Chapter — III

Exposition of Downtrodden Status of the Underdogs in Anand’s Untouchable and Pillai’s Scavenger’s Son
CHAPTER III

EXPOSITION OF DOWNTRODDEN STATUS OF THE UNDERDOGS IN ANAND’S UNTOUCHABLE AND PILLAI’S SCAVENGER’S SON

In terms of theme, Anand’s Untouchable and Pillai’s Scavenger’s Son project similar happenings in the social milieu in which the writers have lived. Both the novels portray the harsh realities of their own times. Hence they are considered as classics portraying the outcaste people in Indian fiction. The words of C.P. Sivadasan are apt in this connection, “Both these novels have, as their theme, the life of scavengers belonging to the lowest stratum of the Indian society” (119). The practice of untouchability is one of the most important expressions of the caste system that prevails in India. Social reformers have fought against this practice from time to time. Anand, in Untouchable, expresses the words of Gandhi, “I regard ‘untouchability’, as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This view of mine dates back to the time when I was a child” (137).

To be drawn to the theme of the evil of caste system, even at the very start of their writings career, the two major
contemporary writers, Anand and Pillai, have been drawn to the same subject in depicting their common sympathy for the social problems. "Mulk Raj Anand", says C.P.Sivadasan, "spearheaded the Indian novel by writing on the life of an untouchable scavenger. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai occupies a similar position in the history of Malayalam novel" (120). C.J.George's comments about the central concern of the novel emphasize the same point, "in this sensitive portrayal of an individual, Mulk Raj Anand displays his penetrating thought and humane attitude in understanding the grim realities of the social life in India" (36).

**Untouchable** reveals Anand's humanistic approach, whereas Pillai's *Scavenger's Son* maintains his socialistic approach. Though both the novels present the same theme, the conception and execution in each work appear to be different due to the difference in the outlook of the authors at the time of writing the novels. Neena Arora opines, "Anand's maiden venture **Untouchable** (1935) is a fine example of great technical skill and artistic handling of a plot spoilt somewhat by the propagandistic element" (28). Similarly Paul Zacharia writes, "Thakazhy, from *Scavenger's Son*, evolved
into a master storyteller of classic dimensions, a writer with an unerring sense of the social ground reality in Kerala” (32).

Despite the presence of several progressive elements in Untouchable, Anand’s novel with its portrayal of the individual’s struggle against his hostile circumstances in his attempt to achieve a better way of life, and with its emphasis on a humanistic vision of society appears to be more close to the naturalistic tradition. Anand’s approach to the problem of untouchability presented in the novel is evident from the statement of Neena Arora, “the urge for writing a novel about an untouchable was the result of the deep attachment with a scavenger, Bakha during his childhood” (28). Anand’s portrayal of his hero is marked by sympathetic attitude combined with rare detachment. He keenly feels the pains and pleasures of the untouchables. He is full of compassion for these outcastes and indignation against those who victimize them.

Pillai’s Scavenger’s Son, with its central concern of the rise of social consciousness in the scavengers leading to class struggle, Paul Zacharia writes, “is history in Kerala. It made a long lasting contribution to the process of the Revolution and
to the founding of the modern Malayalam novel. In many ways, it is an invaluable Indian social document" (32). Likewise Anand created a furore in literary world by treating an untouchable as the protagonist of his novel. Saros Cowasjee's words are apt in this connection: "Untouchable opens quietly on an autumn morning, and by the time the evening approaches, the author has been able to build around his Bakha a spiritual crisis of such magnitude that it seems to embrace the whole of India" (45).

Anand and Pillai regard the problem of untouchability as an occasion for a deeper consideration of the larger issues involved in the general human condition in India. Cowasjee writes, "It is only after we have put the book aside and ruminated on Bakha's fate that the full implications of the tragedy explicit-a tragedy of a large section of mankind ostracized and condemned to misery" (47). R.E.Asher expresses similar opinion, "Thakazhi's aims in writing Scavenger's Son are multiple and complex. As always there is goal of producing a well told story which will hold the reader's attention" (36).
In *Untouchable*, Anand has achieved, in the creation of the protagonist, Bakha, as struggling against a system. The tragedy of the Indian untouchable is portrayed in the experiences of one day. Pillai, similarly, in *Scavenger's Son*, narrates the story of three generations of a scavenger family in Alleppey. C.P. Sivadasan authentically observes:

> Both these writers had, as the source of the incidents depicted in their novels, the unforgettable experiences in their own lives. While Anand drew his details about the sweepers' life from his acquaintance with military camps, Thakazhi learnt about the life of scavengers from his experience in the municipal wards of Alleppey.

(55)

While Anand seeks to implicitly project a society based on mostly humanistic values and idealism, Pillai's main focus is on the vision of the socialist society. This is evident from the introduction of the theme of social revolution into a novel which is apparently about the desperate struggle of an untouchable to forge a new social identity. It may be observed that the real subject of both the novels is not a single
individual but the whole class to which the individual belongs. Both the novels belong to the period of the thirties and forties—decades of great economic and social crisis. Being true products of the period, they capture the spirit of their times following the dominant literary trends and portraying some of the major social problems.

The main theme of both the novels is the pathetic situation of human being arising from the separation of man from his society. Presenting the pitiable condition of the two untouchables—Bakha and Chudalamuttu—two of the poorest of the poor, both the writers try to bring this theme into sharper focus. In both the cases, the authors broaden their concern from the individual to their community as a whole. In *Untouchable* and *Scavenger's Son*, the social evil which Anand and Pillai first attacked is castesim. They find it to be the greatest evil of Indian society. They penetrate deep into the social system and identify the causes of the social evil. In doing so, they seek ultimately to express the aspirations and basic problems of all such social reject and project the general social crisis of their period. This is quite evident from
the expression of Pillai’s concern for all those victims of the society towards the end of **Scavenger’s Son:**

Turn your gaze backwards. How many millions of Chudalmuttus and vallis have been ground down and destroyed like this! For how many years has this been going on! Where else could all their desires and dreams, their love and hate, be absorbed except in this atmosphere? (109)

Marlene Fisher points out the fact that in **Untouchable** Anand expresses similar concerns for his hero as well as for all kinds of untouchables:

Anand’s portrayal of Bakha’s inner life makes untouchable the kind of novel that has great social as well as human significance and thus makes it part of the growing concern that Mulk Raj himself was feeling for metaphoric untouchables, in all cultures and walks of life.

(26-27)

Commenting on the protagonists of Anand, R. S. Singh writes, “are alone, weak and helpless, and dynamic because
they try to understand the causes of their plight and in their own ways wage battle against the social and economic forces that deny them their human rights” (39).

Anand and Pillai express their concern for the general human condition presented in their novels. In order to make this theme effective and authentic, they particularize it by linking it with specific issues like untouchability, exploitation and others and presenting it through the prisms of characters and incidents most suited to it. P.K. Rajan observes, “it is through the dramatization of the protagonist’s painful strivings towards self-awareness that Anand seeks to focus the general tragic situation” (65). The expressions of R.E. Asher are also similar to the writings of Pillai:

Thakazhi achieves his multiplicity of aims with great economy, producing a relatively unadorned narrative which matches the starkness of the subject. In nine brief chapters, each with its own theme, we get the feelings of acquiring a very full knowledge of the lives of the three main characters through the selection of a few telling episodes. (36)
The portrayal of the conflict of the individual and the circumstances of his life is equally presented in the two novels. In each novel, this theme is brought into sharp focus from two directions—from a depiction of the hero's hopeless quest for a new identity and the tragic realization of his inescapable position in society and from an exposition of the social factors that frustrate the hero's struggle for escape and trap him in an isolated existence. The predicaments of Bakha and Chudalamuttu are strikingly parallel. To make their failure more tragic and to underscore the gravity of the situation which they are placed in, both of them are endowed with several individual qualities and capabilities which are scarcely found in their class.

In *Untouchable*, the theme is quite clear in the description of Bakha's plight, "For being an outcaste he could not insult the sanctity of the houses by claming the stairs to the top floors where the kitchens were, but had to shout and announce his arrival from below" (59). Anand refers to the humanistic aspect of this theme when he speaks of the irony involved in the tragic situation of his hero. Similarly Pillai also expresses, "Chudalamuttu had been standing in the
doorway for an hour. No one had seen him. Even if they saw him, they made no sign of recognition. It is only in the morning that people recognize or remember a scavenger." (4).

The following remarks of Ramesh K. Srivastava also underline the humanistic nature of the central concern in Anand's novel:

While portraying the dirt and filth through his descriptions in *Untouchable*, Anand must have had in his mind social, religious, hygienic, humanitarian and literary aspects in view and all these angles must be thoroughly explored while analyzing the problem in detail. (15)

Like Bakha, Chudalamuttu's story also is a struggle against social circumstances. He too is not allowed to escape the confines of his enclosed living and realize his yearnings. His tragedy lies in the frustration of his aspiration to make his son something other than a scavenger:

There was great pleasure in seeing the child grow up. But in that happiness there also was a sadness; a feeling of desolation. The fatherly
affection which he could not show, which he suppressed, broke the walls of the poor fellow's heart. (78)

Both the novels, Untouchable and Scavenger's Son, present how the untouchables live in inhuman conditions and are subjected to worst kind of humiliation, sometimes on trifles and sometimes without any cause. The social and moral implications of this description of Chudalamuttu's plight are quite clear. The irony of the tragic situations of both Bakha and Chudalamuttu is that, despite all their individual qualities and aspirations, they are denied any freedom or right to put their potentialities to use and realize their aspirations.

Untouchable and Savenger's Son are considered as classics, since they bring out subhuman quality of life in the outcaste colonies juxtaposition of the individual qualities of their protagonists. Since they were born in low caste and because of the socio-economic compulsions, they take up their hereditary job of sweeping and cleaning the latrines. But, their individual good qualities and their aspirations to lead a better life make them too noble for their job. Anand's
description of Bakha reveals that his hero is too noble for his job, "Here is a man. And it seemed to give him nobility, strangely in contrast with his filthy profession and with the sub-human status to which he was condemned from birth" (12). Pillai's description of Chudalamuttu is also the same, "He does his work properly. No one takes liberties with him. But he shows respect for the people of every household. He has learnt many things from those who are higher in the social scale" (18-19).

Though he has demanded food from others to eat, Bakha has developed into a big strong man like a wrestler. Anand observes, "And in spite of the poor nourishment he got, he had developed into a big strong man, broad shouldered, heavy-hipped, supple-armed, as near the Indian ideal of the wrestler as he wished to be" (111). The toil of the body had built up for him a fine physique. Once again Anand writes, "Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like a glass. He must have had immense pent up resources lying deep in his body" (16). He has strong desires, ambitions, sensations and capabilities. His desire is to live the whiteman's life. He is
eager to wear western dress, study English and play hockey. In this mood of righteous indignation, he has the strange sensation of being, "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 a tiger at bay" (71).

Both the writers describe the physical descriptions of Bakha and Chudalamuttu in the same manner. In *Scavenger's Son*, Chudalamuttu is always physically strong. He has a good physique with a manly appearance and curly hair. He is distinguished from the other fellow-scavengers by his washed clothes and disciplined life. He does not appear to be an ordinary scavenger. He is a person who sees and understands things. He is well built. Pillai observes:

If we look at him closely once again, we shall observe that in the depths of his eyes the cringing and deferential expression of a scavenger is not be seen...who takes a bath everyday, a scavenger who shaves, a scavenger who wears a dhoti or shorts that he has either washed or had laundered.(18)
While this long description of Chudalamuttu emphasizes his distinction from other scavengers, it also gives the impression that he is one of society's natural victims. Both Bakha and Chudalamuttu are given nobility strangely in contrast with their filthy surroundings and the sub-human status to which they were born. They are noble souls, honest and efficient workers but they have to face all kinds of insult and humiliation.

It is obvious that the dirty surroundings of the outcaste colonies in both the novels provide a good contrast to Bakha and Chudalamuttu. Anand and Pillai concentrate their attention on the plight of both the individual and the low caste society as a whole, and thereby evoke the sympathy of the reader for both of them. There is a remarkable resemblance between the two novels in the dismal picture of the conditions of outcaste existence that they evoke. The outcaste colonies of Bulshall and Alleppey are quite identical in a variety of ways such as the hellish qualities of the surroundings, the living conditions, houses; dress, food etc., through such details Anand and Pillai show the closed world of the outcaste. The inhabitants appear to the products of
their environment, heredity and other forces that control their lives.

In *Scavenger's Son* Chudalamuttu feels dirty about himself because of work which he does and the environment operating in the lives of outcastes. Chudalamuttu becomes aware of the strong influence of such forces when his son insists on eating with him from the same bowl. Pillai describes the mood of him:

Chudalamuttu was taken aback. Yes, he was really taken aback. He had never imagined that such a demand would be made. The boy wants to eat rice that has been mixed with the curry by his father's hands, the same hands that have cleaned out the latrines. (80)

The inhuman condition on which the people live is vividly described by Anand and Pillai. People of both the colonies are similar in their predominantly passive and the negative attitude towards life and the conditions of their existence. They are resigned to remain in an isolated existence, passive, unthinking, credulous and undisturbed by any real urge for a
better life. While Bakha and Chudalamuttu share such qualities as intelligence, sensitivity and capacity for thinking, the others in their respective colonies display their common characteristics of insensitivity, ignorance and timidity. With the sensitive portrayal of individuals both the writers display their social consciousness and penetrating deep into the problems of social life of the untouchables.

Chudalamuttu has some rare human virtues, sincerity and efficiency and urge for life and an urge to rise above the level. He has never wished to become a scavenger. But, once he has become a scavenger, he decides to rise above the level of the degraded life of the scavengers. He asks himself, “Cannot a scavenger live like a human being?”(2). To the surprise of others in his colony he refuses to accept usual left-over- food given to a scavenger, “because of that his obstinacy increased and he resolved not to take anything”(3). Like Chudalamuttu, Bakha is a contrast to his father and others in his colony. His response to his surroundings is clear from his relationship with his father, “he had grown out of his surrounding and he just hated the thought of being in the neighbourhood of his mud-house” (90). Bakha’s instinct
for cleanliness and his aversion, Anand writes, "a sort of dignity that does not belong to the ordinary scavenger, who is rude, uncouth and unclean" (21).

Bakha and Chudalamuttu are not happy with the colony in which they live. They want to come out of the streets and the colony. With such qualitative differences from the rest of the inhabitants in their colonies, they can no longer fit into the animal-like existence in their colony. They have an instinctive hatred for the social milieu of which they are very much a part. In Bakha "it was a queer mixture of awe and romance, the alternation of his hatred for his own town and the love for the world to which he looked out" (69). In Chudalamuttu, it is a firm conviction as expressed to Valli. "Nothing good will happen by living in the neighbourhood of devils. We must go somewhere. We must go to a place where neighbours are good. Is it enough to remain always a scavenger?" (56). Both of them have an impulsive desire to escape it: they share some common vision of a society where they can establish their identity as human beings. Bakha has obtained glimpses of the world of his vision at the Tommies 'barracks', "The mind which has once peeped into the
wonderland of the new, contemplated various aspects of it with longing and desire is shocked and disappointed when living reality pulls in the reins of the wild horse of fancy" (69).

Bakha's love for fashionable life is psychologically revealing. He loves and admires the Tommies. He imitates them. He even smokes as the 'Shahibs' do. His favourite cigarette is 'Red-lump'. He wears Western hat, discarded trousers, artillery boots, puttees and breeches. Bakha's imitation of the Tommies is described by Prof Narasimhaiah as, "There is, it is true, a psychological factor. Behind it the Tommies have treated him like a human being, while to the caste Hindu he is untouchable" (111).

Similarly Chudalamuttu is also drawn to those aspects of his dream world that he observes in the lives of the upper castes while working at their houses. He learns something daily from the lives of the upper castes and tries to translate them into his life. But his vision is a broad one, extending into his future generations. What he aspires for is not just a better life for himself or his wife, on the other hand, it is a new world for his son and his subsequent generations. Chudalamuttu says, "then we must leave the place. My child
must not suffer any more insults like this. He has found out he's a scavenger's son; but at least when he grows up let him not suffer this disgrace" (90). Thus his concern for the destiny of his son in a wider perspective reflects his concern for the destiny of the community as a whole.

In comparison to the high aspirations of Chudalamuttu, the concern of Bakha appears to be limited and superficial as is found in his fascination for the white man's style of life. He appears to be concerned only with himself rather than with the community as a whole. This passion for a better way of life as seen in Chudalamuttu and Bhaka is symptomatic of the social and humanistic aspiration of thousands of such outcastes who are denied recognition and acceptance, to establish a new social identity and to interact with society as human beings. But in the worlds of Chudalamuttu and Bhaka, their potentialities and aspirations are all rendered meaningless: their struggles to lift themselves from their filthy surroundings and to become one with the larger society are ultimately frustrated.

Both Pillai and Anand offer an explicit analysis of the society to explore the major factors that brought about such
a sad predicament for the individual in the modern society. The society depicted by Anand is a decadent, tradition-bound one, where the rigid orthodox Hindus live a world apart, shut off against the lower castes. In Pillai, it is more a capitalist society where all distinctions are made in terms of caste, creed, and class and all the human values are sacrificed for material possession and social status.

It may be observed that this difference is due to the fact that while North Indian Society of the thirties was dominated mostly by orthodox caste Hindus, in the shifting society of the forties in Kerala with a feudalistic set up, the economic exploitation was rather more virulent than the religious exploitation. But at the same time it can be noticed that the difference is more due to the difference of outlook as revealed in the social analysis of each novel. While Pillai’s novel presents a Marxist interpretation of the social situation, Anand’s novel offers a humanist interpretation. The social analysis in Scavenger’s Son, seems to be based on Marx’s theory of dialectical materialism and economic determinism. Caste is shown only as one of the social factors that create
the social situation presented in the novel. The hero's social environment is constituted mostly by the capitalist forces.

Anand creates an oppressed character caught in the villainy of the Indian social structure to bring out the untold suffering and humiliation. In his analysis of society, Anand, unlike Pillai, does not make any serious attempt to explore the root cause for the existence of untouchability. He appears to focus more on the moral and religious aspects of the problem rather than the economic and political aspects. This becomes clear from one of the most dramatic situations in which Bakha comes to realize the truth of his plight. Anand writes, "he became the humble, oppressed under-dog that he was by birth, afraid of everything, creeping slowly up, in a curiously hesitant, cringing movement" (50).

Again through a similar situation, Anand exposes the same determining forces that are at work in the environment surrounding his hero, "He could not overstep the barriers which the conventions of his superiors had built up to project their weakness against him. He could not invade the magic circle which protects a priest from attack by anybody, especially by a low-caste man" (56).
A series of humiliation faced by Bakha realizes what he really is. He recognizes with a shock his social position. It awakens the inner walls of his mind. He realizes that he possesses like any human being, head and heart, and flesh and blood, he is in the eyes of the world an untouchable. Anand shows that it is the customs, traditions and conventions perpetuated to protect the interest of the upper class that form the essential part of the restrictive social systems.

It is not religious orthodoxy that dominates the social life portrayed in Scavenger's Son. The chief enemy of Chudalamuttu is the capitalist system. Pillai finds in the capitalist system the root cause of the prevalence of untouchability. He is always a severe critic of the corrupt capitalist system. He exposes those like Kesava Pillai who manipulates the prevailing socio-economic systems for their own benefit and suppresses the workers ambitions. Kesava Pillai suggests: "Let him bring here all the money he's got... He can also hand over all that he gets from now on. When it has mounted up sufficiently we must buy a plot of land and a hut for him" (25). He shows how capitalism in the form of
such callous people replaces social and moral values by what Marx termed cash-nexus.

Pillai has more successfully presented the evil influence of the capitalist values in the portrayal of Chudalamuttu. Pillai's depiction of Chudalamuttu's capitulation to the capitalism and the process of his subsequent disintegration culminating in his tragic death is a master stroke of genius: it forms in many ways the most successful section of the novel. At first, it enables Pillai to explore the darker aspects of capitalist living and value system and show for instance, how a living social bond is replaced by a capitalist value system. It is his obsession with the thoughts of escape from his mean job and social surroundings and with the great plans for his son that leads Chudalamuttu to fall a victim to the corrupt ways of capitalist life.

Chudalamuttu is a brave man as far as taking decision is concerned. Once Chudalamuttu comes to believe that the collective action under the worker's union can no longer help him change his present job and secure a socially acceptable one, he breaks away from them and goes along a path of his
own. He is drawn to the ways of those that he opposes, seeing how the clever can manipulate the corrupt system for his own benefit. Pillai brings out his new mood, "Every day Chudalamuttu comes back having learnt something new from his superiors. He tries to apply it to his own life" (40).

After experiencing many frustrations in his life, Chudalamuttu tries to adopt a life of exploitation in which the values are turned upside down and the virtues like trust or honesty have no place and he thinks hypocrisies, scheming and ruthlessness are essential for one's success. He knows that his ambitions of possessing a piece of land and a house and of shaping a new destiny for his son can all be realized only with money. So his immediate concern in life is to make as much money as possible. "Chudalamuttu has learnt both to make money and save it. He has money put by. This is an important lesson he has learnt from other people. He is thinking of increasing his savings. Another important lesson" (19).

According to his own plans and out of hopelessness Chudalamuttu wants to do everything to lead a happy life. He betrays his own community and its values; deceives the
closest friends; commits fraud and embezzles. He does all this with a conviction that nothing is dear to him when compared with his mission in life, he feels that he must perpetrate any heinous crime.

Pichandi had been his friend; he still was. No one else had found the same genuine happiness in the way Chudalaluttu had improved himself. His going up in the world was source of pride of Pichandi. Who else had stood by Chudalamuttu in his time of trouble? (57)

Though Chudalamuttu is a close of friend of him, he becomes instrumental to the utter ruin and disintegration of Pichandi and his family.

In the process of his dehumanization, he allows himself to be a pawn at the hands of his employers who tempt him with false promises and use him against his fellow-men to be later cheated and discarded. He typifies the pliable workers who fall into the trap of the systems to be used to undermine and destroy the ambitions and movements of the working class.
Bakha is described as static because centuries of servility have made him weak, helpless and morally degenerate. Anand reveals, "He came of peasant stock, his ancestors having come down in the social scale by their change of profession. The blood of his peasant ancestors, free to live their own life even though they may have been slaves, raced in him now" (56). It is a society of orthodox caste Hindus bound by the age-old feudal conventions. Its cruelty, hypocrisy and the ruthless exploitation of the low class people like Bakha are all exposed through typical characters and situations. For instance, the incident in which the priest tries to molest Bakha's sister and after the failed attempt comes out shouting, "Polluted, Polluted," is a powerful condemnation of the duplicity of morality found in the upper class living. The irony of this episode becomes more apparent when it is set against another incident in which Bakha is abused and humiliated before a large crowd and finally slapped by an upper class priest who has brushed past him and then got polluted. The upper class people like the priest adopt one idea for Bakha's sister and another for Bakha.
Bakha wants to come out from his sordid existence. Like Chudalamuttu, Bakha too pursues his own plans for escape. He too is unconcerned about the fate of his community. If Chudalamuttu, in his attempt to escape from the dreariness of the life under capitalism tries to become a capitalist himself, Bakha in his attempt to get out of the clutches of an orthodox Hindu society tries to become a White Sahib rather than a caste Hindu. But it is also proved futile. At last he realizes that except for his English clothes there is nothing English in his life.

To come out from the cruel hands of the system Chudalamuttu accepts a capitalist value system. It shows his desire to bang his oppressors at their own game. In the case of Bakha's preference for the Tommies over the caste Hindus is likely the natural outcome of his hatred towards his oppressors:

These old Hindus were cruel. He was a sweeper, he knew, but he could not consciously accept that fact. He had begun to work at the latrines at the age of six and resigned himself to the
hereditary life of the craft, but he dreamed of becoming a sahib. (31)

Upendra Prasad Singh describes:

**Untouchable** though written in early thirties has never outlived its vitality in theme. Even today several incidents regarding atrocities on Harijans are a sordid story with no parallel in history to match. They are still burnt alive, killed in cold blood and enforced to over work by the caste Hindus. (3)

Anand’s humanistic view of man is implicit in his exposure of the upper class living and in his insistence on the need of destroying the inequalities of birth.

As Pillai, Anand shows how Bakha too develops the attitude of a petty bourgeois as revealed in his disgust with his community, search for a new identity, obsession with the English clothes, aping of the values of Tommies and others. His appearance and behaviour make him ridiculous in the eyes of others. As Valli does in the case of her husband Chudalamuttu, Bakha’s father points out the contradiction in
his life and angrily tells him to go away from his house. “Go away! Get out of my house. And don’t come back! Don’t let us see your face again” (109).

Both Chudalamuttu and Bakha are equally placed to face the criticism of the social situation in which they move. Bakha comes to realize the truth about him when in the midst of a crowd he is humiliated and beaten up by a passer-by for allegedly touching and polluting him:

We are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too. That’s why I came here. I was tired of working on the latrines everyday. That’s why they don’t touch us, the high-castes...it is only Hindus, and the out-castes who are not sweepers. (43)

As in the case of Chudalamuttu his self-realization comes when he finally fails in his attempts to improve himself economically and socially. He reveals his new perspective by direct self-analysis. Confronted with the reality of his unalterable social position in the society, he begins to look
back at his past life and remorsefully analyses the motives for his actions:

In the sleepless night that followed, Chudalamuttu examined his whole life. It was the first time he had looked back in this way. His father had been love itself. He had lived only for his son...cursed the day when Ishukkumuttu had fallen ill. It was then that he had accepted a scavenger’s job as means of livelihood and gone out carrying the bucket and shovel. If he had not done so, this child who was lying asleep would not have become a scavenger’s son. (90-1)

Bakha and Chudalamuttu view education as a means of escape from their hereditary profession but their attempts to acquire education are opposed and hindered by the caste Hindus in number of ways. Chudalamuttu is seized with a great sense of disillusionment and utter desolation, he laments to his wife: “Do you know why our kid was not admitted to school? If a scavenger’s children start getting educated-then people worry that there will no longer be any scavenger” (88).
Bakha realizes why his father has not sent him to school, "there was no school which would admit him, because the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low-caste man's sons" (30). Chudalamuttu too realizes it later. He too knows the reason why his is not admitted in school for admission, "He was well aware of the reason why his son could not gain admission into a school. It was because the child was a scavenger's son, and because of that alone" (87).

It shows that Bakha and Chudalamuttu are not even permitted to lead an honourable and independent life. The social structure that enforces them to live the underdog lives. Their abortive attempts for escape, their frustration arising out of their ultimate defeat and the eventual tragic realization of their miserable position in the society—all reveal that the depiction of the conflict between aspiration and circumstance occupies the central position in both novels. The similarity found in such a depiction draws our attention to other significant points of similarity between the two novels on the thematic and structural levels.
The privileged people in India have caused mental depression to the untouchables out of which there emerges a new awareness among the sufferers. The new awareness in both Bhaka and Chudalamuttu is shown as an important stage in the rise and growth of consciousness taking place in the society of such under privileged people. While Anand indicates the growth of humanist consciousness through the contrast between the hero and his father, and the hero’s inner transformation, Pillai traces the evolution of socialist consciousness in the society through three successive generations with their contrastive attitudes and levels of awareness. Through the transformation of Bakha, Anand insists that man must assert his individually and human dignity, instead of trying to escape his miserable identity by such means like religious conversion or aping some ways of life alien to him. Unlike in Pillai’s novel, Anand’s intention in Untouchable is not to arouse the socialist consciousness in the people for any concerted action to break down the existing social structure. This becomes quite conspicuous at the end of the novel. The passionate feelings of Anand for the oppressed come to the fore in the novel.
In *Scavenger's Son* Pillai brings out the rise and growth of revolutionary ardour and class consciousness leading to class struggle. Though the kind of social transformation presented in both novels is not the same, there appears to be certain significant similarities in the manner of the presentation. The scheme of each work clearly indicates the importance each writer has given to this theme. The structure is designed to this end; each novel has distinct divisions corresponding to the different stages of the evolution of consciousness presented in it. By presenting the untold suffering and humiliation of the untouchables the writers manifest a plea in their novels for the total abolition of untouchability.

*Scavenger's Son* unfolds through three generations of scavengers – the old man Issukkumuttu, his son Chudalamuttu and Chudalamuttu’s son, Mohan. The story of *Untouchable* is confined to only two generations of scavengers Lakha and his son Bakha. But the growth of consciousness in Anand’s novel is also shown to have three stages, almost parallel to those in *Scavenger’s Son*. The writings of C.P.Sivadasan confirm this view:
In *Untouchable*, three remedies are suggested to ameliorate the condition of the untouchables. The first one is provided by the Salvationist missionary Hutchinson. The second method suggested is the Gandhian approach... untouchablity is the greatest evil of Hinduism. The third one is proposed by Iqbal Nath Sarshar the poet. (57)

The social consciousness is then shown to move from a stage of passive resignation through feeling of discontentment to one of rebellious spirit. Issukkumuttu and Lakha are the typical representatives of the older generation of scavengers with their passivity, resignation, ignorance and above all their acquiescence to authority. They take their fate for granted without any sign of dissatisfaction with the subhuman condition of their life or of any protest against the social injustice or of any hope for a different life. Their only concern in life is with their food and a place to sleep. When it comes to the younger generation the consciousness undergoes a drastic change as epitomised by Bakha and Chudalamuttu. The higher level of awareness possessed by them is reflected
in their dissatisfaction with the life around, their response to
the social conditions, their passionate concern for a better
life.

Both Bakha and Chudalamuttu are of a different breed.
They struggle hard to get away from the shackles of fate and
aspire to lead a new life in spite of the fact that their fathers
advise to them to contrary. The difference in the level of
consciousness between the two generations is shown mainly
through the contrast of the protagonist with his father in
each novel. If Chudalamuttu is the equivalent of stereotypes
of outcastes and they are meant to epitomize the pathetic
condition of outcaste living; their reactions to the social
conditions are typical of the outcaste society as a whole.
Fatalism, passivity and servility lead both of them to an
acceptance of their fate with resignation. Anand and Pillai
depict the superior awareness of their heroes in contrast with
the collective consciousness of the outcaste community
represented by Lakha and Issukkumuttu. This contrast
between the father and the son is intended in each novel to
highlight the two levels of consciousness seen between the
older and the younger generations.
Both Lakha and Issukkumuttu, with their will completely paralysed, are conditioned to an animal like existence in a stratified world and are reconciled with their circumstances. Their only concern in life is their food and nothing else. Lakha advises his son Bakha caution and acceptance: "They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient to overbalance all that we might say before the police. They are our masters, we must respect them and do as they tell us" (71). Issukkumuttu gives a similar advice to his son, Chudalamuttu while initiating him as a scavenger, "one must be obedient; one must be tidy" (2). He advises his son to be respectful to the employers of the town as their lives depended upon them.

In his service as a scavenger for thirty years, Lakha has regularly paid every month at least one third of his salary to his overseer. In the course of his whole service he has taken leave only for six or seven days. He has all alone been preparing the grounds for the transmission of his job to his son at the time of his retirement. He used to tell the successive overseers to appoint his son in his place when he becomes unable to work. His life's desire seems to have been
to make his son inherit his job and carry on the hereditary work:

To think that another man would go into the latrines that he had cleaned out over a period of thirty years! It was too much for the old man. Why had he got the householders to make good the defects in the latrines? For his son's sake. To make his work easy. (2)

Finally, he succeeds in getting his son appointed as a scavenger in his place by giving bribe and offering to pay his son's first month's salary to the overseer. Like the contrast between the two generations, Bakha's gradual awareness of the reality of his social position and his transformation from the intense docility and gentleness to a rebellious spirit are all intended to reflect in miniature the change taking place in the society as a whole.

Bakha is a dissatisfied and suffering soul longing for a change. The bitter experiences suffered by Bakha at the hands of the upper class people have roused in him rebellious feelings. For a moment, he stands up against all
oppression and humiliation. He appears to be no longer submissive and docile. The spirit of some rebellious force that has been lying dormant in him is suddenly kindled. Anand writes:

But there was a smouldering rage in his soul. His feelings would rise like spurts of smoke from a half-smothered fire, in fitful, unbalanced jerks when the recollection of some abuse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes or remorse inside him. (42)

But Bakha does not grow into a revolutionary with any class consciousness or any revolutionary ardour. He is not shown as capable of any purposeful action. At the end, he is never seen to achieve anything. "Interestingly enough, Bakha actually does very little. He neither leads an insurrection nor runs away nor tries to change his circumstances" (27).

Though there are sporadic moments in which Bakha is shown to be capable of action and strong feeling most of the time he remains passive and meek. The spark of wrath remains unignited, but it reveals that a revolution against the
inhuman practices is in the offing. Every humiliation inflicted on Bakha leaves a deep impression on his sensitive mind but at the same time the desire to liberate himself from the disgraceful position is stronger. Bakha is not shown at any stage as acting in an exemplary or positive manner but he is depicted rather as a victim of the social forces, a figure usually found in a naturalist novel. He sometimes wants to protest against the humiliation but the servility of centuries which is ingrained in him paralyses him.

In order to emphasize the difference between the way Chudalamuttu has acted and the new generation is acting, Pillai brings out clearly how Chudalamuttu is committed to revolution. Pillai suggests that the creation of a new society is possible only through a social revolution, a Marxian course of action as demonstrated through Mohan and others in the last section of the novel. He views the problems from the Marxian point of view and maintains that the prevailing socio-economic systems have to be destroyed first, before attempting to create a new order. This can be achieved through Mohan and the sons of Pichandi and Sundiram Pillai writes, “Pichandi’s son and Sundiran’s son are now
scavengers along with him. The three of them are joined together in kinship, like soldiers fighting against the same enemy” (109). This is evident in the expression of P.K.Rajan, “Thakazhi moved by the inspiring rise of working class struggles in Alleppey in the forties, seems to put his faith in the great power of the proletariat”(67).

Pillai advocates the necessity of trade unions to uphold the rights of labourers. In Scavenger's Son, through Mohan and others of his generation like the sons of Pichandi and Sundiram, Pillai effectively presents the third phase of the evolution of social awareness the kind of socio-political awareness that he tries to encourage. By the portrayal of their higher level of awareness and their activities, he adds a political dimension to his novel. Unlike the older generations of scavengers, who have for too long been kept in ignorance, fear and subjection, the new generation is neither naive nor timid; the consciousness has reached a much higher level. Pillai concludes:

In Allepey the scavengers have learnt to speak with a united voice...The Allepey scavenger has learnt quite a bit. He knows quite a bit. He knows
how to think on the basis of what he knows and thus get to know more. So he behaves as one lost in thought. He has realised that a scavenger is a human being. (109-10)

Mohan is shown as a revolutionary, “The blaze of fire and the spilling of blood were becoming clearer in his mind’s eye every minute. Now he must see these sights with his real eyes” (113). He symbolizes the spirit of revolt against the social systems and structures that deny to poor people their liberty and their right to live. At the end, he leads a massive demonstration of the untouchables, workers, lepers and beggars. “His flag was fluttering in the breeze. The crowd, unarmed and possessing only spiritual strength moved forward under the leadership of he scavenger’s son. His face bore the serious and resolute expression befitting a leader” (115). Though the procession is reduced to one fourth as a result of the police firing at three places, it moves forward braving the bullets. Mohan’s sacrifice of his life in the heroic struggle for the liberation of the dispossessed masses of people marks the climax in the process of revolutionary changes in society.
Like Pillai, Anand is a significant humanist and he champions the cause of the lowly and the downtrodden. As a man he has restored the basic identity of man irrespective of his low caste, poverty and lack of education. As a true humanist, he finds that the solution to the social crisis lies in the economic growth of the country through industrialization. This is evident from the words of the poet,

But you know that it is only in terms of our bitter poverty that India is behind the other countries of the world. In fact, it is one of the richest countries; it has abundant natural resources. Only it has chosen to remain agricultural and as natural resources. Only it has chosen to remain agricultural and has suffered for not accepting the machine. We must, of course, remedy that, I hate the machine. I loathe it, But I shall go against Gandhi there and accept it. (142)

Anand expresses his belief that 'the machine' which symbolizes the power of science and technology will ultimately bring about a change in this social order leading to the liberation of the oppressed masses of people. What
Meenakshi Mukherjee has said in her analysis of the novel assumes importance in this context, "He is a rational humanist, in the western tradition, believing in the power of science to improve material conditions, in progress and in the equality of all men, and his manifest intention is to propagate his beliefs through his novels" (75).

As Bakha returns home, his mind is raised with the hope that he, "can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society" (146). Bakha's transformation is shown to reach its point of completion through his confrontations with the priest, Gandhi and the poet. He comes to realize that the problem of people like him can never be solved by simply embracing a different religion or culture. The growing awareness gradually obliterates his self consciousness as a scavenger and leads him to shake off the complex that he shares with his community. "But a part of him seemed to have flown, to have evaporated. He felt he had lost something of himself and was uneasy on account of it, yet thrilled about it, happy" (135). Similarly, he becomes aware of the superficiality involved in his ridiculous attempts
to become a sahib. Having come under the spell of Mahatma, he loses his interest in sahibs.

Somehow, at this moment, Bakha was not interested in shahibs, probably because in the midst of this enormous crowd of Indians, fired with an enthusiasm for their leader, the foreigner seemed out of place, insignificant, the representative of an order which seemed to have nothing to do with the natives. (134)

Bakha at the end finds the answer in the words of the modernist poet to come out from the cleaning of the latrines that is "the flush system." E.M. Forster, in his preface to Untouchable, offers a solution:

No god is needed to rescue the Untouchables, no vows of self-sacrifice and abnegation on the part of more fortunate Indians, but simply and solely-the flush system. Introduce water-closets and main-drainage throughout India, and all this wicked rubbish about untouchability will disappear. (viii)
The new awareness enables Bakha to overcome all his inner conflict and get the glimpse of a brave new world. His hatred of his father and his community is shed off, his love of them returns. As a changed man, he now wants to share with his father the knowledge he has gained about the untouchables and the alternative to the present dehumanising system. His interest now is widened to include his father, his society as a whole. E.M. Forster writes: “Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now of the Mahatma, now of the machine. His Indian day is over and the next day will be like it, but on the surface of the earth if not in the depths of the sky, a change is at hand” (viii).

Through their novels Anand and Pillai convey that the need of the hour is a radical change in the living conditions of untouchables. At the end of Scavenger's Son, Pillai provides a vision of an imminent social change with the support of revolutionary future. Untouchable favours a social change through industrial development. More than anything else, it is in this significant difference between the alternatives suggested in both novels that the polarity in the outlook of the writers is clearly revealed. Both the writers share the view that the existing social order has to be replaced by a new one. They offer a ray of hope at the end of their novels.