CHAPTER II

Untouchability

The practice of untouchability is the most pernicious system prevailing only in India. Other aspects of untouchability are temporary and they will not hurt anyone's feelings. This evil practice based on caste with its enforced and attendant filthy chores leaves an indelible inferiority complex in the minds of the unfortunates. Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan look upon this practice as an evil, which eats into the vitals of a vibrant society. And they also visualize the scope for surmounting it.

'Untouchable' is defined as a member of the lowest caste Hindu group or a group outside the varna system. Contact with untouchables is traditionally held to defile members of higher castes (NODE 2939). There are many attempts to define it, since it forms a significant part of the Indian social structure.

According to Hanumanthan, one of the historians on the practice of untouchability, the term 'untouchability' is the English rendering of the local expressions like 'Asparya' in Sanskrit, 'Titu' in Tamil or 'Pula' in Canarese and Malayalam which generally convey the meaning of pollution (7). The term connotes a lot of interpretations and thus eludes exact definition. Ambedkar writes, "Untouchability underlies the notion of defilement, pollution and means of getting rid of that defilement" (1) Aiyappan defines it as, "the socio-religious practice by which the Hindus keep large numbers of the low
castes from touching or coming near their persons, houses, temples, tanks and sometimes even public roads" (37). And he additionally calls it 'contact taboo' by which persons by reason of their birth, or physiological or ritual state, act as carriers of pollution and induce temporarily a similar state in others by their contact direct or within a prescribed distance." (38) Louis Dumont declares, "We shall define untouchability in the way that is most current, by the segregation into distinct hamlets or quarters of the most impure categories" (134). In fact, it was the British administration, which first coined the words, 'untouchables' and 'untouchability' (Census of India 47).

The term 'untouchability' in its Indian usage means much more than what it stands for. Ordinarily it denotes a particular condition of a man or a woman, rendering him or her unfit for being touched by the other persons. For example, a filthy person coming out of a coal-mine, or a muddy field, or a person suffering from an infectious disease such as smallpox or leprosy, is an untouchable to the other normal person in any society. In these cases, after the disease is cured of or the dirt or mud is removed, they become normal. Hanumanthar states, "But the Indian notion of untouchability is not physical or external" (9). In India, the notion of untouchability is something that is given to a person at birth or something that he inherits. When one is born an untouchable, he carries the disability to the grave and no expiatory ceremony will enable him to get rid of it. Moreover, the untouchable has to carry on the traditional work and his children have to continue the same after him.
Tracing the source of the untouchables and untouchability has been an inconclusive effort even to the scholars of history. The study of Hindu religious texts has been of little help to determine it. Hanumanthan refers to the deduction of Ambedkar in this respect, but he does not, however, offer a clear-cut conclusion. The reasons are: in one context, Ambedkar avers that the untouchables of India are the descendants of the ancient Nagas or Dhagas of Iran and that their untouchability is solely due to their persistence in the 'habit of beef-eating', and in another context, he has propounded another theory that the untouchables of India were former Buddhists (58).

In regard to the origin of untouchables, there are various interpretations, even though no clear-cut derivation has been arrived at. Hanumanthan quotes Vasishta Dharmasasthra in his Untouchability. According to his view, "The atheist, the miser, the ungrateful and the one who cherishes anger for long—these are the four 'chandals' by conduct and the fifth is by birth" (21).

Radhakrishnan, the renowned Indian philosopher and former President of India interprets the origin of untouchables in a rational way. According to him, inter-caste marriages in ancient times were spurned down and children born illegally or out of inter-caste marriages were not accommodated into the four-fold varna system. Since they were kept out of the ideal caste set-up, they could have formed the fifth order or 

*pancama*s (125)
Studies by the Anthropological Survey of India have unearthed the fact that the tribals have generally remained outside the varna system. "Therefore," the Survey reports, "they have gone beyond the pale of caste society except those who have interacted closely with peasant castes in a few regions" (Singh 111).

Hutton is of the view that the caste system and untouchability in India are the products of the mingling of Aryan and pre-Aryan social institutions (Hanumanthan 59). After highlighting various approaches, Hanumanthan finally states:

Scavenging is perhaps the filthiest job and if it could be done by the members of higher varnas themselves; there is no question of any job being considered ceremoniously impure, capable of imparting pollution to those who performed it. But the Arthasasthra lays down regulation protecting slaves of high castes from doing impure works. It is probable that the local aboriginals who were segregated and suppressed by the higher varnas took to such impure and mean occupations out of economic necessity rather than out of their own choice, for it is a matter of commonsense that nobody would condescend to do filthy jobs voluntarily. By the time the notions of ceremonial purity took strong roots in Aryan society, they were easily classified as untouchable caste (57).

In modern times, some of their age-old professions would have disappeared and so the New Oxford Dictionary of English gives additional detail regarding them. "In senses relating to the traditional Hindu caste system, the term 'untouchable' and the
social restrictions accompanying it were declared illegal in the constitution of India in 1949 and of Pakistan in 1953. The official term today is "Scheduled Caste" (2032). The word coined by M.K. Gandhi with an intention of giving them dignity and self-importance, that is, 'Harijans' is now not used in Indian officialese.

Singh enumerates the nature of work undertaken by the untouchables and they are skin and hide work, carrying carcasses, scavenging, drumbeating, playing music and singing and other insignificant works like acrobatics, devil-dancing, exorcism, snake-charming, fibre-twining, singing ballads, fortune-telling as sooth-sayers, and finally rural medical profession (7). An analysis of the occupation among the untouchables suggests that some occupation like leatherwork, scavenging and others are considered degrading.

A peculiarity of the practice of the untouchability is that certain untouchables undertaking certain occupations in some areas are not considered the same in other areas. The fishing communities are untouchables in eastern India, whereas it is not the same case in western coastal areas or in the south except the Bharatars in Tamil Nadu (9). The potters of Madya Pradesh and Manipur are untouchables, but not so in other areas. The washer men in Andhra Pradesh are not untouchables, whereas in many other areas they are considered otherwise and notified as Scheduled Castes.

Untouchables are humiliated as non-human beings by caste Hindus. They are mostly treated as mere labourers of base nature doing filthy works and so not accorded proper respect by the society. It has been incontrovertibly thought that when one is born
an untouchable, whatever penance, sacrifice, expiation or metempsychosis he undergoes, he and his future generation will have to be called untouchables. Ambedkar expands this point, “But the born untouchable, however, could never become touchable. It is a case of permanent and hereditary stain, which nothing can cleanse. In most of those primitive societies the defiling persons were not segregated from others permanently” (25).

Hanumanthan says, “In India, whole groups of people numbering millions were isolated permanently from others and were forced to live outside the settled habitation of the caste Hindus” (10). In traditional villages, it can be noted that the untouchables are housed separately far away from the main habitations of caste Hindus. And sometimes, various untouchables doing different types of works will have their dwellings in different directions away from the central township of caste Hindus.

In India, Hindu scriptures such as the ‘Dharmasutras’ and ‘Dharmasastras’ sanction the practice and enjoin purificatory ceremonies for its breach. In spite of all the disabilities heaped on them, the untouchables are still retained within the Hindu fold. The upper classes keep them at a distance, yet give them a place which is subordinate to them in the social hierarchy. They are the typical examples of what Toynbee has called ‘the internal proletariat’, namely, people who are called in the society but not of the society (Somervell 375).

Indian society, in the past, not only humiliated the untouchables but also punished people of other castes for the non-observance of this practice. Anyone who associated
with the outcastes in any form of behaviour, eating, and drinking, would be proscribed from his caste and would never be restored to it, without a number of troublesome and purificatory ceremonies at great expense. This worst detestation of the outcastes was carried to the extreme in Northern India than in Southern parts. (Dubois 375)

Since the untouchables do not come within the circumference of the cycle of Indian varnas, that is, caste-system, they do not retain similar names and castes in different parts of India. In the past, before the awakening of the reformist zeal by the social workers and the government, they had numerous caste names like Pallar, Parayar and Chakiliyar in Tamil Nadu, Chamar, Chandala in North India, Mala and Madiga in Andhra Pradesh, Koleyas in Karnataka and Pulayars in Kerala. Now to enhance the status and consolidate the self-respect of the untouchables they are called differently in regional languages. In government records, to refer to all the untouchables of India, the word ‘Scheduled Caste’ is maintained. But it is distressing to note that the decent term coined by Mahatma Gandhi, that is, ‘Harijans’ (‘Sons of God’) is sparingly used. In Tamil Nadu, the late E.V Ramasamy Naicker addressed the untouchables as Adi Dravida (meaning ‘from the beginning (adi) the Dravidian people) to raise their self-respect’. (Washbook, D.A. 12). Following the example of Tamil Nadu, the untouchables in Andhra Pradesh started calling themselves as Adi-Karnataka. The Chandals gave up their derogatory name towards Namasudras, and the Chamars to Ramdasia.

Anand and Rajam Krishnan are socially conscious writers and are aware of this worst practice subsisting around them. Having resolved to condemn it, they highlight this
evil practice afflicting the society. Rajam Krishnan writes of the caste-system in her preface to *Çātilmanitarka*:

It cannot be denied that in the Hindu society, the system of four *varṇas*, meaning four castes has been a deep-rooted one. Those who are beyond this four-fold caste-system are said to belong to the fifth caste, *pancamas*, or low caste and they have been absorbed as slaves by the upper castes (4)

Rajam Krishnan has had no personal experience of closely observing any particular outcaste at home during her formative period. Her actual contact with them came only when she went to live with her engineer husband in different places. Besides, through books she has acquired her own perception of their relegated status in the society. She notes in *Çātilmanitarka*:

Outcastes have been destined to slave for caste Hindus by being placed beyond the purview of the ideal social set-up and this has been justified by the higher-ups by quoting the efficacy of Karma and the theory of deeds of previous generations, *poorvajanmam*. All such Hindu sāstras have established the servile nature of the outcastes to the benefit of caste Hindus.

Such justification and permanent establishment of the creation of fifth caste have not been castigated by any ‘human dharmas’. Even the novel nomenclature, ‘Harijans’ has not brought in any effective social change. We have caused minor ruffles in the society by enacting laws to permit the outcastes to enter the temples of upper-castes and to
settle-down in the Brahmin neighbourhood. It has now been proclaimed that 'there is no poor and no slave' (5).

Rajam Krishnan makes a mockery of all the reformist efforts by the government to alter the status of the oppressed. She criticises that the concessions and reservations announced by successive governments have not reached the last man among the outcastes. Yet she visualises the emergence of new awareness and activities in the arena of politics, society, science and economics. She concludes her preface to *Egritmanitarkal* saying, "Why I have taken up this project is to see in person how far these toiling outcaste farm hands have fared in the present social set-up" (6).

She finds fault with the high-handedness of feudalism, fixing it as the main factor for social caste-domination. At the very base itself, these feudalistic forces have established divisive structures. The domineering attitude of feudalism has resisted all efforts of social reforms and that is why all innovative measures and progressive thoughts have not yielded any fruits, since the very basic structure of society remains unaltered.

Anand had a sweeper boy-friend named Bakka in his childhood days. His personal experience of the humiliation his friend and playmate underwent would have lent him support to write *Untouchable* (1935). Indication of this aspect is referred to in *Seven Summers*, the first of the three volumes of Anand's autobiography. His friend Ali shouts, "First of all this sweeper scoundrel has touched me and polluted me and then he is insulting my religion by using my fez cap to wipe my nose with it..." (Unt 35).
Apart from the pernicious practice of keeping the untouchables at a distance, there prevail other types of untouchability, which are all quite harmless to the affected party. A Sudra cannot easily touch a Vysya and will not be allowed inside his house. The reason for such keeping-distance is owing to the fact of Sudras being non-vegetarians (Shanmughasundaram 17). At the same time, a Sudra, or a Vysya or a Satriya cannot touch a Brahmin. Brahmins usually keep distance from other community people. But such distance-keeping measures are meant to keep them ceremonially pure and unpolluted. Each caste considers the next lower caste or castes in the social hierarchy as untouchables. Hanumanthan says, “Thus the Hindu society is honeycombed with the script of untouchability from top to bottom. No caste is free from the notion of pollution” (6). And for the Brahmins, even the ‘Ferungis’, white-complexioned Britishers are untouchables. Anand had been brought up with such an advice by his parents. He says, “I had always been taught to regard them as superior little Sahibs, whom one should not touch lest their clothes should get soiled or some contagion be passed on to them” (SS 01). When Brahmins do not touch or allow themselves to be touched by other people, the main reason has been not only to keep themselves unpolluted and religiously pure, but to avoid contagion or aversion resulting from the non-vegetarian habits of other communities.

Anand tells of the lowly opinion caste Hindus have over the character and habits of the untouchables. Whenever any theft occurred in his family, the blame would squarely fall on the father of Bakha, Lakha, an old outcaste. (Anand has intentionally
included Bakha and Lakha the real personalities as fictional characters in *Untouchable*. Anand continues in *Seven Summers*, "... my mother had the sweeper who came to our house in the morning searched" (138). And the old man, Lakha, who had served the house for a generation submitted without a murmur, even offering to have his house searched if Anand's parents so wished (138).

Anand made friends with the untouchables in his younger days, and he gives vent to this fact in the following: "How much kinder and more prodigal in their generosity were these humble, poor sepoys, workmen and untouchables than my own parents" (150). The fact why he felt very amiable towards the lowly placed was owing to his parents' attitude to them holding themselves "as their superiors" and they always forbade him to touch anything belonging to them. He is now proud to say, "all my manhood was built up on the experience of these irrelevant moments spent in truancy" (150).

When they were playing the game of Kabadi, Anand who was just an observer because he was very young, was not allowed to mingle with the grown-up boys. Ram Charan, one of the players cried in chagrin, when he was caught by Bakha, the untouchable sweeper boy, "The sweeper Bakha has no right to catch me. He is a bhangi and he has polluted me" (SS 154) Ram Charan continued, "My mother has already asked me not to play with him, the illegally begotten" (155). When a scuffle between them arose, a stone hit Anand and blood at once poured from his head. "Bakha, the sweeper had no scruples this time... in picking me up in his arms to carry home" (155), writes Anand. His mother, a traditionally devout lady also started abusing Bakha for touching
him, "Vay, may you die for polluting him, Vay, Bakhia ..." (155) Such incidents and their consequences deeply get impressed in the gullible young minds and Anand has such a similar incident occurring in Untouchable but with a change of character. These incidents anyhow bring out Anand’s sympathy towards the unfortunates of this life. He sums up the injunctions of mothers of caste Hindu families with regard to untouchability, in the following statement… “They let us grow up in the dust as elemental creatures without much help, only warning us now and then against contamination by untouchables and low-caste children” (SS 156).

Anand’s depiction of the horrible scenes in Untouchable and The Road makes the reading public abhor the pernicious practice of untouchability. Pre-Independent days and the days immediately after the Independence were the terrible days for the outcastes in India. They were brutally ill-treated. By means of deftly creating noble characters like Bakha and Bikhu, against the sordid backdrop of social humiliation, Anand achieves his main purpose.

Untouchables in India do menial jobs and hence they are segregated socially by the upper castes. When Anand landed in England, he saw a different type of attitude to work there. He writes in Apology for Heroism that he “had been struck by the peculiar dignity and self-respect with which the porters, sweepers and other workers bore themselves as against the coolies in India who were always being kicked about and intimidated by some high caste people” (60). Comparison of Western and Indian values
of the dignity of labour enables him to deal out a powerful dig at the backwardness of Indian mentality in observing the evil practice of untouchability.

Anand wrote Untouchable in 1930 when he was in England after completing his doctorate in theology. It arose as a result of an urge to communicate "the troubles of his bad conscience." Anand tells in "The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie":

The book poured out like hot lava from the volcano of my erased imagination, during a long week-end I had to do finger exercise in order to ease the strain on my right hand. And I must have slept only six hours in three nights while writing this drama. And even during those six hours, I kept on dreaming about several strains in the central character of Bakha, almost as though I was moulding his personality and transmuting it from actuality into the hero of a nightmare (6)

Bakha was a 'rare human being' whom Anand had known from his childhood and adored as a hero because he was physically like a god, played all the games superbly and could recite whole cantos from the epic poem Heer Ranjah of Waris Shah. Anand continues in "The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie",

I was aware of his tragedy. That this otherwise near-perfect human being was a sweeper who was always being humiliated by most of our elders on account of his low caste and was not allowed to go to school even if his father had sent him (which he would not have), flawed his conscience, for no fault of his. He was suspected of leading all the younger people astray.
and therefore vigilantly watched and kept at bay. The contradiction between the inborn qualities of this youth and the down and out status to which he was condemned may certainly have been the obvious cause for my broodings about him. (7-8)

In *Untouchable*, Anand poignantly touches on the slapping incident wherein Bakha feels humiliated, and other references such as his not being allowed into the temple, polluting the injured boy he carries and the leftovers being thrown at him. And a few minor incidents are mildly indicted at. They are compactly packed into the shorter duration of the novel, that is, twenty-four hours, since he has to maintain artistic integrity and excellence. And Anand has achieved it after a lot of revisions and corrections by himself and his helpful ‘middle-section friends’

Anand recalls, both in *Seven Summers* and in the article “The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie” the tenderness of his childhood friend Bakha. He had developed a guilt about him, since for all the humiliations heaped on him in real life, he remained meek, docile and utterly abject, even though these were qualities imposed on him by the callous society. “And yet”, Anand acknowledges in “The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie” “I wanted to compulsorily appease him by making him a hero of my novel”(8).

Unlike Anand, Rajam Krishnan did not have an untouchable friend in her childhood, since in Brahmin houses untouchables are not regularly employed. She does
not elaborate as to how she picked this issue either in the prefaces to her novels or articles. Moreover, she has not devoted a separate novel to highlight this evil practice. Her knowledge of this practice would have come to her through her extensive tours to the places where she went for on-the-spot study of child labours in and around Sivakasi and the farmhands in the Tanjore belt. Sufferings and humiliations of the outcastes at the hands of the feudalists, factory-owners and high-caste people, which Rajam Krishnan explored personally are unearthed in Cērilmanitarka and Kūtukunjuka. Moreover, in Pātayil Patinta Adigal and in the short story “Malligaippu”, she underscores the societal segregation these outcastes are subject to.

In Indian Writing in English, Untouchable is the first novel to deal with the issue of untouchability. It was not at all considered a literary topic by creative writers, has they concentrated only on decent topics to earn fame. Even great Indian writers in English before Anand, like Bankim Chander Chatterjee, and Ratannath Sarshar were not bold to venture on the issue of the ‘lowest dregs of humanity’. But for Anand, there are valid reasons to write on the untouchables. He had witnessed the coal miners’ strike in 1926 and the emergence of the European untouchables with dignity because of the acceptance by many people, even among the upper echelons of natural human rights. His reading of books by writers like Maxim Gorki, Leo Tolstoy, Walter Rousseau and Charles Dickens has emboldened him to undertake this attempt of making Bakha, Munoo and Bikhu heroes of his novels. His urge to express himself at all costs in an absolutist manner has forced him “to expose the ugliness of death-in-life by deliberately dramatizing
even through distortion, the non-human realities which impinged on one from all sides”

(TSEWL 9)

Mahatma Gandhi’s magazine Young India influenced him to know more about untouchables and untouchability. “The genuineness,” he writes, “of his love for the outcastes moved me more importantly than many of his other ideas” (TSEWL 10). He then decided to meet Gandhi, since the general feeling was that the association with one whose unorthodox stand was against the caste order, was respected. The purpose of consulting Gandhi was to receive from him the needed courage to describe the awkward things he had himself put down on paper. (10)

In the ashram, Anand asked Gandhi’s permission to work in the anti-untouchability programme since he knew very few untouchables except his childhood friends. Gandhi then asked him why he should write a novel on untouchability and why not a tract on it (13). Gandhi advised him to make the book truthful and to try to reform people by saying things frankly. After being asked to take vows, he was permitted to stay in the ashram. He had, as per the vows of the ashram, to clean the latrines once a week. Anand writes about how he went about his work, “… because I had developed an English puritan attitude towards excreta, I had recoiled against latrines” (13). But he determinedly honoured the vow by bringing to his mind the work of his boyhood friend Bakha. He goes on saying:
I knew I would have to face the fact that there was refuse in the world and that if the sweepers could clean the latrines of caste Hindus and carry away dung, then the so-called caste Hindus should also learn to clean the latrines and carry the excreta... I invoked my village attitude in overcoming my anglicised outlook. (14)

Anand’s actual experience of cleaning the latrines at the Sabarmathi Ashram made him realise that Bakha’s work was “no-better and no worse than any other work” (14). Thus Bakha’s cleaning the commodes began to occupy an important aspect of the novel. Anand sums the whole experience in the following: “…the dirty aspect of the job seemed not so much to be his attitude towards cleaning commodes but part of the anal-erotic complex of the Hindus through which they condemned a whole caste of people who cleaned their dung-pots” (14)

By the time Rajam Krishnan started her writing profession, Mahatma Gandhi was no more. Yet she could have been influenced by his writings in her teen age. Unlike Anand, she did not have any close association with Gandhi; but she refers to the life of Sabarmathi Ashram in Venukkunir, to which Yamuna and her parents had been there for sometime

In Paigal Patinta Adigal, Maniammai, the social crusader against poverty, attends the meeting of Mahatma Gandhi at Mannargudi and gets blessed by him to carry on her social service by ‘spreading the message of Khaddar and the removal of untouchability’. These events establish the needed point for this study that Rajam Krishnan has also been
influenced by the preachings and writings of the great leader for the removal of untouchability.

Anand has acquired the idea of work as worship by his familiarity with the works of Russian writers and by the influence of Marxism. In addition to these factors, he has also acquired an integral outlook towards all labour as a kind of creativity. Owing to hard physical labour, Bakha, Anand’s ‘god-like’ figure, had been matured by the exercise of his muscles. He expresses his regret that Bakha had been denied by the callous society “to attain anything near the potential of his qualities of manhood” (TSEWL 14). He concludes his stay in Sabarmathi Ashram with a new revelation that “the warmth towards Bakha may have emerged from my warmth towards the person of Gandhi” (14). It became his dream to write about the poorest of the poor human beings and he was inspired by the fact that Gandhi also exhorted devotion to the poor.

Rajam Krishnan has read about the problems of the outcaste farm-labourers of Tanjore belt in the newspapers (Cēṭrilmanitarkal 2). Since farming has been hailed as the foremost of all the works in the world by the illustrious Tamil poets, like Thiruvalluvar, Subramania Bharathi and Kavijothi, she wanted to write a novel about them. She writes about her dream in her preface to Cēṭrilmanitarkal, “These farm-labourers have been praised by our poets and my long-felt ambition has been to make them heroes of my novels” (3).

Rajam Krishnan has created many outcaste characters in Cēṭrilmanitarkal but has not paid concerted attention on any single individual. The reasons why she has not
created a single lovable outcaste, like Bakha of Anand, are: firstly, in most of her novels she has concerned herself only with the social problems and not bothered about developing characters. Secondly, she would not have observed any hero-like outcastes in her life, and thirdly, she would have felt reluctant to make a hero of an outcaste fearing the censure of orthodox readers.

*Untouchable* has been the result of Anand’s brooding on all the agonies, despairs and sufferings of those condemned to undergo the torments of hell all through the process of their growth. The outcastes have been going through untold sufferings with little or no hope of Heaven (TSEWL 19). Anand had closely observed the heroic qualities of Bakha and also the public humiliations he had to face daily while at work and in the town. And therefore, into the character of Bakha, he has infused “... the poetic truth of Blake, the pictorial truth of Picasso’s blue period and Theodore Powys’s fabulous manner. The real cry was not recorded in the book and held back deliberate, but the echo might be heard if anyone wants to listen. A man is a man - and he is born equal to all other men” (19).

Anand foresees the possibility of change in the attitude of society towards the outcastes. His mission in taking up *Untouchable* has been “to bring to light the ghosts of dead souls, murdered without a rite by the Dharmabugs” (19). He wants “to beckon all the phantoms, so that they should haunt the dreams of the half-dead, and awaken them, may be, to the lingering sparks of life” (19).
Unlike Anand, Rajam Krishnan has not written a novel with special emphasis on untouchables and untouchability. She, too, is a socially conscious novelist touched by its ills, even though she has paid more attention to the sufferings of the female lot consistently in her career. She has been much inspired by Subramania Bharathi, who has advocated a casteless society in *Kumnipāṭṭu*, singing that there are no castes except the gender differentiation of masculine and feminine. Her treatment of untouchables can be gathered from *Cēṭirimanitarkal*, *Kūṭukunjukal*, *Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adigal*, *Rōjō Iṟalkal* and a short story called "Mallikaippū".

Rajam Krishnan has heard about, in her childhood days, how the agricultural labourers toil in the fields shedding sweat and blood and how the low caste workers have been dominated by the upper caste people, but she has had no first hand experience with them. Her hero among the outcasts in her village has been none but Nandan, the traditional untouchable of the village folklore who argued with the caste Brahmins over the Vedas and finally won them over to accept his superiority as a true Brahmin. She has been told in such village functions that the outcaste peasants will eat crabs, drink toddy and offer pujas to the local deity and that they work in muddy fields to raise crops. But, of them, Nandan alone, she has been informed, worshipped the gods of the higher castes. People have told her that even among gods there exist two groups: one for the upper castes and the other for the outcasts. The History of Nandan by Gopalakrishna Bharathiar influenced her much to focus her attention on the social-awakening (CM 5).
Around 1950s when Rajam Krishnan started writing, the practice of untouchability had been already banned by the Government of India. Even then it would not have disappeared totally on the social scene. Since associating with the outcastes was socially condemned, she did not, in her young age, make friends with them. Moreover, her Brahmin community has its own Dharmas and injunctions which would have left her no chance to personally observe the humiliations heaped on them. The severity of the issue of untouchability in her age, would not have been the same, which Anand had observed in his youth. And yet glimpses of the filthy work carried out by the outcastes are found in her short-story, "Mallikaippū", and Kūtukunjuka. In total, her novels say more on untouchables than untouchability, whereas Anand’s forte has been on untouchability both in Untouchable and The Road.

Bakha is humiliated when a caste Hindu slaps him on account of pollution by being touched by an untouchable. The slap, according to Anand’s view, is a slap on all the untouchables of India whom he wants to arouse through the medium of art. That was why Anand did not comply with the request of Gandhi to write a tract on untouchability instead of a novel. What Anand emphasizes touchingly in Untouchable is the societal humiliations, that befall Bakha and the do’s and don’ts which the society prescribes to the untouchables. Even after two decades, Anand finds the same atmosphere unameliorated with regard to untouchability in The Road (1963). Here he has another theme, that is, the objects touched by the untouchables are considered polluted and so the higher-castes do not like to use the road laid by using the stones quarried by the untouchables.
Since the outcastes are outside the *varna* system of the traditional society, "scavenging is perhaps the filthiest job allotted to them" (Hanumanthan 57). Apart from this work they do leather works, farm-works and all sorts of menials jobs from which caste Hindus shy away. Anand’s *Bakha* does scavenging work neatly in *Untouchable*, and in *The Road*, Bikhu and other untouchables are hired by the government to build a road so that milk can be easily transported from the village of Govardhan to Delhi. Thus after a gap of twenty-eight years, Anand presents them doing somewhat different works. Yet he is not satisfied with the progress of government schemes to the outcastes. Cowasjee comments, "It is Anand’s reiterated opinion that the Congress government has done little for the untouchables apart from legislating against untouchability.... The Block Development officer does nothing to punish those who set fire to the huts of the untouchables" (162)

Rajam Krishnan’s outcastes do better jobs than the outcastes of Anand, since successive governments have enacted laws to provide them concessions and reservations. Dorai of *Vērakkunī* (1972) becomes an executive in a company; Shanmugam’s eldest son works in the Secretariat and his daughter studies up to matriculation level in *Cēṭṟilmanitarkaḷ*. Only a few untouchable characters are better off owing to the government’s reservation policy, whereas the other outcastes in *Kūṟukunjukaḷ* (1980), *Cēṭṟilmanitarkaḷ* (1982), and *Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adigāḷ* (1991), are still backward and illiterate. They are mostly employed as farm hands or labourers in the match factories. Rajam Krishnan’s intention through her works has been to paint the sordid atmosphere of
the untouchables and her regret is that the benefits of the government policies have not reached all of them.

Anand wants to show that the untouchables do have the same attitude towards love as caste Hindus do. He portrays two untouchable heroes, Bakha and Bikhu in amorous moods to bring out their human sides. Bakha, a young, muscular and well-featured boy in *Untouchable* thinks of Ram Charan’s sister with whom he used to play during childhood (85). He pictures her quite naked and feels as if he can forcibly gather her in his embrace and ravish her. But he at once checks his wild imagination and curses himself for the unholy fantasy. Anand’s second outcaste hero Bikhu has only eye contact with the high caste Rukmani and it is she who has fallen head over heels in love with him. (TR9) In both the novels, Anand has not developed their romantic affairs further. He has purposely avoided it, since his artistic integrity demands to stress on the aspect of the utter abjectness of their characters.

Rajam Krishnan’s outcaste characters are, of course, humble but not as abject as the heroes of Anand in behaviour. Keeping with the changing times, they are educated and employed and so chances are provided to them to marry caste Hindu girls. Dorai of ‘Verukkumir’ marries Yamuna and Shanmugam’s eldest son, Gobi does the same in *Cétrilmanitarkal*. Indian society has come a long way after the national Independence and the evolution of love for the outcasts, from the creative period of Anand (1935-1963) to the time of Rajam Krishnan (1972-1982), has undergone a lot of sea-changes. She delineates the living-together of a caste Hindu, Shanmugam, Viji’s father and
Velammal, an outcaste, in Kupukunjukal. Velammal came into their house as a servant-maid and brought up the two young girls after their mother’s death. Since the girls get attached to her, she remains in the household along with her own son. But Viji’s grandmother does not like an outcaste living in their house and leaves it to reside in her ancestral house in the village. Viji, now a married post-graduate, does not mind the caste-factor, even though some rumblings come from their relatives. (53).

Outcastes live mostly in thatched huts or poorly-maintained hovels owing to their low income. And naturally the surroundings are the worst to look at. Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan give detailed pictures of their shabby dwellings and the unhygienic atmosphere surrounding them.

Rajam Krishnan writes in Cetralmanitarkal, “Even in daylight there is darkness all inside the thatched huts” (14). Maniammai, the social revolutionary, looks into the hut of an outcaste in Pataiyil Patinta Adigal, and finds “no light inside but a tattered coir-mat and around the hut; pigs are prowling in muddy pot-holes” (55). There will not be any regulated sewerage system and people have to carefully avoid putting their feet on the holes in darkness. For fuel, they cut thorny branches from nearby jungles and dry them out before use (KK 93).

Anand’s vivid description of the outcaste’s colony in Untouchable is worth looking at:
... (It) was a group of mud walled houses. Under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment but outside their boundaries and separate from them a brook ran near the lane, once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes. The absence of a drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made the quarter a marsh, which gave out the most offensive smell. And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the nursery which lay within it, made it an 'uncongenial place' to live in. (14)

Moreover, outcastes have "the cave-like, dingy, dank, one-roomed mud houses" (15) and inside the hut, "they will cook, 'on the two-bricks-with-a-space-in-between-fire-place' in a corner of their one-roomed house" (15).

Rajam Krishnan pictures a similar rural outcaste habitation, "The houses have small mud walls with worn-out thatches interspersed with thorny shrubs amidst waste, human and animal and stagnant ditch water" (KK 12). In such depraved conditions of the Harijan colonies, basic facilities like "potable water, electricity and paved pathways are not provided" (CM 38, 128 and 176). Moreover, to bury the dead, they do not have separate burial grounds and often they have to face opposition from caste Hindus, if the funeral procession passes through their streets or pathways. (CM 38) The outcastes'
slogan over the years has been as per the poetical statement of Rajam Krishnan: “We need water to drink / plot to live on. And / Ground to bury the dead” (CM 184). Nearby there will not be any hospitals and they have invariably to trek many kilometres to get medical treatment. (PPA 75)

Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan do not fail to represent the concerted efforts of the governments to provide basic facilities to the habitations of the outcastes. Anand points out, in The Road, the provision of metallic road laid by the government for the convenience of villagers to move to big cities. Rajam Krishnan’s outcastes in Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adiagal (1991) have metallic or tar roads provided to their colonies. Government measures in providing potable water through tanks, and electricity are hinted at in Kūṭukunjukal (239).

Scavengers have to remove not only human dung but also cow-dung and horse-dung. (Unto 98) Society thus forces them to do the dirtiest job of all. Anand’s Untouchable presents the pathetic working condition of the outcastes. In “Malligaippu”, a short story, Rajam Krishnan focuses the readers’ attention on the municipal scavengers’ work of cleaning the overflowing and stinking septic tanks. (Kanavu 22)

Apart from these two basest cases, other outcastes do road-laying work in The Road and in modern times farm-works in Čērilmanitarkal, Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adiagal and job-works in match factories in Kūṭukunjukal. Rajam Krishnan mentions, “Since they
could not get regular labour in the almost drought-affected villages even for poor pay, they go for works at the fire-works and match-factories, a life saving god-send” (KK 40).

Caste Hindus have subjugated the outcastes by means of preaching mythological or puranic versions of the theory of Karma and Dharma. Since the outcastes were deterred from developing ‘high consciousness’ by the orthodox Brahmins, they believed and obeyed whatever was told of their origin and the way of attaining the stage of being ‘twice-born’. “The lower caste people”, Anand mockingly writes, “were Dardinarayans, lowest incarnations of god, according to the faith, who had the divine in them but who had to assume countless animal and human shapes before they could enjoy completement and become twice-born” (TR 98). By such deliberate means the outcastes were held under the Brahmins’ sway and made to lead abject lives.

Anand and Rajam Krishnan project the overweening attitude of the Brahmin community towards the outcastes. They consider the low caste people as serving the effects of Karma or Purva janmam. Pandit Suraj Mani, the hypocritical priest, in The Road is a representative of the arrogant Brahmin community, which has put down the very being of the outcastes by its own interpretation of their salvation. He avers, “These people are evil-doers… but they are working out their Karmas” (39) and goes on, “These people are condemned by their Karmas to work out their doom among the flies and the dust of their huts” (40). He asserts the sadistic mentality of the upper castes; “... And these people suffer enough for the guilts of the past” (41).
Rajam Krishnan refers to the Vedic interpretation of the Brahmin community in regard to the outcastes in Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adigal Maniammai, the revolutionary widow champions the cause of the low-caste people; but her close relatives caution her reformist zeal, saying, “Low-caste people are suffering from the effects of Dharma. Gandhi need not mingle with them, since he has read the Gita and the Vedas” (38). When such a theory of Karma propagated by caste Hindus percolates down to the basic structure of the Indian society, the outcastes have no redemption in life. They are therefore destined to lead servile lives forever. Even unstinted efforts of dedicated leaders cannot alter the corroded mentality of the society.

Humility and servility of the outcastes to the upper caste Hindus are proverbial and have been congenitally bred in them by the orthodox Hindus to keep them at a distance in order not to be polluted either by their nearness or touch. The very idea that they have undertaken menial jobs over the years has made them feel a separate group from normal human beings. E.M. Forster poignantly observes, “No wonder that the dirt enters into his soul and that he feels himself at moments to be what he is supposed to be; It is sometimes said that he is so degraded that he does not mind” (Unto 10). Long-held opinions of their forefathers with regard to the filthy nature of their occupations have compelled the outcastes to consider their very existence as sub-human. Outcaste children naturally ape their parents who never question their masters. “The Brahmins, the Kashatriyas, the two upper castes”, as per the footnote of Anand, “in Hindu society, justify their superiority by asserting that they have earned their position by the good deeds of multiple lives” (24).
Rajam Krishnan makes this point clear in *Pātiyil Patinta Adigal*, where Maniammai’s farm labourers do not look at her with straight eyes. They keep their eyes down in a submissive manner (43). Bakha has gained “a nobility strangely in contrast with his filthy position and of the sub human status to which he was born” (Unto 29). Anand touches the heart of the readers by projecting their true lives, “One didn’t need to employ a courtesy, a greeting, to become part of their gathering as one does in the world where there is plenty of light and happiness. For in the lives of this riff-raff, these drags of humanity, only silence of death fighting for life, prevailed” (50).

When Bakha remembered that he had forgotten to buy a box of matches, while buying a packet of ‘Red-Lamp’ cigarettes “he was unwilling to go back, as though some deep instinct told him that as a sweeper-boy he should show himself in people’s presence as little as possible” (59). Bakha’s abject nature has been repeatedly pointed out in Untouchable, since that was the natural mentality of the lowly placed in the Indian society. He reminds himself, as a sort of self-abnegation through self-humiliation, that "I am an untouchable... an untouchable”(72).

Even when provoked, he checks his temper and under the stupor induced by the society and his father over his being a ‘sub-human being’, he does not react violently when his sister, Sohini, confronts him informing of the amorous attempt of the priest. He feels he must kill the hypocrite; but he is cowed back, "the sense of fear creeping into him”(88). When the picture of the molestation of his sister Sohini reverts to his mind, he
feels his blood boiling. Anand writes, "With a wild desire he wants to retaliate, retaliation meaning to him just doing anything to the man, from belabouring him with blows to killing him if need be. But the servitude of thousands of years has humbled him... and lessened his respect for life" (89).

Like Bakha of Untouchable, Bikku, too, adopts an abject nature when he is confronted with a provocative scene. Bikku, when thirsty, accepts a brass tumbler of water from Rukmani and is at once slapped by her brother for defiling the tumbler. Like his prototype, Bakha, Bikku for a moment thinks of retaliating, but his hereditary subservience towards the privileged class reasserts itself and he takes to the road. Bakha has been coaxed by his father, Lakha, into submissiveness in Untouchable; but, in The Road, Lakshmi, Bikhu's mother assumes the same role. She tells her son, "Join hands to them all and obey them... Don't fight... Son, we are chamars" (4). In the scene just referred to, Bikhu exhibits his humble and subservient nature, by telling all, "I am Bikhu-Harijan" (109) and at the end of the scene of provocation, he feels he can hit Sajna, Rukmani's brother, but instantaneously he remembers that he is a chamar, that is, untouchable and controls himself. Anand has thus presented the abject nature of the untouchables through these characters. And humanity has to apprise itself of the worthless status of living to which these untouchables are led.

Kathamuthu, in Kutukunjuka by Rajam Krishnan, keeps quiet, when he is being beaten by the caste Hindu, Rathinam. The novelist points out their innate nature of being unprovoked even in critical junctures (9). Dorai of Verukkunir, an engineer does not
react, when he is reminded of his low caste being by Yamuna's uncle (25). It is evident from these examples that they are not only unmoved when provoked but also very submissive even in ordinary situations. Shanmugam, the union leader in Cērīlmanitarkal quite respected by his own outcastes as well as by the Brahmins, uses the following epithet whenever he meets the higher caste leaders, 'Swamy', literally meaning god but here the Brahmins (190). "Harijan farm hands or even labourers are decently respected by none", is the charge of Vadivu to Thevu in Cērīlmanitarkal (133). The author's oblique remark has been that the abject mentality of the outcastes has to be mended and that the higher-caste Hindus should realize the havoc they have so far done to the untouchables.

Bakha likes to smoke like the Tommies and has bought the 'Red Lamp' cigarette but he is very shy of smoking in front of caste Hindus. He feels, "for a sweeper, a menial to be seen smoking constituted an offence against Lord" (Unto 59). Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan thus poignantly portray the servile nature of outcastes.

Eating habits of the outcastes are very deplorable. Caste Hindus keep them at a distance and do not allow themselves to be touched by them, since they eat 'dead flesh' and beef. They are mostly non-vegetarians. Hanumanthan points out that among the outcastes those who have the habit of eating beef are spurned by the outcastes who do not so (17). Besides, the British populations in India then employed untouchables as servants for the preparation of beef in their kitchens.
Among the outcastes, scavengers generally ask for alms from caste Hindus after a tiring day. And the poor outcaste labourers and farmhands always exist on the barest means and have little to drink and eat. In Cēril Mani cortaka, Shanmugam’s son, Gobu who works in the Secretariat at Chennai, wants to alleviate the pathetic condition of his parents. When his plans are rejected outright by them, he curses them, “You will never come up in life as long as you go on drinking old rice-water and live in ramshackle huts. There will come no salvation at all” (64). Existence itself is very difficult for them and so it is inconceivable on their part to lead decent lives. When there is no work, they are forced to skip eating meals once or twice a day. Kathamuthu informs Viji, in Kūlukunijukaal, “I ate only tapioca roots and Marisamy’s brother brought me a cup of tea” (35). Hanumanthan has also touched on this aspect in Untouchability. He writes, “The Puliyars of Kerala exist only on eating tapioca roots” (18).

Humiliation against the outcastes takes place in many forms according to the views of Anand and Rajam Krishnan. They can be scolded using filthy or unparliamentary words or their caste names which, by means of association of ideas, have acquired and denote derogatory sense. Such atrocious steps were common occurrences in the past, since the outcastes did not retaliate owing to their servile attitude and the society, too, did not penalise such inhuman treatments.

Kathamuthu, in Kūlukunijukaal, feels terribly insulted when his own outcaste co-workers are condemned as “pigs of the outcastes” and “boys of dung” (9). Rajam Krishnan, out of literary and conventional modesty, does avoid using such filthy caste-
words that could have been uttered by the high caste speaker. "What fellow, respect, great respect do you expect? ... 's sons should be respected" (84) When the reader fills up the blank in his imagination, he feels horrified to realize the enormity of the abuse. Maniammai, in Pālaiyil Paţinta Adigal, tells, "Scavengers are condemned as 'Thottis'. The very people who toil like mothers in removing the faeces of humans are not shown any respect" (152).

Anand's Bakha and Bikhu receive a volley of abuse from caste Hindus. "Cock-eyed son of a bow-legged scorpion", "Dirty dog! Son of a bitch! Off-spring of a pig" (Unto 65), "eater of my masters" (TR 98), "thieves of daylight" and "evil-doers"(39). When one reads the slapping incident in Untouchable, he feels contrite and even hates humanity itself. Anand says, "The lady who inspired the work, when she went through the manuscript, wept after reading the incident. " (TSEWL 3). In the actual text, Bakha seethes with anger at the abusive language of caste Hindus and he gives vent to his anguish in his recollection of the slapping incident: "All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused? The sanitary 'inspectors' that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers, because we touch dung"(Unto 71).

To avert body-touch, things will be thrown at the outcastes and water has to be drunk by cupped hands. Such scenes of utter insult destroying the ego of the outcastes are brought out severely by Anand and moderately by Rajam Krishnan.
When Bakha orders a packet of ‘Red-Lamp’ cigarettes, he is asked to place the coin in a place pointed out by the shop-keeper. Once the coin is placed, the shop-keeper sprinkles water over it for purification and picks it up. Then he flings a packet of ‘Red-Lamp’ cigarettes at Bakha, as a butcher might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing around the corner of his shop (Unto 59). In the second scene, Bakha has been waiting for alms from a caste Hindu lady for a very long time. In the meantime, a holy man comes and goes away with his begging-bowl filled with cooked rice. But Bakha is not responded at once. He is ordered to do extra sweeping works and while he has been in the middle of his job, the lady flings down from the first floor, some stale bread shouting at him to catch it. Fortunately it falls down on the brick pavement of the gully (101). To such extremes, caste Hindus humiliate the feelings of outcasts.

Rajam Krishnan, writing novels in an atmosphere of transition, points out a reversal of such action in Raja Ralkal. Here the outcasts are not called by caste names but by personal ones. Lakshmi, an outcaste girl, makes friends with Maithreyi, the heroine. Maithreyi goes back into her house to offer the Harijan girl the sweets and savouries which her husband has brought in the morning, but some rats have been attacking the packets. And they run away on her arrival. Cursing them, she throws the packets of sweets and savouries away thinking that the rats would have poisoned them. But Lakshmi does not mind and like Bakha, goes to the spot where the eatables have fallen down, collects them and starts tasting the ‘jelabis’. Even after being cautioned by Maithreyi about the possible contamination of the items, she goes on tasting them. Lakshmi then asks a poignant question at her, "Do the Brahmins always throw away such
tasty items?"(22). Even in the short-story, "Malligaippu", when the young outcaste scavenger asks for the jasmine flower, the house-lady, a Brahmin, is all wonders for the finer sensibility of the outcaste, even though he handles filthy and unrefined works. She does not deny him the flowers and has been waiting for him to return in the evening to collect them (Kanavu 24)

Caste Hindus have geographically segregated the dwellings of the outcastes. This societal segregation does not stop there and it appears even in the village teashops, where 'two-tumblers system' still prevails. The untouchables can have their tea only by using the specially marked tumblers. An outcaste schoolteacher, in Rajam Krishnan's Kootukunjikal, describes the provision of separate tumblers for the outcastes in a tea-shop in the nearby village. He mentions, "Our people wash the tumblers after reaching the teashop and can sip tea only from it" (23). When the teashop owner is later asked why he still practises the punishable system, he replies, "For me, business is more important. Caste Hindus will not visit my stall, if I don't keep separate tumblers for the outcastes. In the next village, a teashop owner was arrested and even after being released, he still continues the same method" (KK 55). That this evil system is still prevalent in Tamil Nadu is evident from the following report, which appeared in the Hindu dated 27 August, 2002:

Despite police action against the practice of untouchability in tea shops of rural Tamil Nadu, several shopkeepers, under pressure from caste Hindus, continue with the discriminatory 'two-tumbler' system. In the caste-ridden State, teashops in several villages do not serve just hot beverages
but also trade untouchability in 'two-tumblers': cheap glass ones for the Dalits and shiny stainless steel containers for the cast Hindus. And now, a 'three-tumblers' system too is adopted in some areas-plastic throw away cups for outsiders whose caste identity is not known.

Atrocities on the outcasts were quite rampant in the past and even after independence such occurrences have not totally disappeared. Murder of an individual or the genocide of a whole village apart from arson, rape and other physical ill-treatments are hushed up owing to the domination of caste Hindus. Even now sporadic events of murders of outcasts, or arson by caste Hindus are reported in the newspapers. Cowajee in his "Afterword" to Untouchable, writes "The Times of India of 26 December 1967 reported that .. three untouchables in a village of Madya Pradesh were shot by caste Hindus for daring to grow their moustaches upward. And recently a young boy in Andhra Pradesh was tied to a pole and burnt alive before a huge crowd..." (221). In Tamil Nadu, Cuddalore and Chidambaram belts and the Nadar areas of southern districts are communally very volatile between the Harijans and caste Hindus.

The types of maltreatment meted out to the outcasts by caste Hindus are: rapes of girls, beating child labourers and burning or uprooting their huts. Shanmugam's father describes how in his hey-days the outcaste women workers were ill-treated, "They can't stand up for betel-nut chewing while transplanting in the muddy fields. The agent will kick the womenfolk by ordering them to raise their sarees up. Even menfolk too can't cheat them" (CM 71) Maniammai feels terribly angered at the unchecked atrocities of the
village 'Minor' on women, she narrates, "The village leader whips the outcasts by tying them to trees. Both father and son do not leave a single mature girl unmolested. "(PPA 76) Marisamy, a caste Hindu worker, rapes a Harijan girl (KK 102). Shanmugam's daughter Gandhimathi, a matriculate falls into the lecherous net of a 'Minor' caste Hindu and gets raped by him (CM 68). In Karippumanikal, Ponnachi, a female labour in the salt-pan is raped by a co-worker (75)

Anand reports on the lecherous attempts of Pandit Suraj Mani in The Road and a priest on Sohini in Untouchable. For the caste Hindus, these helpless women are easy victims of lust and they get away from such crimes as they are not usually reported and even if reported, the police do not view them seriously. Even in recent times, complaints of Harijans of such heinous crimes are hushed up in police stations (KK 78) and (CM 85)

Next comes the act of arson on Harijan colonies. Maniammai makes a complaint of such crime in her village to the police and the case is not at all registered (PPA 51). Harijan settlements near the temple are uprooted without prior notice by caste Hindus (CM 135). They cannot live nearby Brahmmin neighbourhoods. Vadivu asks, out of frustration; "In the Agaramas, many houses are in dilapidated condition and a large vacant site is nearby. Will they permit us to erect our huts?" (CM 136). Harijans are mostly illiterate and are credulous and gullible. Whatever the landlords or caste Hindus ask of them to do, they carry it out wholeheartedly. The crafty panchayat chief foists a false case on Maniammai and a feeble-minded outcaste acts as a false witness to
strengthen the case (PPA 151). Rajam Krishnan thus unmasks the nefarious designs of caste Hindus to degrade the character of the outcastes.

Outcastes are kept away from the four-fold varna system not only for their origin and the nature of work, but also for their defiance of the accepted social mores. They do not observe the established moral codes followed by caste Hindus. In terms of marriage, their attitudes are not up to the standard of an ideal society. For them living with other's wives is not a serious crime and after a tiring day, they usually go for arrack or toddy. Anand and Rajam Krishnan describe the depraved behaviour and mentality of the other outcastes to drive home the point that as the outcastes are left out of the varna system, they behave naturally and licentiously.

Anand has nevertheless drawn exceptional characters like Bakha and Bikhu, as ideal heroes. They do not evince any loose or immoral strands and even if such possibilities arise, they check themselves. "Bakha and Bikhu are lovable, thwarted and sometimes grand, sometimes weak and thoroughly Indian" (E.M Forester 2). They remain comparatively clean, though their jobs are dirty and tough.

Generally among the outcastes, there are no two opinions of their base morality. The agent tells Maniammai of the Harijans "They don't observe any strict moral code. She has deserted her first husband and lives with this man. This is a wicked caste" (PPA 46). The scavenger who asks for jasmine flower from the landlady in "Malligaippū" lives with a lady who has deserted her husband. And this Ananta-like character maintains her
as his wife and hence asks for the flowers (Kanjivu 27). Outcastes are notorious for their addiction to hard drinks. Owing to their low income they usually go for arrack. Maniammai asks her field-labourers" Why do you drink toddy early in the morning? "(PPA 56).

Anand points out in Untouchables that outcaste women are mostly immoral, since for them, to make both ends meet is more important than observing the finer aspects of social mores for which they do not have enough time in this life. He paints the character of Gulab, the washer woman as an immoral character. She claims, "a high place in the hierarchy of the castes among the low castes, mainly because a well-known, Hindu gentleman in the town who had been her lover in her youth, is still kind to her in her middle age" (34).

Regarding the loss of virginity, Rajam Krishnan says, "They don't bother, since, for them, living is more important" (CM 27). Shanmugam's wife has been ravaged, but he marries her and they live happily. And his daughter is also raped by her lover, but they do not make a hue and cry of it and lead normal lives. (CM 258)

Caste Hindus do not allow the outcastes into the temples owing to the fact of untouchability and pollution. "To enter the temple, caste Hindus are expected to do so after a holy bath and donning washed clothes" (Hanumanthan 38). When that is the case for caste Hindus, it can be understood that the outcastes who do filthy works are forbidden from entering the holy precincts.
Bakha in *Untouchable* feels that "An untouchable going into a temple pollutes it past purification" (80). Yet he wants to see what goes on inside and the shape of gods caste Hindus worship. With courage and under the guise of cleaning the steps, he manages to get to the top of the steps leading into the temple. And that is all he can do. In *The Road*, Pandit Suraj Mani declares that the karma of the untouchables makes them do filthy jobs and that he would not allow them into the temple (39). Anand says, in *Apology for Heroism*, that the higher consciousness has been denied to the outcastes (34) and his statement gets reverberated in the incidents where the untouchables are denied entry into the temples. Bikhu tells his mother in *The Road*, "I will see you to the door of the temples" (1) and beyond it they are not permitted. Moreover, the Harijans can make dry offerings to the gods for the preservation of dharma, which may emancipate them (41). Cowasjee writes "We find caste Hindus tyrannizing over their outcaste brethren; they are not allowed to enter temples" (161).

In her preface to *Cēṭṭilmanitarkal*, Rajam Krishnan refers to the history of Nandan a devout outcaste who attained true Brahminhood by worshipping the gods of caste Hindus. He was also denied entry into their temples and yet proved that he was diviner than the orthodox Brahmins. She goes on informing, "In recent times, Harijans have gained entry into all temples by the government laws through the unstinted efforts of Periyar E.V.Ramasamy Naicker" (5). Maniammai, too, understands that "the low caste people fight for rights to enter the temples of caste Hindus" (PPA 67).
Outcastes are considered born slaves to serve caste Hindus. When their whole pre-occupations are concerned with filthy and other mean works, they do not have time to think of education. Brahmins and landlords have denied them education fearing that outcastes would assert themselves once they are allowed to go to school.

Bakha, in *Untouchable*, is told by his uncle that if he wants to become a sahib, he has to go to school. And he has wept and cried to be allowed to go to school. But then his father tells him that schools are meant for the babus and not for the ‘bhangis’. Later still he realises that no school will admit him, because the parents of other children will not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of a sweeper’s son (54). Yet Bakha wants to learn on his own and requests the babu’s son to teach him the letters for payment.

Bikhu, in *The Road*, is somewhat of a bard. He is once promised by Pandit Suraj Mani that he will take him into the temple school, if he comes and sits outside the sacred courtyard and repeats the lessons from there. Like Ehalaiva of *Mahabharatham*, who learnt the art of archery himself, Bikhu has to stay beyond the walls of the temple school and learn by his own effort. But the problem of distance of two miles deters him from undertaking this venture.

Rajam Krishnan, in *Kittukunjikal*, laments over the callous and selfish attitude of factory-owners in not allowing children to go to schools; rather they entrap them to come to their match and fire-work factories. Moreover, poor parents think of the immediate
cash their children bring now than their distant future (25). Landlords of Nagapatinam belt do not encourage schools being established in their villages, since it necessitates shortage of farm hands. Orthodox caste Hindus thus always try to suppress the emergence of individualistic attitude of the outcastes (PPA 77). When Maniammai asks the low caste labourers to send their wards to school, an outcaste from Mayiladudurai with concern replies, "Higher castes will not approve of our children going to schools. They will react to it at once, if they come to know of it" (78). Maniammai still persists in her advice, "Everybody should study, irrespective of caste" (65). But in recent times things are changing. Many schools are established and outcaste children go to school. Determined parents like Shanmugam send their wards to schools. His son after schooling is now working at Chennai and his daughter Gandhi, after finishing matriculation, tries to get admitted into the polytechnic but in vain. Yet the present atmosphere according to Rajam Krishnan, presents a grim picture, since all the outcaste parents cannot afford to send their children to schools. Her concern in this respect has been that the benefit of education has not reached all the outcastes.

To eke out a decent livelihood is very difficult for the outcastes. They are not well paid and most of their earnings are spent on country-made arrack and toddy. With the meagre income, marriages and other ceremonies are celebrated by borrowing money. Shanmugam in Çbrilmanitarkal has borrowed money to build a house and now he is able to repay only the interest. And in this situation, "How can I," he ponders, "borrow two thousand rupees to pay for a seat in the polytechnic for my daughter?" (28).
Lakha, Bakha's father in *Untouchable* borrowed money by mortgaging his wife's trinkets for her funeral ceremony. Now he feels he is unable to retrieve them as the income has come down. (15). Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan project the outcasts' penurious living, waiting on their masters' or landlords' mercy for the celebration of their wards' marriages; or else they seek the help of baniyas, the money-lenders.

When the lower castes of the ideal Hindu society are looked down with disdain by the Brahmins, it becomes quite evident that the outcasts cannot be treated as normal human beings. They are called the 'lowest dregs of humanity!' (Unto 9). Landlord Thakur Singh loudly announces in *The Road*, "... This village was a trust reposed in my family by the Gods. And you have defiled it by robbing the stone from the quarry..." (6). Moreover, Anand explains why Charat Singh, 'the twice-born' high caste Hindu feels kind to Bakha. Charat Singh does not relax the grin "which symbolised two thousand years of racial and caste superiority" (Unto 24).

Rajam Krishnan differs from Anand in this aspect. Anand's technique is to strengthen the case for the pathetic plight of outcastes by highlighting the vainglorious opinions held by caste Hindus. On the contrary, Rajam Krishnan does not have an individual hero or heroine of outcaste origin in her novels to adopt this technique. Rather she goes to the other extreme of depicting the degradation of a few Brahmin personalities like Swaminathan of *Manutatin. Makarantankal* (Nalainadevi 80). Maniammai is cautioned by her own relatives and community people not to work for the outcastes. They
say, "you are violating the traditional code of the village discarding the injunctions of the Dharmasastras" (PPA 75)

Mahatma Gandhi, the unflinching crusader against untouchability, pioneered the movement to dispel the diseased conception of the high castes with regard to untouchability and untouchables through his Young India. He christened them 'Harijans' meaning sons of Hari and in the ashram all were treated equally. And when India became independent, the new Indian Constitution declared the practice illegal in 1947.

Both Anand and Rajam Krishnan have in their novels introduced characters like Maniammai to propagate against untouchability. In Pataiyil Patinta Adigal, Maniammai is personally introduced to Mahatma Gandhi who advises her to take up the propaganda for Khadar and against untouchability (35). She continues to carry out the timely advice of Gandhi by wearing Khadar and propagating the usefulness of spinning, apart from working for the welfare of the outcasts in and around her locality. Rajam Krishnan is more concerned that these ignoramuses do not know of the government publicity that untouchability is evil and that the patriotic poet, Subramania Bharatzi has sung, "Castes, there are none, darling / And it is a curse to utter caste-loveness"(PPA 7). She refers to the abusive language of caste Hindus in Cēritilmanitarka. She mentions, "Outcasts are invariably cursed as 'parappayal' meaning 'men of low caste' (51). Indian government has enacted many laws to protect the outcasts from the tyranny of caste Hindus. To call an outcaste by his caste name is legally punishable. In the educated and knowledgeable circles, people are wary of such incidents and indulgence in such derogatory language is
now rarely seen in public places. On the contrary, misuse of this act has been exploited by the wicked opportunists to malign their superiors.

Ambedkar, the champion of the low-castes, had a tiff with Mahatma Gandhi on the issue of electoral constituencies. Ambedkar wanted separate constituencies for the outcastes, but owing to a compromise with Gandhi, he accepted the proposal of creating 'reserved constituencies' for the time being (Hanumanthian 17). Rajam Krishnan, now, has a sarcastic point of view in this matter and writes, "Thirty years after Independence, it has been showily announced that there are reserved constituencies and separate ministries for the outcastes" (CM 186). Her main concern has been that such reservations and other concessions have not done any good to the lowest rungs of outcastes. Harijans are still beaten, their huts are burnt and the whole neighbourhood is driven away. And in North India, brutal genocides of the Harijan villages are now and then reported in the newspapers (186).

Anand's political approach to the problem has been discussed by Cowarsjee in So Many Freedoms. Anand himself has replied to him, when he asked him why he wrote The Road, since he had covered much the same ground in Untouchables:

... When I went to live in Haryana, twenty miles from Delhi, ... I found that the caste Hindus would not touch the stones quarried by the untouchables ... because the stones had been touched by them. I mentioned this to the great Nehru. He did not believe me. He was quite angry at my mentioning this awkward fact...(161).
Anand's conclusion at that stage was that even the human empire of Jawaharlal Nehru with all the publicity, concessions, and reservations could not annul the practice of untouchability. Religious bigots and vested interest want this evil practice to continue. And even the effects of government measures are effective.

Over the centuries, outcasts have been held as slaves by the four varnas. Ambedkar's influence during the framing of Indian Constitution brought in its wake a lot of reforms to eradicate this evil practice and to alter the mentality of the society towards the untouchables. One of such measures has been the Removal of Bonded Labour system from the agrarian surface of India during the Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. Maniammai refers to the abolition of such bonded labour system in Pātauviḷ Patinta Adigal. Bonded labourers are mostly hill-people and outcastes. For petty wages they slave for the landlords without break during their lifetime. (79)

Dorai, the Harijan engineer and husband of the upper caste Yamuna, is very proud of the changed attitude of the Hindus towards the outcaste:

...We are all now accepted in caste Hindu hotels and given water to drink. Some of us are educated and confident of leading honourable lives. Our roots may have been in quagmires; but we have migrated out of them. But who will permit us to mingle with the higher echelons of society? It is enough to feel content that we are now employed (VN 126).
Nalinadevi sums up Rajam Krishnan's view of the changed status of the untouchables:

...Some of them have been benefited by the special schemes and reservations of the government and they are educated and employed. Moreover, economically they have bettered only themselves. Because of education, they have parted ways with the pernicious evils of superstitions, which will pave way for poverty and ignorance. And they now have the chance of marrying higher caste girls. Shanmugam's son marries a Brahmin girl in Cēṭrimanitarkaḷ (73).

In 1930, it was too early for Anand to predict better times for the outcastes and so he had decided to project only the negative impact of untouchability and the plight of untouchables. Through The Road, he makes one surmise that the possible amelioration may come to the outcastes, as the road has been laid, and avenues of opportunities may be lurking in the capital, if they undertake the trouble of reaching and settling there. Bikhu, the hero of The Road, might sink his caste, since no one knows who he is in Delhi (111).

Visionary reformers have tried to arouse the dormant consciousness of the society towards its deep-rooted evils. Narayana Guru of Travancore, E.V. Ramasamy Naicker of Tamil Nadu, Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and others have done yeoman service to eradicate untouchability from the Indian soil. Government of India has issued many circulars to ban this practice and they are being sent annually to its servants and the
public to take pledge against it. Even then it is still a living problem in India (Hanumanthan 17).

Rajam Krishnan draws the attention of her readers to many social problems. She feels, "disturbed by them greatly" (KK 1). To usher in reforms, she has created leaders like Shanmugam in Kūṭukujukal and Maniammai in Pāṭaiyil Patinta Adigal. Shanmugam is of the opinion that "as long as the outcastes do not shed their inferiority complex and servility, nothing can be achieved" (71). Maniammai dedicates her life to the cause of the outcastes and the poor people. Her hackneyed importunities to the outcastes have been "Harijans are, according to Gandhi, the people of god. You all should go to school and keep yourself and the surroundings neat and tidy. Then none can deny you basic rights". (PPA 39)

She does not cease with advising; rather she sets an example by personally bathing the dirty Harijan children. And she delouses and brooms their shrivelled hair after applying coconut-oil (42). Maniammai is more a doer than a talker and so attends to their immediate needs and encourages them to defend themselves by practising martial arts (68). Finally, she succeeds in forming a labour union for the scavengers of Nagapattinam. Her untiring slogans are: "Be united, Oh depressed people! Form unions, wherever you are! Fight for your rights" (152). Shanmugams of Çërtîmanitarkal and Kūṭukujukal form unions for the outcaste peasants and labours and help them fight for basic facilities. Even with all the laws against the practice of untouchability and measures to upgrade their lives, the present state of affairs has not been up to expectation. Rajam
Krishnan laments in her preface to *Cetralmanitarkali*: “All the concessions and reservation which aim at a casteless society have not alleviated the sufferings of the repressed classes; rather they have lengthened the list of Scheduled Castes” (2). Outcaste characters in her novels “have, however, marched ahead to get societal approval for the law-based equality, defying the tyranny of caste Hindus and disregarding cow dung-water and whiplash” (Nalinaedi 252).

Rajam Krishnan gives a sensational account in regard to untouchability by referring to a book entitled, *Ex-untouchable* in *Veerukkunir*. Dorai, the outcaste engineer has bought it from the Chennai pavement and he tells his wife, Yamuna, “The American author of this book has created two divisions of American untouchables, one the present-day untouchables and other, ex-untouchables” (125). Rajam Krishnan’s standpoint reveals the still prevalent discriminatory attitude of the White race towards the Negroes. Economically forward and well-settled Negroes are treated on a par with them and they become ex-untouchables, whereas the indigent Negro labourers and servants still reel under the step-motherly treatment. For the Negroes, the practice of untouchability is not a permanent stain. Once they are well off, they are accepted by the alien society. But in the case of Indian untouchables, it is a life-long scar in their heart of hearts.

Anand’s hero, Bakha, listens to the speech of Gandhi and the national leader comforts the wounded soul predicting distant changes on this issue. Gandhi waxes eloquent:
I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be
reborn as an Untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and
the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself
and them from their miserable condition. (Unto 200)

And Anand makes Bikhu, in The Road, utter the poem of the weaver-saint, Kabir Das:
"Work, work, devoted one; for, through work, all sins are washed away, by the earth and
the sweat!"(8). Bikhu's mother enjoins her son not to retaliate to the ill-treatment of caste
Hindus, but "to show love to them even if they hate us. Love all God's creations and you
will get love back in turn" (2).

On the social scene, the practice of untouchability has almost disappeared owing
to the unstinted efforts of social reformers and the Central and State governments. Yet
herculean measures, on a war footing, are needed to cleanse the psyche of orthodox caste-
ridden society from its feeling of baseness of being an outcaste. Anand and Rajam
Krishnan have thus emphasised the point through their novels that, like the privileged
people of the four varnas, the untouchables are also normal human beings with the sense
of dignity and expectations for a better future. It is quite meaningless in further stifling
their vibrant spirits. And it is fondly hoped that caste Hindus do away with the traditional
outlook on the untouchables and accommodate the unfortunates into the main stream of
life.

On the heels of this deep-rooted evil comes another— the exploitation of labour in
India in the next chapter.