clear Latrines in his family. He talks about his physical touch but does not talk about changing his profession.
- 4) Gandhiji says “I Love scavenging.” Indirectly he supports the system but does not talk about its abolition. He supports Varnashram system, talks about sin, next birth, purification of soul but does not talk about giving constitutional rights and protections to them. He call untouchability as sin but does not declare it punishable crime.
- 5) His speech provides solace to the soul but brings no change in the life of Bakha.He does not give answer who will clear Latrines of upper-caste Hindus if not Bhangies.
- 6) Varnasharm system does not allow change of profession also. What will be the alternate profession for Bakha?
- 7) Gandhiji talks nothing about giving education to untouchables.



Therefore I conclude that the journey of Bakha is a journey from dust to ash and the we can not anticipate a future life of self-respect, dignity, honour , equality, justice for Bakha in the preview of Gandhism.

## WORKS CITED

- 1) Anand Mulk Raj : Untouchable
- 2) Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar edited by Virendra Grover, Published by Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi,1998.
- 3) Ambedkar: B.R. : Annihilation of Caste in Writing and Speeches –Vol –I.  
Published by Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1992.
- 4) Harijan , Aug. 24 , 1934
- 5) Harijan , Sept. 28, 1934
- 6) Iyengar K.R.Srinivasa : Indian Writing in English-published by Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd.1972.
- 7) Young India , Dec. \*, 1920.
- 8) Gandhi M.K. : An Autobiography or The story of My Experiments with Truth –Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.-1999.