

Linguistic Reflection of Imperial exploitation and Cultural

Barrier in Mulk Raj Anand's Novel

Abstract: Language is both an individual and social phenomenon. The function of language is to establish social relationship and also to convey information about the speaker. Society reflects the social mode of life. This paper discusses the novel *Untouchable* and *Coolie* which exposes class based society in India. It focuses attention on a number of social beliefs, customs, traditions, social evils etc. of the Hindu society. These novels were written when India as a colony and untouchability was a rife through India. Mahatma Gandhi made a crusade against this social cure.

Key word: Relative role of Language and Culture, linguistic and non-linguistic ability, class, sociopolitical scenario in pre independent society in India, humiliation, humanity.

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Language is both an individual and social phenomenon. Language is a social reality because it is intimately connected with society through its primary function of communicating message from one individual to another. It is also a very important means of establishing and maintaining relationship with other people. The function of language is to establish social relationship and also to convey information about the speaker. Society reflects the social mode of life. The social mode of life depends mostly upon such variables as language, customs, education, economic background, attitude, value system etc, which are usually covered by 'culture'.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1936:69) "Both language and culture are built of opposite correlative lenses of our culture, it has a deep and profound influence on us –on the way we see ourselves and our relative role in the world" (Phillip:1976:70) that is why "Language can be treated as a conceptual Model" (Strauss:1963:69) to examine the aspect of culture. Every utterance of our speech reflects an act of identity in a multidimensional space.

Dell Hymes coined a term –"Communicative Competence". As its simplest, it means saying the right thing at the right time on matching the code to the context. Socio-linguistic largely depends on Dell Hymes' proposition of Communication competence. The term "communication Competence" as proposed by Dell Hymes (1972:224) is knowledge needed by speaker on hearing." Hymes claims:

"To account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about, with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitude, value and motivations concerning language it

features and uses an integral with competence for and attitude towards the inter-relation of language with the other code of communication.”(Hudson: 1985: 75)

Communicative competence covers all type of linguistic and non-linguistic abilities under lying successful speech behavior. Language and literature are socio-cultural and political phenomena. It is related to national identity and pride. English as a link language in India carries the weight of different experience in different context /surrounding. English is essentially malleable in nature, adapting its form to suit cultural context. Indian writing in English is a part of great Indian tradition that compromises both pre-independence and post independence streams. Writers feel as if they are the part of great Indian traditions, which is amorphous, diverse and undefined. Indian English Literature is ‘one of the voice in which India speaks. It is a new voice, no doubt, but it is as much Indian as others.’(Iyenger: 1982: 3)

‘Untouchable’ (1935) is probably Mulk Raj Anand most artistically satisfying novel. The novel is about a day in Bakha’s life. Bakha, the eighteen year old untouchable boy is one of the son of Lakha, the Jamadar or the sweeper. As the dawn breaks Bakha’s work of Latrine cleaning begins. One day sister Sohini goes to the public village well to fetch water. Kali Nath the priest of the temple agrees to draw water from the well for the outcaste. He feels attracted to Sohini’s youthfulness. The priest asks her to come to his house. When she goes he makes wrong gesture to her and as she starts shouting, he screams ‘polluted’. Bakha too undergoes the same humiliation at different times. In the hockey match, a little boy gets injured and Bakha tries to lift him up. His mother thinks that Bakha polluted him. Bakha runs away from Colonial Hutchinson’s house and goes to the ‘Gole Maidan’. There he hears Gandhiji’s (saviour of untouchable) speech. Gandhiji’s concept of untouchable as the ‘greatest bolt on Hinduism’ encourages Bakha. E.M.Foster writes in the preface to the novel, “Untouchable” could only have been written by an Indian. No European however, systematic, could have created the character of Bakha, because he could not have known enough about his trouble.

Untouchable exposes class- based society in India. It is a socially conscious and sociological novel. It focuses attention on a number of social beliefs, customs, traditions, social evil etc. of the Hindu class ridden society. The Untouchable (like Bakha) live their subhuman life in mud walled, one roomed cottage in unhygienic conditions. They are exposed to long term disease. This novel was written when India was a colony and untouchability a rife through India. Mahatma Gandhi make a crusade against this social curse .When Bakha unknowingly touches a high caste Hindu in India. The practice of untouchability is an offence in India legal code these days. Mulk Raj Anand depicts the socio political scenario of India 1930’s .When ‘Swadeshi Movement’ under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was in full swings:

“As you all know while we are asking for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation, we have ourselves, for centuries trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest removes for our inquiry. For me, the question of these people is moral and religious. When I underfoot to fast unto death for their sake, it was in obedience to call of my conscience (p-162-63)

‘Untouchable’ presents the crude reality of the social outcastes who does not harm anyone but for their birth in a particular class, are themselves harmed and exploited. Untouchable, a social novel, reveals status /class differences of the character in the novel. Indian society has an age old tradition hierarchy, which date back to the heyday of feudalism and imperial power. Honorific tag like “Huzoor” and “Sahib” are used frequently in the novel. Bakha asks Colonel Hutchinson “Who Is Yussuh Messih, really Sahib

“?Again Bakha replies in response to Colonel’s, abusive terms “Nothing Sahib, I was just tired”. Bakha addresses Colonel, the Christian missionary as ‘Huzoor’ not because he enjoys a powerful position but because Colonel is respected for his benevolent deeds. He is an elderly person too. In “Ha, Huzoor, you are a Sahib”(139) Sahib stands for a white person, a member of the colonizing community in India socio-economically inferior people for those who belong to relatively upper class use “Sarkar” Lakha calls Hakim Bhagwan Das “Sarkar”.(92)

I said “Sarkar, I went away after standing outside for sometime “Maharaja” is an address term used exclusively almost all over India in political domain. In the past, the mighty kings were addressed as “Maharaja/Maharaj” In India social discourse, the doctor and ‘Hakim’ are also called Maharaja or Maharaj. In ‘Untouchable’, Lakha remembers an incident involving Bakha’s illness. Lakha had no option but to get some medicine from Hakim Bhagwan das .He fell at the feet of the Hakim .The Hakim abused him for violating class distinction. In reply Lakha said:

“Maharaj, I forgot your shoe on my head. I am not in my sense. Maharaj you are my father-mother.”(p.92)

Your shoe on my head and ‘father mother’ are loaded with class consciousness. This term indicate the inhuman conditions in which untouchable used to live.

The expression ‘brother in law’ means differently in Indian context. The boy in “untouchable” addresses each other ‘brother in law’ (p.127). ‘Brother in law’ is an expression of abuse (in India) too. Bakha narrates how the priest tries to molest Sohini and come out shouting “polluted, polluted” (p.108) Chota, Bakha’s intimate friend hearing all about Sohini and the priest, consoles Bakha, “forget all about it .We will go and play hockey. Let that ‘brother in law’ of priest come down our street and we will teach him the lesson of his life” (109).Bakha, his father and priest are most of time referred and addressed in abusive term such as a sweeper’s son (p.17) illegally begetters’ (p.131) or son of a pig, ‘The greeting reminds us of the identity of the persons concerned. A lot of abusive terms has passed into ‘Indian English Greeting’ such as ‘kute ka bacha’(son of a dog)(139)’sur ka bacha’(son of a pig)(p.139) some kinship terms soften serves the purpose of greeting in the novel as a sin .Following example:

“What is the matter with you, brother in law?”He asked (p.107) Bakha cannot be Chotas’ brother in law’ in real life. Even then, Chota greets Bakha as ‘brother in law.’

The greetings are often expression of the communication’s desire to belong to one group despite their different societal or religious greetings in the novel.

“Salam Saheb “ said Bakha putting his hand to his forehead as she got up.”Salam Salam you sit don’t disturb yourself squealed the Colonel in wrong, badly accented Hindustani patting Bakha affectionately the while” (p.38)

Here both Bakha and Colonel use ‘Salam’ even though they belong to gestures to make themselves understand each other better. Sometimes non- verbal actions accompany regular greeting.

“Tum Udas” said Colonel putting his hand on Bakha’s (p.137). Bakha thought of Chote or someone from the out castes colony would come and console him. Colonel Hutchinson and Englishman, consoles him

with non-verbal action. Non-verbal actions are possibly, better device than the verbal ones to express sympathy or to console someone. Let us consider the point with one more example from the same novel:

“Wonderful! Wonderful! Marvelous! Beautiful! Exclaimed Chota.”Brother in law”, you are lucky! He slapped Bakha’s back... (p.127).In an upbeat mood Chota slaps Bakha’s back as a gesture of praise for Bakha .”

Self-humbling indicates the unequal relationship between the addressor and the addressee. It is typical characteristic of Indian English politeness discourse. We can cite an example from the Bakha who gets surprised to see Colonel speaking Hindustani. He has never heard the Sahibs speaking acceptable Hindustani apart from some swear words. Colonel asks Bakha” what has happened? Are you ill? (p.138) Bakha Politely says ‘Nothing Sahib, I was just tired (p139) than he adds ”I am a sweeper the son of Lakha Jamadar of the sweepers”.(139)

Some people are reserved and some are talkative. Some are precise in their talk, other are disaggressive and fond of supplying information that is not mandatory. When people converse with in for strict, they may or may not follow the strife rule of the maxims. ‘Untouchable’ is unusual in that one of its characters is a missionary. (Colonel Hutchinon) who speaks Hindustani feels honored as the Sahib talks to him in ‘broken Hindustani’.

COOLIE:

Coolie is one of the classics of Indo Anglican Fiction and it has been called the ‘Odyssey of Munoo’. For as in the ‘Odyssey’ .Homer has related the heroic of kind Ulysses, so in Coolie Mulk Raj Anand has related the adventure\misadventure of Munoo (a hit boy who is dragged into the plains in the false hope of going to work and seeing the world) as he move from the North to South and then back again to the North. Coolie presents a panorama of Indian Life. Coolie is ‘verily a cross sections of India, the visible India, that mixture of the horrible and the holy, the inhuman and the humane the sordid and the beautiful. The general effect is panoramic, good and evil being thrown together as in actual life... (Iyenger: 1984: 340) Anand’s ‘Coolie’ carries the indictment against a society that breeds prejudice, cupidity and cruelty like ‘Untouchable’. Coolie is term of derogation in India. Anand marks this non-descript vocation of the coolie as his subject, in the novel. Its action moves from the village of Bilaspur in the hill of Kangra. Punjab to Shamnagar, from there to Daulatpur and then to Bombay and back again to Shimla in the north. Munno the central character of the novel, symbolizes the suffering and misery of the downtrodden and exploited mass of India. He does’nt harm anybody but is himself harmed, maltreated and exploited till death relieve him from his lifelong suffering .

‘Coolie’ presents a comprehensive view of Indian society of the time- the 1930’s where the years of tremendous commotion in Indian History. It was the time when the Indian struggle for independence was at its zenith. As a product of his age, Anand had disgust for cruelty and hypocrisy of Indian Feudal life, with its castes, creeds, customs, and restrictive religious rites. The relationship between colonist and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed is nakedly exposed in the novel. The head foreman of the Cotton Mill treat the factory worker as if they are nothing but animal o Sir George while as cotton mill is the symbol of western exploitation through its use if machinery, supervisor, technology and it obliges the poor Indian under paid Coolie, like Munoo and Hari, to work in the unhygienic condition. The factory workers are forced to live in the slum of Bombay where they exposed to infectious diseases and all kind

of malpractices. Through Coolie the whole misery of Indian speaks. Its account for the Indianness in Indian society. The Indianness in Indian society is that the individual to a very large extent,

is subordinated to the group. His function and duties are determined by the caste to which he belongs.

Language in literature is language in communication. It can be regarded as one of the ways of using language of real life in particular contexts. While engaging in a conversation with somebody, people take into account several sociological and interpersonal factors, such as age, sociological background, social cultural background formality – informality of relation, socio status etc. In a master servant sociolinguistic role relationship, socio-status etc, in a master servant sociological role relationship politeness strategy works in a different way. The master does not mind to use impolite expression while talking to his servant because the very fact of being the master puts him in a superior status to his servant. As the novel begins, Munno and Gujri is heard shouting to Munno: "Munoo, oh Monova of Mundu, where have you died;" (9). Munno must at once come home and get ready to go to Shamnagar with his uncle Daxa Ram. A master can use a nickname or its derivation safely for his servant. Munno's uncle and aunt ill treat him. They think Munno as their burden. Gujri's opinion shout reflect her inner gross. "Munova" or "Mundu" are the derivation of "Munoo". The way Gujri behaves with Munoo, we are but to redefine the relationship as the obliger- obliged. The same tale continues in the colonizer colonized relationship. In the feudalistic time in India, "I fall at your feet" and "Maai Bap" (p.234) were very common expressions. Speaking such language is a mark of showing respect to superiors in terms of social class, caste and education. In standard British English, people never use such expressions of politeness.

All the three possible modes of communication (tactile, visual and aural) are used in the narrative pattern of the novel. Indian society has an age old tradition of hierarchy. The honorific terms like 'Sahib' 'huzoor' 'Sarkar' etc are used more than a dozen times in Coolie. The use of 'sarkar' (means government) dates back to the Mughal time. Sometime double honorific terms are used more than a dozen times in Coolie. The use of 'Sarkar' (means government) date back to the Mughal time. Sometime double honorific terms are used in the novel. "Huzzor Sahib" interposed Munoo, I heard in Daulatpur that the least pay for work in a factory is thirty rupees" (p200).

In the hierarchical set up like the pre independent Indian society, the master/obliger/colonizer /free to address his servant obliged colonized 'tum'. The servant/obliged/colonised is never allowed to use that they are supposed to use 'aap' to remain polite. Jimmy Thomas is an English man and he symbolizes the colonial exploitation of Indian in the novel. He is an exploiter of the poor Indian Coolie. On the other hand, Hari is a poor coolie. Jimmie Thomas is superior to Hari in terms of social status. Therefore, Jimmie Thomas enjoys a created superiority in a stratified society. "Salam Huzoor" said Hari bending low and taking the palm of his hand in his forehead. "Tum Harry" said Jimmy Thomas "you can back"? "Ha Huzoor, mai Bap" said Hari joining his hand. (p98-99)

A writer's work is sustained by the intellectual, social, political, religious and cultural milieu to which he belongs. From 1920 onward Indian thought and life were greatly influenced by the powerful impact of the national movement and the ideology of Gandhi. All India literature showed a marked impact of Gandhian thought and reverberates with the glorification of truth, non violence, non cooperation, village uplift, charkha, prohibition, end of purdah system. Sati, communal harmony and abolition of untouchability.

The political milieu is the dominant setting of Indian Literature of the period and Gandhian ideology as its intellectual background.

Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable" is a work of considerable merit, dealing with a very important aspect of Gandhian ideology- 'Untouchability'. The novel deals with social problem of untouchability depicting at the same time people faith in Gandhi. Mulk Raj Anand is a novelist with an internet social purpose. His theme is socio economic problem. He is not interested in writing about the glorious past but contemporary India with its problem of untouchability, poverty, labour problem, hunger, superstition, religion, narrow formalism. Women and her economic insecurity. His novel focus attention on the basic condition in which man live.

The form of creating writing, which is the novel, came to me much more naturally than any other form because through this I could live through the experience of other people and realize what silent passion burst in their heart. What immediate and ultimate sorrow possesses them here they want to go and how they grapple in their ways and with their destinies" (He wrote in his book Apologio for Heroism)

Anand's numerous novels form a chronicle in which his eclectic humanism and his humanitarian companion for the underdog are persistent themes. Conditioned by Marxists dialectic, the social impulse is at the heart of his writings.

The first three novels of Anand Untouchable; Coolie; and Two Leaves and a Bud are a class in themselves depicting the lives of the less fortunate, the lowly and the disinherited. They are indeed rich human document having varying degree of excellence. Among these 'untouchable' is a work of considerable merit, dealing with a very important aspect of Gandhian ideology 'Untouchability'. Gandhi own feeling a stated by him."I have never been able to reconcile to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence existence in Hinduism .I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practice it today in the entire book we call Hindushastra..."

Anand wrote "In fact the Mahatma asked me to write a straight forward pamphlet about untouchability I would prefer to write a novel because I wished to present a total personality as a response to the challenge, than an article and dry statement denouncing untouchability. I feel that the novel goes deeper into the human personality than a didactic book. In so far as it is life, creative literature is its mission."

This was the genesis of untouchable, the most important Indian English Novel of the Pariah Consciousness the caste and the creation of the casteless out caste. The hero Bakha is an untouchable and a growing consciousness of the injustice perpetrated on him and his kind. Within a span of less than twelve hours Anand depicts the agony mental and physical trauma of Bakha with deep insight. Bakha is conscious that he is not considered human enough even to be touched. He is in society yet not in it. He is useful for cleaning only to be identified with the dirt he cleans. E.M. Forster writes , "the very act of excreting I considered virtually and physically unpleasant and those who carry them away or otherwise help to dispose them off are outcaste from society. Really it takes the human mind to evolve anything o devilish. No animal could have hit it."The sweeper is worse off than a slave. For the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free but the sweeper is bound.

For ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape, he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of religion and every minute subjected to caste Hindu shouting at his sight. Brahmin crying

out pollution, a whole hostile world focusing on him, he is a miserable sight stirred with anguish and anger.

Anand chooses a very tender moment for the first scene when after much eyeing and mental deliberation. Bakha buys a packet of sweets and loses himself in ecstasy only to wake up to a tirade of abuses “Keep to the side of the road, you low caste vermin, why don’t you call, and announce your approach. Do you know you have touched me and defiled me? No I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself. (p.34)

Such a language is a product of a superior caste which sounds high stung and neurotic to an outsider but not to Bakha who stood “amazed embarrassed, fear gripped his soul fear and humility and servility. The attitude of the crowd is indifferent and hostile which slows the age old exploitation of the untouchable.”

The slaps despite the Muslim Tanga Walla’s timely consolations sets him in a vigorous dialogue within himself make him realize his social non-status. “For them I am a Sweeper, Sweeper- untouchable, untouchable, untouchable... (p38).The two scenes most crucial to the novel are Bakha’ painful moment of humiliation when slapped by Lala the merchant for having defiled him by accidentally touching him and later his own sister Sohini getting nearly molested by a Brahmin priest who himself yells for public sympathy for having been polluted. These two events leave him completely dazed, cursed and smoldering in rage.

He resents much more the passive attitude of his own community; he cannot understand their spirit of acceptance. There is trepidation in his heart as to why he is expected to gulp down the odious abuse, why is he supposed to succumb to the humiliation. Why should he keep quiet when his sister is molested? The only answer to this raging question is the caste barrier. Caste has close down all avenues of remonstrance. At every incident which has cost him his self -dignity he is seething with rebellion which does not find an outlet. He is alienated with a growing realization, that he is one against a whole society. All this bitter experience make him realize, “they think us dirt because we clean their dirt “with feeling of irredeemable humiliation and servility. Bakha goes out to a public meeting addressed by Gandhi. The word Mahatma was like a magical magnet to which he like all other people rushed blindly. Arriving at the meeting place he was an untouchable waiting for Gandhi in a crowded place. “He was in the midst of humanity which included him in its fold and yet debarred him from entering into a sentiment, living contact with it Gandhi alone united him with them in the mind because Gandhi was in everybody’ mind, included Bakha Gandhi might unite them really “(p116).As Bakha he hears people talk around him about Gandhi “He was to them a legend, a tradition and an oracle” to the rustic Gandhi’ arrival I greeted with the flower and “Gandhi Zindabad”. This strange dramatic act, rally multi coloured and multi tongued India to himself.

Gandhi Jee’s focus in the meeting on untouchables but he opened the social subject against the background of contemporary Indian politics;

“As we all know while we are asking freedom from the grip of the foreign nation’, we have ourselves for centuries trampled underfoot million of human being without the lighted remorse of our iniquity...I don’t want to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should wish to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable , so that I may endeavor to free myself and them from their miserable condition “.Towards the end of the speech “Two of the strongest desire that keep me in the

flesh are the emancipation of the untouchable and the protector of the cow. When the two desires are fulfilled there is Swaraj and there lies any souls deliverance.(p124-126)

The introduction of Gandhi serves a very strong purpose in both aspects of the theme political and social without the appearance of Gandhi and without his speech Bakha' oppressed mind would not have been soothed and the illiterate untouchable boy's nationalist feeling inspire of his own problem in society. Untouchable has the immediacy of the true voice of feeling. Anand shares the intricate life with Bakha modelled after one of the many sweepers he knew during his childhood and youth. A great deal of personal urgency has gone into the making of the character.

Is there any salvation for the people like Bakha. This becomes the obsessive concern of untouchable. Bakha is drawn for a while to Christian religion here no distinction I made between one man and another only to realize the Christian missionary is interested only in conversion. Gandhi would exalt only the dignity of his work but would not be able to abolish the caste barrier. Anand does not pronounce a solution but is able to achieve his effect through the debt handling of Bakha' incipient revolt arousing the social conscience against the cure of untouchability .To Anand a novel states a problem of human destiny it does not solve them but it can focus attention on the real drama of body and soul-the truth of life with its suffering and its nightmare which may resurrect genuine -humanity through the writer's ability to bear the yoke.

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