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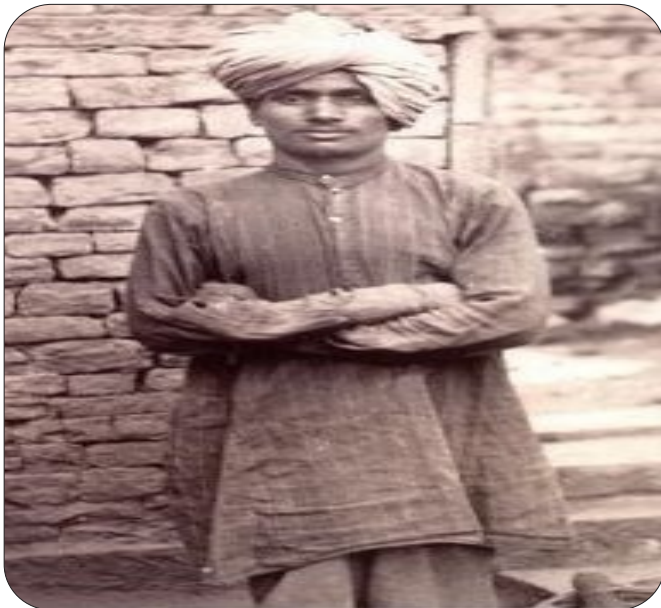


THE PRESENT STUDY OF NOVEL TO BAKHA'S



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ABSTRACT

Untouchable presents a set of adolescent characters-Bakha, Rakha, Sohini, Ramcharan, Leather worker's son Chota, the sons of Babu. Bakha is a central character. The other adolescents occur as the part of the total scheme of the novel. They are minor characters. Rakha and sohini share some of Bakha's traumatic experiences.

KEYWORDS :Adolescent, Novel, Bakha's Physical Built, Bakha's life

INTRODUCTION

The novel narrates a series of insults imposed on a young sensitive boy in a day. One can't expect great physical changes in Bakha's physical built, in a day. But the mental growth is traceable. Anand describes the physical appearance of his adolescent character. Anand introduces Bakha in these words: Bakha, a young man of eighteen, strong and able-bodied.

Then he goes on saying something or the other about Bakha's physical appearance. After the completion of Bakha's daily round at the latrines, Anand, comments : His black eyes shed fire and his big, broad face was slightly contracted with the fatigue.

Bakha is lithe and supple. Bakha has five feet two frame with heavy buttocks. Anand narrates his journey in Bazaar in these words : He was perspiring. His broad, frank face ordinarily so human, so variable, so changing, with its glistening high cheek bones, its broad nose, the nostrils of which dilated like those of an Arab horses, his fine full quivering underlip so alive always, was set and impassive, silent, grim and deathly.

Anand compliments him : A superb specimen of humanity he seemed whenever he made the high resolve to say something, to go and do something his fine form rising like tiger at bay.

These scattered remarks about Bakha's physical appearance present the hero as an authentic

figure. Sohini is Bakha's sister. She has delicate features of her rising beauty. Her innocent and honest face impressed others. She has the young fresh form whose full breasts with their dark beads of nipples stand out under muslin shirt. Anand offers her pen-portrait in these words: She had a sylph like form, not thin but full-bodied within the limits of her graceful frame, well-rounded on the hips, with an arched narrow waist from which descended the folds of her salwars and above which were her full, round, globar breasts, jerking slightly for lack of bodice, under her transparent muslin shirt.

Leather worker's son chota was the smartest fellow about the lane, with his neatly oiled hair, khaki shorts and white tennis shoes. Rakha was a short, long-faced, black stumpy little man. His small eyes and the narrow forehead were positively ugly. The elder son of the Babu was simple and innocent. Another child had big forehead with bright egg shaped face. All these minor characters form the backdrop for a day's happenings in Bakha's life. The centre of interest is the dexterous young boy, Bakha.

Bakha: Rakha and sohini are motherless children. So healthy domestic life is an impossible thing for them. Their father, Lakha abuses them. He awakes Bakha: Are you up? Get up, you illegally begotten.

The words and phrases like 'cock-eyed son of a bow-legged scorpion' 'Dirty Dog' 'Son of a bitch' 'Offspring of a pig' 'The swine' 'The son of a dog' 'roughe' 'illegally begotten' are poured on Bakha. They show the environment around the hero. Bakha has not domestic protection. The economic security is a thing beyond comprehension for this family. The caste and class of Bkaha's family is important in Bakha's growing up. Bakha is a victim of the present caste and class system. The title of the novel, Untouchable is without definite article. This shows that Bakha is representative of untouchable adolescents. But that does not mean Bakha has not his own identity. E. M. Forster rightly pointed out, Bakha is a real individual, lovable thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian.

Bakha is a young boy who wants to grow up. But Bakha gradually loses his innocence. The day begins with abuses from his father and loud shouts from the sepoys reminding him of his duty. After finishing his morning round, he went to the town. Bakha bought jalebis. He put a piece in the mouth. It was wonderful to walk while munching the jalebis. But then he forgot to announce his arrival. He touched a caste Hindu. The mob watched him. Bakha tried to explain his position. But the man slapped him. Bkaha's turban fell off and the jalebis were scattered in the dust. Bkaha's natural reaction to this incident is like this:

'Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him...That man. That he should have hit me. My poor jalebis. I should have eaten them. But why could not I say something? Couldn't I have joined my hands to him and then gone away? The slap on my face. The coward, how he ran away, like a dog with the tail between his legs'

But in the same mood, he recognizes his place in the society,

'For them I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable, untouchable. Untouchable., That's the word. Untouchable . I am an untouchable'

This is a departure point for his innocence. Later a caste woman abuses him while offering the food. He tries to have a close look at the Gods in the temple. But the people shout that he has polluted the temple. Pandit in the temple tried to molest his sister. He became angry. He spoke to himself:

'I could have given him a bit of my mind'

But the tradition could not allow him to do so. He took the Babu's wounded son in his arms. But the boy's mother charged him of polluting her son. This type of incident has happened in Anand's actual adolescent years. The religion, family are not safe places for this young boy. He considers the muslims as good persons because they were also outcastes to the Hindus. Bakha is a victim of religion and the contemporary caste and class structure of Indian society. In fact, Bakha has number of good traits in

him. He is a dexterous workman, he is a good player. He is admirably clean. He respects the upper classes. But all his good qualifications are of no use. Because he belongs to lowest of the low caste-the sweeper. Bakha identifies his caste. 'They think we are mere dirt, because we clean their dirt'.

Bakha tries to get psychological solace for his tragic plight. His love for modernity is his attempt to protect himself against the evil caste and class system. He is a devotee of fashion. He smokes Red Lamp cigarettes. He wants to look and walk like the white sahib. The topis, knives, forks, buttons, old books are the things of attraction for him. Anand says:

'He did not like his home, his street, his town because he had been to work to work at the Tommies's barracks and obtained glimpses of another world. Strange and clean, he had grown out of his native shoes into the ammunition boots that he had secured as gift. And with this and other fashionable items of dress, he had built up a new world, which was his heaven, if for nothing else, because it represented a chance from the old ossified order and the stagnant pools of the lane near which he was born'.

Bakha wants to wear the sahib's clothes and speak his language. This love for modern English life is his illusion which allows him to forget the reality for him. Bakha is thankful to good hearted persons like Havildar Charat Singh and the lady who offers him food.

Bakha is deprived of formal education. But he has the urge for education. Bakha reflects about his school-going : school. One could talk to the sahibs. One wouldn't have to run to the scribe every time a letter came. And one would not have to pay him to have one's letters written. He had often felt like reading Waris shah's Heer Ranza. And he had felt a burning desire, while he was in British barracks, to speak the tish-mish, tish-mish which the Tommies spoke'.

The schools were made for the caste Hindus. He felt the impulse to study on his own. He bought a first primer of English. But his self-education could not proceed beyond the alphabets. He agreed to pay money to Babu's son as the tuition fee for teaching him. Bakha lacks in formal education. But his daily life is his teacher. The experiences in a day taught him everything about why and how his place and position in caste and class ridden Hindu society.

The last part of the novel presents three solutions to Bakha's problems. They are :

1. Conversion to Christianity
2. To follow Gandhi
3. Flush system as narrated by the poet.

This last section begins on page number 164 and ends on 213. Most of the aspects of these solutions are beyond the comprehension of this adolescent. These solutions give a vague and distant hope for Bakha. The state of confusion in Bakha's mind is expressed in the end of the novel. Bakha was thinking of everything he had heard, though he could not understand it all. Bakha comes to a tentative decision:

'I shall go and tell father all that Gandhi said about us, he whispered to himself, and what that clever poet said. Perhaps I can find the poet on the way and ask him about his machine'.

METHODOLOGY:

Bakha is the victim of traditional caste system. But Munno is the victim of class system. His place is questioned in the new class system based on cash nexus. His poverty is responsible for his tragic misfortune. He categorizes the world into two classes-the rich and the poor. He casts his lot with the poor. His poverty forces him to leave his village. This victimized rustic lad has to move across the country in search of his daily food. His urge for life is admirable. He tries to seek his place and position in society but the society denies him this place. His lust for life ends in his tragic death.

CONCLUSION:

The article present a Bakha and Munoo are adolescent lads from the northern India. Both of them are types of and individuals at the same time. Some young Hindu boys give a false witness against Bakha when he touches the caste-Hindu.

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