



Mulk Raj Anand – Untouchable – Summary and Analysis

Mulk Raj Anand, acclaimed as the Charles Dickens of Indian writing, focused on the everyday problem of pre-independence and post-independence of India. He is especially known to shed light on the lives of lower caste people who are treated with great bias and unfairness. Almost all of his novels and short stories like Untouchable, Coolie, The Big Heart, Two leaves and a Bud, etc. touch the problems of the political structure, oppression of classes, un-touch-ability and so on. Untouchable is a novel written in the year 1935 and revolves around a day's consequences in the life of Bakha. There are no chapters in the book; hence, they are split to different sections for the convenience of the reader

Untouchable Summary: Bakha's Family

Bakha lives in a house made of mud and has only one room. He lives along with his father Lakha, brother Rakha and sister Sohini. Lakha works as a sweeper and is the leader for the sweepers of the town. The town they live in is Bulashah [imaginary place] and their community of outcaste's restricted to a colony near the latrines of the town.

Bakha always thinks of his friends and is almost obsessed with the "English" way of living. He and his friends call the Englishmen as "Tommies" and try to imitate them in everything. Lakha constantly abuses his son for having such an interest on the Englishmen. As Bakha reminisces on several things while on bed, his father abuses him for not going to clean the latrines. However, he does not care and thinks of his mother who died. He believes that abusing done by his father started only after the death of his mother. He constantly ignores the words of Lakha when he hears another voice ordering for cleaning the latrine.

As Bakha hears the voice of Havilar Charat Singh, he immediately attends to his duty. He does not soil himself showing that he has great proficiency in his job. Singh comes out after taking care of his daily oblations and reveals his idea of gifting a hockey stick to the boy. As Charat Singh is a great hockey player, Bakha feels really happy about the promise. Bakha resumes his work with joy as many people enter and exit the bathrooms. He collects the refuse to a chimney and completes his job for the shift. He goes to home only to find that Lakha is sleeping and there is no water to drink. Sohini offers to fetch water.

Untouchable Analysis: Bakha's Family

Although set in a backward family, it is a typical family one can find in India - dreaming son, careless father with no one to remind him of his duties, a hardworking daughter and a burdensome life. The life of middle class families are similar where there is no aim or meaning to life and it is lived as life is given



to live. Bakha is a representation of youth who is thinking beyond his family life through the Englishmen and Charat Singh.

Untouchable Summary: Sohini goes for water

No outcaste is allowed to directly take water from the well and water can be acquired only through the mercy of a high caste person. As Sohini reaches well with a pitcher, she observes many outcastes waiting for any compassionate individual to help with the water. She waits with others for a sympathetic higher caste person. The waiting group has a washerwoman named Gulabo who is very jealous of Sohini. She starts to use derogatory words such as prostitute, bitch, etc. and Sohini feels that she is joking. However, she does not stop and increases her verbal abuse making Sohini to realize that intentions of Gulabo are real. She wonders about her doings that made Gulabo to feel that way. Gulabo even tries to hit Sohini but Waziro – wife of a weaver, stops her. Sohini shocked by the incident stays calm and thinks about thirsty Bakha.

Meanwhile, a sepoy comes to the well to fetch water. Unfortunately, he does not listen to the pleading of the outcastes and leaves. Shortly, priest and in charge of temples – Pundit Kali Nath, comes to the well. He is pursued by the women as he finally accepts to pour water from his pitcher to theirs. Gulabo cries out that she came first and the rest claim the same. However, Sohini stays out from the group and waits for Kali Nath to give water. He observes this and looks at Sohini. He gets attracted by the face of her and the way she refuses to join the group. Therefore, he asks her to come forward and pours water into the pitcher. Further, he asks her to come to the temple for cleaning. She accepts his order and returns to home with water.

As she reaches home Lakha yells for being late and uses derogatory words. He orders her to gather her brothers as he intends to say something. However, Rakha escapes to play and Bakha is the only one to be in the house. As Bakha nears his father, Lakha acts as if he is ill and makes Bakha to fill his duty as a sweeper. Bakha reluctantly accepts as he is completely aware of the fake nature of the illness. He drinks tea and walks towards the temple where he needs to sweep.

Untouchable Analysis: Sohini goes for water

Class diversification and caste diversification has always been a topic of discussion in India. It is because the fundamental unity that once existed with King's rule has been disrupted with the formation of East India Company. Everyone felt that having an upper caste birth meant to dominate the lower class. This is evident with the behaviour of the soldier who came to the well and the habit of lower caste prohibition to fetch water from a well.

The same discrimination has continued for centuries and even now India is suffering from such problems. Sohini is a general example of becoming the subject of discrimination as Gulabo starts to abuse without any reason. Meanwhile, the author reveals that there are higher and lower castes even in the outcaste's colony leading to such unnecessary yet prideful conflicts.



Untouchable Summary: Bakha and his friends

Bakha, while walking towards the town, observes that the air fresh and clean outside the colony. He stands on the road enjoying the sun unaware that his friends Ram Charan and Chota along with his brother Rakha are watching him. They make fun of Bakha for his weird behaviour and jokes about it.

Ram Charan, the son of Gulabo, declares that his sister is about to get married that day. Bakha feels a bit sad because he has feelings for her. Chota inquires about his duties for the day, when Bakha orders Rakha to clean the latrines in the colony as he is out for another duty. However, Rakha doesn't seem interested and walks towards his home. The rest force Bakha to join for gambling but he refuses to skip his duties.

As Bakha tries to move towards the town, two boys come to them. They are the sons of a high caste man named Burra Babu and Bakha greets them well. They discuss about hockey and agree to play later that day. When one of the boys say that it is time for school, Bakha's curiosity immediately increases as he always wanted to know about schools and teaching. Therefore, he offers one Anna for a lesson to the eldest of the two boys. He accepts and says that they can meet again to begin with the lessons. Chota and Ram Charan joke at the interests of Bakha. He takes them lightly and walks towards the town with great anticipations that day.

Untouchable Analysis: Bakha and his friends

Mulk Raj Anand cleverly portrays the innocence of childhood and the effects of no education through the introduction of Bakha's friends. All of them are not bothered with the restrictions of caste and class systems followed by the elders. They have fun and decide to play together. On the hand, use of foul language shows that they have no education whatsoever and they do not know how to behave.

Once again, Mulk Raj Anand brings out another social problem found in India – education. For centuries, there is no proper education offered for the lower classes and it was only restricted to the children of higher classes. This was partly due to the traditions followed and the unwilling nature of the higher castes to share their knowledge with others. There are many like Bakha who show interest in education but are not fortunate to receive any directly. This has led to the contemporary problem of “Reservations” making India a difficult nation to survive and succeed.

Untouchable Summary: Touching a High Caste

Bakha buys a cigarette and takes the coal to light up from a Muslim. He enjoys being in town absorbing every scene and sound he could. He gets attracted to some sweets and shrugs off the fear of his father who would abuse him for spending money on such things. He asks the shopkeeper to give candy for four annas and the shopkeeper cheats the boy by weighing the scale incorrectly. Despite knowing this Bakha does not protest and takes what he is given. He feels happy for the fact that he has some candy to eat and he munches them while walking.



He stands and observes the advertising boards when a high caste man runs into Bakha. Although, Bakha is not to blame for the hurriedness of the high caste man, he starts abusing him and starts shouting about his presence so that others could know. Bakha pleads his apology but the man won't listen and soon a huge crowd circles him. His option of escaping is closed out as he needs to touch someone if he has to escape the circle. All of them start to insult Bakha for his actions and falsely accuse him of previous actions.

Fortunately, for Bakha, a horse buggy with a travel merchant comes to the road scattering the people gathered around. However, the high caste man stays despite many urges from the merchant and only leaves after giving a hard slap to Bakha. Many emotions flow from the furious and crying Bakha like anger, frustration, indignation, horror, etc. Bakha decides to take revenge when the travel merchant tries to console him. Bakha gets up to leave when a shopkeeper reminds about chant of the untouchables. He starts to sing the chant as he walks forward to the temple.

Bakha is confronted with many questions after that incident. He could not understand the humility shown by him despite the arrogant behaviour of the public. He regrets for not hitting the high caste man when receiving a slap for no reason. He questions the relevance of the system, wonders about the reason for untouchables to get abused. Bakha realizes that his duty of cleaning latrines makes him repugnant to everyone in the society.

Untouchable Analysis: Touching a High Caste

The faults that were found through the practice of one religion make a man to take another religion as shelter. Hindu civilization cherished when the four castes were living in harmony and when one caste tried to oppress the other, chaos ensued. Bakha knew that he could not ask fire to light a cigarette from anyone in the town as it would be unholy. Therefore, he approaches a Muslim man who is not into the caste system. Further, the travel merchant is also a Muslim who helps the crowd to disperse.

The religious conditions that motivated in many faith conversions are clearly depicted by Mulk Raj Anand. Although, Bakha does not think of a new religion understands his position in the current one and feels helpless. The circle of people around Bakha is a symbol for the oppression of the outcastes from many higher castes smothering the movements [progress] of lower castes.

Untouchable Summary: The Temple

Bakha after observing the happenings of the town finally reaches the temple. Being in such a tranquil place gives him peace as he starts to work. He sees some worshipers approaching and starts to chant his presence to avoid the same treatment again. As he is not supposed to enter the temple, Bakha is always curious about the worship and the prayers used. He listens to the prayers with joy but does not understand the words. He does not understand who the gods are! Therefore wonders who is Narayan, Shanti Deva, Hari, etc. Curiosity increases within him and slowly approaches the entrance. Suddenly, he becomes discouraged and returns to his work.



After completing the clean up, Bakha tries to see the inside of the temple again and goes to the top stair. He observes the temple, the priests, the hymns, the worshippers and is in a divine state. Unfortunately, he hears someone shouting “polluted, polluted!” and alarmingly falls down in a prostrate position. Slowly, he realizes that the cry was not meant for him but for his sister – Sohini.

Pundit Kali Nath accuses Sohini for intentionally touching him and abuses her in many ways. The worshippers lead her and Bakha forcefully out of the stairs. Sohini explains that Pundit Kali Nath has tried to touch her, which infuriates Bakha. He holds her sister and comes near the stairs to spat at the people for not realizing what has actually happened. As Bakha starts to talk in rage all the worshippers remain calm with fear. However, Sohini realizes that it could end up bad, convinces Bakha to leave the matter and leave the Temple. Bakha is filled with rage but understands that he is not able to cross the barriers set by traditions and experienced me of the past. Therefore, he asks Sohini to go back home while he leaves to collect food for the day.

Untouchable Analysis: The Temple

Temple is a very holy place to Hindus and any unholy doings in it would result in temporary closure or permanent closure. However, one can observe that there is a social bias here also as Pundit Kali Nath escapes from his wrong doings by showing his stature as a higher caste man. The worshippers despite confronted by Bakha do not react about the matter showing caste conflict. There is no proper justice done for Sohini and the two leave with distraught thoughts.

Untouchable Summary: High Caste Woman

Bakha goes from street to street to beg some food so that his family could eat. No one shows pity for him and he finally gets tired of begging. Bakha sits in front of a house and naps. A Sadhu comes to the same house and his voice wakes the boy. At the same time a woman comes out of the house and is aghast by the presence of Bakha at the doorstep. She abuses him and Bakha moves away from the door.

Another woman comes out and gives some food to the Sadhu and a Chapatti to Bakha with the same kindness. She exits and the first woman comes with some food to Sadhu and orders Bakha to clean a gutter before receiving any alms. He does so and she asks to clean the bathroom, which he does. Then, the higher caste woman throws bread into the ground for Bakha to pick. Unable to do anything, Bakha picks the bread and frustrated throws his work broom. The woman criticizes the lower castes in common that they are getting too much excited these days.

Untouchable Analysis: High Caste Woman

Bakha is insulted many times for the day and it shows how dire the situation of a lower caste in the community is. If men try to take advantage of the women of lower castes, women try to exploit the helpless nature of men of lower castes to fulfil their needs. There is neither equality nor justice in treating people like for things that that are superficial, superstitious and far from their reach. They are



chained by fate of their great, great elders who were treated like untouchables for some mistake they have done. Everything is far from grasp to Bakha as he is subject to such humiliations from childhood and all he can do is force a broom stick from his hand.

Untouchable Summary: The Doctor

Bakha reaches home desolated only to find his father's frustration for brining just two pieces of bread. Rakha is not home as usual and is said to fetch food for the family from the barracks. As Lakha asks about small amounts of food collected, Bakha says that he is not aware of many people in the town. Lakha says that he needs to know people as it is the only way to get food in the future. However, Lakha sees some distress in his son and asks about it. Bakha explains the happenings of the day and feels very sad.

Lakha tries to convince his son that high caste people are far superior to them in everything. Therefore, it is their duty to respect them without any questioning. He reveals about a doctor who saved Bakha from severe illness. When Bakha was only a child, he was sick with fever that was not healed. Therefore, Lakha goes to a doctor of high caste to get help. Lakha stood outside the home of the doctor pleading everyone entering to pass the massage to the doctor. No one helped and he cannot even buy medicine [although having money] for he is not allowed to be in the place. Lakha desperate comes back to see if his son is alive and to his great fortune he is alive.

But, he notices that the child was barely able to take breaths and runs back to the doctor. This time he does not wait and enters to the chamber directly not thinking about the circumstances. He, at once, falls at the feet of the doctor while other patients scream and run because of his presence. Not minding them and the furious doctor, Lakha explains the situation and begs the doctor to help.

The doctor understands and starts to write medicine when Lakha's brother enters and announces that Bakha is about die. Lakha not taking the prescription rushes back to the house to look at his son. As the parents cry dejectedly, the doctor knocks the door. The high cast doctor enters the house of Lakha and saves the life of Bakha. After hearing the story, Bakha feels so happy but controls his emotions.

They have a conversation about Rakha and wonder where he is. He soon appears with some food from the barracks. However, Bakha feels that the food is collected from the water used to wash hands after eating. This idea repels Bakha from eating and makes an excuse of attending the marriage of Ram Charan's sister.

Untouchable Analysis: The Doctor

All the negative elements shown throughout the earlier pages are turned to a slight positive note with the story of the high caste doctor. Anand shows that not everyone in the high caste upbringing is indifferent towards the hardships of the lower caste. Indeed, the caste system is intended to help each other so that everyone could live in harmony.



According to Hindu Dharma, Brahmins are supposed to help the society through prayers to Gods and helping others perform various rituals. Kshatriyas are supposed to protect the people and rule them based on the principles of Dharma. Vysyas are supposed to look after trade and commerce helping everyone to acquire sufficient goods. Sudras are supposed to help in providing labour for everyone thus ensuring better living within a community.

Although the doctor recoils at the beginning is a good example of following the Hindu Dharma as he saves Bakha from death. He comes to the house of Lakha and provides aid to the dying child. From this one can understand that there is no concept of untouchability and there are no untouchables. They are only created by some malicious men in the higher castes so that they could dominate the society with great authority.

Untouchable Summary: The Wedding

Bakha moves towards the wedding thinking about the sister of Ram Charan. Both of them used to play together when they are children and once they contemplated marriage through a game. They were even married in that game and Bakha always had feelings for her. As he enters the area of the wedding, he is too shy to enter directly into washer man wedding. He is afraid of Gulabo as she has acquired a name of having great hatred towards people.

Fortunately, Chota appears and together they try to get the attention of Ram Charan who is busy eating sugarplums. When they do get his attention, Gulabo also watches and chases them away. Rama Charan also runs with them towards the hills. Bakha contemplates on the beauty of nature and falls back while his friends move forward. He drinks from a natural pool in the hill and tries to take a nap. As he sleeps, Chota tickles his nose making Bakha to sneeze louder with a weird noise. He laughs along with other but not in a natural way arising suspicions. The two inquire Bakha, but he says that it is nothing to worry about.

Bakha then asks Ram Charan to give his lot of sugarplums. Ram Charan opens a hand kerchief and asks Bakha to take a sugarplum. However, Bakha refuses and asks Ram Charan to throw one so that he can catch. This dismays Ram Charan as well as Chota who understand that something is terribly wrong with their friend. There was no difference between them previously as they ate together and shared the same bottle of soda. So, they pressure Bakha to reveal the reason for such behaviour. Bakha confesses about the three incidents that took place earlier.

Ram Charan feels ashamed of the behaviour of the high caste people and remains silent. Chota tries to console Bakha and shows great frustration towards the way they are treated. However, he resorts to cheering his friend and reminds about the hockey game. He also offers to take revenge on the priest for his treatment of Sohini. Ram Charan reminds them that if he needs to attend the game, then it is imperative to go home now. All of them head back and decide a time to meet. Chota leaves home and Bakha moves towards the place of Charat Singh to receive a hockey stick as promised.



Untouchable Analysis: The Wedding

Bakha cannot express his feelings towards Ram Charan's sister because of caste restrictions. No lower caste individual can marry a higher caste individual. In addition, there is Gulabo who is feared in the colony as a mean lady who accuses everyone in the name of caste. Such remnant and inevitable thoughts make Bakha to suffer and his conditioned nature of a lower caste man comes out when he asks Ram Charan to throw a sweet. This creates a drift amongst the friends, which is solved very quickly. It also indicates that Bakha is accepting the barriers of the society and may become like his father.

Untouchable Summary: Charat Singh

Charat Singh lives in a deserted barracks where there is no one. Only two sentries who stand guard a solar topee can be seen. There are many legends surrounding the topee and Bakha was always attracted to it. He even thought to steal it in order to possess the topee. However, his plans to have the topee diminished over the years. Bakha observes the topee and wonders if his courage witnessed in his younger days is declining. He hesitates to talk to the sentries about the hat and leaves to the house in fear of insults. The door is closed at the house of the Charat Singh and he waits outside for someone to open the door. After a while, Charat Singh comes out and does not notice Bakha. So, he gently calls out for Charat Singh and he greets him gladly.

He inquires about the absence of Bakha in recent hockey games for which the boy tells that he has to perform his duties. However, Charat Singh tries to emphasize the importance of the game [earlier that morning he wants the latrine to be cleaned by Bakha] and tells the boy that he can ignore the work. Despite observing the contradictory ideas of the hockey player, Bakha is happy to spend time with him as he is a famous player of the game.

Charat Singh asks Bakha to enter the house and bring some coal from the kitchen. Bakha becomes astonished to realize that Charat Singh being a Hindu is fine with him entering the house. He enters into the house with great joy and is filled with love towards Charat Singh. He collects the coal from a cook and hurries back to the hockey player. Then Charat Singh gives a new hockey stick to Bakha. He denies having a new stick as a gift, but the hockey player asks him to take the stick and go. Bakha receives his gift and is overwhelmed with joy and thinks that he has good fortunes. As he leaves the house, he immediately thinks about the lessons promised by the elder son of Burra Babu.

Untouchable Analysis: Charat Singh

Once again Bakha witnesses some good treatment from a high caste man supporting the story of Lakha. This shows that not all the high caste men are the same and some understand their practice of religion instead of following what others believe to be true. If the reader observes, Charat Singh does not treat Bakha in a special way but he talks to him as a fellow human being. Such treatment is only observed by Bakha through his friends and no one else. Gifting a hockey stick, allowing him to the house, letting him



handle objects, etc. are simple but they are new and wonderful aspects to Bakha. Thus he claims that he could work as a sweeper for his entire life for Charat Singh.

Untouchable Summary: Game of Hockey

Burra Babu's youngest son brings all the hockey gear needed to play. Chota tells everyone that Bakha is a bearer to a Sahib to mask his true identity. Bakha shows his new hockey stick and everyone congratulates him. Unfortunately, the youngest son does not get to play and is dejected. To console him Bakha gives a task of protecting his overcoat which means so much to him. As the game begins Bakha proves to be a wonderful player with no equal in the field. He moves swiftly between the opponents and scores a goal for his team. This infuriates the goal keeper who hits the leg of Bakha.

Chota orders his team to attack and everyone starts fighting. They throw rocks without observing the young son of Burra Babu is amongst them. A stone thrown by Ram Charan hits his head and he falls unconscious and bleeding. Bakha rushes him to his house expecting some treatment to the kid. As he reaches the home, he is abused by the mother for attacking the child. Bakha is shell shocked and the elder son tries to say that it was Ram Charan's fault. The boy's mother does not listen and constantly abuses Bakha for the condition of his son. He withdraws from the place and realizes that her hate is because of his untouchability.

He walks back home dispirited expecting more abuses from his father. He hides the hockey stick under a cactus bush and enters his home. Lakha and Rakha abuse him for being away from the house leaving them to work. As things get more serious, Lakha shouts at Bakha to leave the house and asks him to never come back. Bakha could not control his rage and bursts through the house leaving his family. He runs towards the plains without even looking back at the colony or thinking about anything associated with his life.

Untouchable Analysis: Game of Hockey

Bakha has bared the burden of an untouchable for as long as he could. He gets slapped; his sister gets insulted, receives food from the ground and gets insulted many times by his friend's mother. He does not deserve such fate as he is a compassionate individual who cares for everyone. This is evident from his actions at the hockey game. He rushes the youngest son to the family without realizing the consequences. The boy's mother, out of hatred towards the untouchable caste blames the injury over Bakha. He remains silent and comes home only to face more insults.

Bakha is the one who does all the hard work while Lakha and Rakha escape their duties. He leaves once for a wedding and game, they start to blame him with indescribable words. The incident does not make Bakha to raise hand against the two; instead he leaves the place running as if possessed. Deep within, he might have realized that talking is an unnecessary task as no one would listen to an untouchable.



Untouchable Summary: Christianity

Bakha after running a fair distance settles under a pipal tree [sacred fig]. He expects someone to come and relieve him from his sufferings. However, he understands that such expectations are wrong and impossible.

But, Colonel Hutchinson comes near the tree and tries to comfort him. Now, the Colonel is a party of the Christian Salvation Army trying to convert untouchables into Christianity. His wife often chides him for his incapability and wasting time on untouchables. Bakha is surprised to see an Englishman laying his hand on him. They introduce each other and the Colonel talks about Jesus. Bakha inquires who Jesus is and the Colonel says that he will explain everything in the Church.

Colonel Hutchison starts to drag the boy to the Church and singing songs about God. Bakha cannot understand a thing and wonders the difference between Jesus and Ram or any other God. Gradually, he becomes bored of the hymns but bears it because he likes the presence of an Englishman. He begins to dream about wearing trousers similar to that of the Colonel.

Even his thoughts do not create interest as Bakha tries to escape from the Colonel. Observing the growing disinterest, the Colonel says that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. This piece of information does not attract the boy; therefore, Colonel Hutchison claims that Jesus treats Brahmins and the Untouchables in the same way with equality. Bakha is immediately attracted to the words of equality, but loses his interest as the Colonel starts to blabber so many religious aspects.

Finally, they reach the Church compound with Bakha hoping for a trouser and Hutchinson hoping for a new convert. Then, the Colonel's wife shouts at him to join her for tea. He says that he will come but could not decide whether to attend Bakha or his wife. As he stands there wondering, his wife comes and shouts at the presence of Bakha by calling him a "blackie" indirectly. She screams about Bhangis and Chamars making Bakha to grow fearful of the two. He takes leave from them and runs away from the Church. A helpless Colonel Hutchison watches as Bakha runs off from his grasp.

Untouchable Analysis: Christianity

Christianity was never a part of India; hence, the conversion rate was very slow. However, this has led to creation of stories like the ones mentioned by Colonel Hutchison. He says that Jesus died for the sins of Brahmins and Bhangis, which is not a concept of Christianity and it not written in The Bible. Such stories gradually attracted the oppressed increasing the conversions leading to more chaos in India. There are only a few like Bakha who realize that running away from one religion to another would only mean to select a different book to realize that the preaching's are the same. It is the individual who has to follow the exact path set by religion and most of the "pious" do not believe this. Now, religion has become more commercial and there is no charity or faith observed in most religious places.



Untouchable Summary: Mahatma Gandhi

Bakha is very upset to see that everyone blames the untouchables as if they had done some mistake. He feels that the hatred shown by the Colonel's wife was much greater than the Hindus he encountered that day. Unknowing where he is going he reaches the railroad station of Bulashah. A train seems to approach and all the people shout about the coming of Mahatma Gandhi. All of them are in white and are walking towards Golbagh where Gandhi is expected to address the gathering.

The term Mahatma creates great curiosity in the mind of Bakha wanting him to join the crowd. As Bakha does not have his tools, the crowd do not realize that an untouchable is standing amongst them. He observes that there are different kinds of people in the crowd. He could easily identify 'who is who' by their mannerisms and attire. As he looks forward, there are many people in front of him and he decides to take a shortcut from a nearby marsh. Some people follow him and they end up much closer to the oval [stage] where Gandhi would talk. Bakha decides to stay under a tree and leans against it.

The men around discuss about the struggles and achievements of Gandhi. They talk about the political progress he could bring and his dedication towards uplifting people who are called untouchables. Gandhi has done fasting for the sake of untouchables and Bakha is grateful that at least someone is trying to help them. A motorcar enters from which Gandhi along with his wife and daughter of a British admiral come out. He reaches the centre of the oval and greets the crowd.

Mahatma Gandhi begins by praying to the Gods and Bakha feels purged of all the filth of the day. He begins his speech with the mention of imprisonment for protesting against the rule of British. He agrees that the Government has let him out by making an agreement of 'not speaking against' British Government. Therefore, he declares that he would speak on another important problem i.e. untouchability. Gandhi says that the people are being oppressed both by the British rule and the unscrupulous principles followed in the society. He emphasizes:

"I regard untouchability as the greatest blot of Hinduism. The view of mine dates back to the time when I was a child."

Gandhi relates a story from his childhood, where he would untouchables and conceal the fact from his parents. Bakha listens many things like abandoning practices like drinking, scavenging, eating carrions and gambling. Although, they seem to criticize the untouchables he understands the importance of them. Gandhi says that untouchables should never take anything that is left over from plates. He states that only good food and grain must be accepted. Bakha feels that Gandhi should tell the same to his father so he could understand the importance of these things. Mahatma even declares that untouchables should have access to temples, schools, wells, etc. The speech ends and Mahatma Gandhi pass by Bakha. The boy is spellbound by the speech and remains near the tree.

Untouchable Analysis: Mahatma Gandhi



Mahatma Gandhi speaks of all the aspects that were causes of insults for Bakha. Therefore, Bakha is greatly influenced by the words coming out from a leader. The efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi to eradicate untouchability are great and it is the primary reason for Mulk Raj Anand to include his character. Further, Gandhi played a direct role in suggesting editions to the novel. Mulk Raj Anand removed almost three hundred pages from the manuscript and made modifications to the main character. All of these greatly collaborate the meeting of Bakha and Mahatma Gandhi.

Sohini is insulted at the temple, Bakha longs for education, bread is thrown to the ground while scavenging and other aspects create negative clouds in the mind of the protagonist. He finds no console in his own house or the society or in a new religion; the only thing that gives solace and drive away the dark clouds are the pure words of Mahatma Gandhi. However, he does not find an immediate solution for his problem as his day continues.

Untouchable Summary: The Muslim and the Poet

As Mahatma Gandhi slowly leaves with the crowd behind him a Muslim calls him a hypocrite. Bakha identifies him as a Muslim and the young man who protests such claims as a poet. The poet agrees that Gandhi has indeed made some mistakes but he has achieved a force to attract the nation towards freedom. He states that India is abundant in philosophy, resources and knowledge of living. Someone in the crowd identifies the poet to be Iqbal Nath Sarshar. The Muslim is identified as Mr. R. N. Bashir, a lawyer.

Bashir expresses his dislike towards the concept of eradication of untouchability by Gandhi. The dislike alone surprises Iqbal as he believes that the issue is the most legible of all. Then he explains about the origin of untouchables, which is the creation of some cruel Brahmins who do not know how to interpret the Holy texts. He emphasizes that such creations of men can be easily destroyed through proper effort. People are following the system based on the work done by the untouchables and according to Iqbal if people start to use the "Flush System" then there would be no need of human intervention. The latrines would be clean without humans and cleaning profession would completely vanish resulting in the eradication of the untouchables. Bashir cannot respond to the claims of Iqbal and they leave.

Bakha wants to listen to the discussion as it gives solutions to the problems in his mind. He is cleansed of all the bad things that happened on that day. Bakha then decides to follow the instructions given by Mahatma Gandhi. He understands that having a flush system would decrease the problems faced by untouchables and heads back home to say all these things to his father.

Untouchable Analysis: The Muslim and the Poet

The debate helps the purged Bakha to find a solution to untouchability. He is a happy soul with many conflicting happy thoughts in the mind after the debate. He decides to go back and relate the speeches to his father. He is no longer in confusion as he decides to follow the path of Mahatma Gandhi. Further,



he realizes that religion has not made him an untouchable; but, it is the people who have created such a profession.

In Yajur Veda, it is written thus:

“Om Yadhema vacham kalyani mavadhani janebyaha |

Brahmarajanyabhyam suudraya chaaryaya cha swaaya chaaranaaya | |”

General Translation: The four Vedas are intended for the study of all Varnas [castes]. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Suudra, etc. and women can read, propagate and listen to the knowledge of Vedas. This will help to remove all the sufferings from life and help to live a harmonious life.

Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand clearly intends to show that Hindu religion is meant to perform on this Vedic Mantra rather than the fictional creation of some people. Bakha is in harmony with his life, for he has realized the truth through the two knowledgeable men he listens to – Iqbal and Mahatma Gandhi.