



## Social disapproval in Mulk Raj Anand's *untouchable*

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### Abstract

This research paper aims to purview the novel *Untouchable* by Mulkraj Anand as a social disapproval. *Untouchable* is Mulk Raj Anand's first novel and it brought to him vast recognition and status. The novel demonstrates the pragmatic image of society. In this research paper social elimination and exploitation of the subaltern takes its roots in the representation of caste-system among Hindus in the novel and it was the root cause of the social disapproval. The emphasis of novel is on an individual's effort to liberate him from the age old evil of untouchability. Anand is here, concerned with harms of untouchability and the requirement for essential understanding. He shows the pitiable conditions of the untouchables through the protagonist namely Bakha. Mulk Raj Anand explored the practice of untouchability is fundamentally a matter of ostentatious religiosity and mistreatment. Anand's protagonist is not of the race, not of the place and the time, but demonstrates all humanity caught in contingencies of an outdated social order that hamper his assessment in to a self-consistent social life.

**Keywords:** exploitation, hypocrisy, conscientious, mistreatment

### Introduction

Independently from the incalculable number of researches undertaken on Mulk Raj Anand, the communal/societal aspects of his novels, even in their routine categorization offer manifold explanations and insights. Anand is a novelist of very important social concerns and doubts, and the social wish is at the heart of his fiction. He is considered the God of the dominated, the despicable and the unnecessary. Society and man form a multicolored structure of life. Within the hard structure of society lie the contentment and sorrow of man. Anand with his experience to a variety of social theories has continuously tried to explore a just and honorable vision of life. Anand envisions a world of human concern and love. He focuses various social and cultural issues in his works predominantly in novels. He has written about 15 novels; some of them his famous novels are *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*. He has written also two collections namely *Indian Fairy Tales* and *More Indian Fairy Tales*. He has written more than six collections of short stories. His first novel namely *Untouchable* deals with various social issues in India.

Society theory argues that social movements are made up of individuals in large societies who feel unimportant or socially disconnected. Social movements, according to this theory, provide a sense of empowerment and belonging that the movement members would otherwise not have. In the novel *Untouchable*, Mulkraj Anand is concerned with the anguish of the masses i.e. *Shudra*- sweepers and his wish to bring about social contentment in their lives and to register his disapproval against the iniquity in the social system of Hindus as well.

In this research paper social elimination and exploitation of the subaltern takes its roots in the representation of caste-system among Hindus in the novel and it was the root cause of

the social disapproval. The caste-system came into continuation in the *Vedic* era. The *Vedic* literature highlights the separation of Hindu society into four castes according to their '*Karma*'- *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. This fourfold system places *Shudra* in the bottom, while *Brahmana* at the top in social order. This fourth caste is again divided in several sub-castes. Among them is sweeper, the smallest one. This sub-division of *Shudra* stops them from being united and therefore they are socially barred and subjugated. Here one can sense the policy of divide and rule in its observable mark. Sweepers whom even other sub-casts of *Shudra* consider lower than themselves have been expelled and subjugated more than them for centuries. They are considered untouchables and obligated to reside in the outskirts of the rest of Hindu residences. Mulkraj was deeply moved by this social unfairness and maltreatment with sweepers and that is the purpose of his writing fiction.

This research paper aims to purview the novel *Untouchable* by Mulkraj Anand as a social disapproval. *Untouchable* is Mulk Raj Anand's first novel and it brought to him vast recognition and status. The novel demonstrates the pragmatic image of society. Mulkraj Anand has portrayed a picture of untouchable who is sweeper boy, in this novel. This character is the representative of all down trampled society in pre-independence of India. The central character of this novel is the shape of pain because of his caste and class. With Bakha, the protagonist, there are other characters who also experience because of their subordinate caste. They live in mud-walled cottages huddled colony in which people are scavengers, the leather-workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcasts. The lower castes people are suffering because they are by birth outcaste. But Anand had described the insincerity of the upper caste people that men like Pt. Kali Nath enjoy the touch of the girls

of Harijan. Mulk Raj Anand displayed all this hypocrisy and double standard or double dealing. Bakha, the protagonist is a worldwide figure to show the cruelty, unfairness, embarrassment to the whole community of the outcastes in India. Bakha symbolizes the mistreatment and domination which has been the destiny of untouchables like him. His suffering and disgrace are not of his only, but the pain of entire outcastes and underdogs. Though Mulkraj speaks about a particular community in the novel subaltern Hindus, it is also inferred to the rest of the world, where caste-based, class-based, racial and economic inequity exists. His consciousness of social segregation and exploitation of the lower dregs of the society show his desire for excluders and exploitations to mend their cruel ways and to transform their social behaviour. *Untouchable* depicts the evil of untouchability in Hindu Society. The emphasis of novel is on an individual's effort to liberate him from the age old evil of untouchability. Anand is here, concerned with harms of untouchability and the requirement for essential understanding. He shows the pitiable conditions of the untouchables through the protagonist Bakha, their immitigable adversities and physical and mental agonies almost with the scrupulous skill of historical narrator.

The protagonist, Bakha starts his day with endearing entreaties and absolute abuses by his father and his encounter with the high-caste people, who can't put up with his very sight. His father, Lakha, the Jamadar of the sweepers, first of all ill-treats him by asking him in the early hours of the cold morning to go out to clean latrines.

These sad circumstances and hurting experiences certainly, blend the emotion of disapproval in Bakha. The sweepers who are conscientious for the maintenance of cleanliness are destined to live in places, unknown to cleanliness and hygiene. Their dilemma is so terrible that they are not allowed to take water from the well. They have to depend on the sympathy of caste Hindus for it. Here Anand depicts the real image of the cruel actuality and the curse of untouchability. The water episode is very touching and heart rendering. Anand's powerful examination, use of regional language, use of abuses and the naked portrait of untouchability evidently states social pragmatism. Sohini, Bakha's sister is treated badly by the high-caste Hindus. The untouchables don't have their well. As Anand explains.

The outcastes were not allowed to  
Mount the platform surrounding  
The well, because if they were ever  
To draw water from it, the Hindus  
of the three upper castes would  
Consider the water polluted. Nor  
Were they allowed access to the  
Nearby brook as their use of it  
Would contaminate the stream.  
They had no well of their own  
Because it cost a lot of money to  
Dig a well in such a hilly town as  
Bulandshahr. Perforce they had  
To collect at the foot of the caste  
Hindu's well and depend on the  
bounty of some of their superiors  
to pour water into their pitchers  
(*Untouchable*, 26)

Mulk Raj Anand explored the practice of untouchability is fundamentally a matter of ostentatious religiosity and mistreatment. By a very well worked out technique of dramatic irony, Mulk Raj Anand in *Untouchable* depicted the social realism in modern Hindu society. Anand actually gives three solutions to wipe out the difficulty of untouchability in the novel *Untouchable*. They are Christianity, Gandhian way and the last is the use of Mechanical Device (flush system) to clean latrines. The non-discriminatory attitude of the non-Hindus makes the untouchables realise and tends to draw them closer to the non-Hindus such as the Christian missionaries who abuse the caste differences and untouchability among the Hindus to draw the untouchables into their religious fold.

Anand wants to stimulate the exploited, concealed, browbeaten and dehumanized classes of the society. He criticizes social problems, human hypocrisies, and individual eccentricities. He has depicted social conflicts and evils, which he has seen and experienced closely in his own environment. Along with criticizing social arrogance and injustice in his novel, Anand urges for a superior outlook, more broadmindedness, more friendly, more unselfishness and better understanding. Anand's protagonist is not of the race, not of the place and the time, but demonstrates all humanity caught in contingencies of an outdated social order that hamper his assessment in to a self-consistent social life. Mulkraj Anand described social disapproval in a proper manner in the novel, *Untouchable*.

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