



## Review Of Research

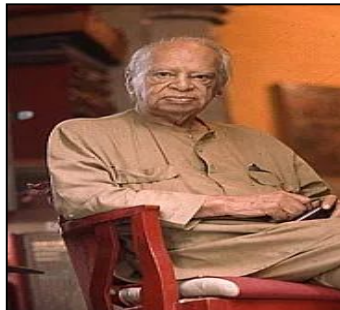


### MULK RAJ ANAND'S UNTOUCHABLE AS A PORTRAYAL OF HUMAN SUFFERINGS

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#### ABSTRACT

Throughout the ages literature has played an important role in exploring human values and their relevance in moments of crisis. In India there are few writers who considered art as a tool of service to humanity. The writers like Mahatma Fule, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr B.R.Ambedkar, AnnabhauSathe



played very crucial role in this context. So far as Indian fiction is concerned there are some writers who vividly portrayed the social reality in their works of literature. Mulk Raj Anand is one of them who did not consider art for the sake of art. Anand is influenced by Mahatma Gandhiji's principles of equality,

brotherhood and truth. Mulk Raj is known as the first Indian English novelist to deal with the tragic plight of the downtrodden of Indian society. Anand lived what he preached and he preached what he lived. Most of his novels deal with the injustice, the inhuman treatment, the degrading humiliation and cruelty by an orthodox and caste-ridden society. In this article my aim is to study how Anand's epoch making novel *Untouchable* is the portrayal of human sufferings.

**KEY WORD:** Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, Dr B.R.Ambedkar.

#### INTRODUCTION:

Mulk Raj Anand is regarded as a Pioneer novelist of India. Moreover he is known as the first Indian English novelist to deal with the tragic plight of the downtrodden of Indian society. Even though, Anand is non-Dalit writer his sympathy lies with the Dalits. He upholds equality. In most of his novels he writes

about the injustice, the inhuman treatment, the degrading humiliation and cruelty by an orthodox and caste ridden society. Being a committed writer he considers art as a tool of service to humanity. Being a portraitist of human suffering he has deep sense of involvement with his subject and society. All his novels right from *Untouchable* to *Morning face* reveal a consistent philosophy of humanism. Humanism believes in the dignity of man. Belief in man's individualism is central in humanism. Anand's love for human being is open secret. After Anand the reflection of human suffering is found in Indian writing in English in large extent, particularly in the Dalit literature. However, in this paper an attempt is made to study how Bakha, the protagonist of the *Untouchable* receive inhuman treatment by upper class people and how skillfully Anand portrays their human sufferings.

Throughout the ages literature has always explored human values and their relevance in moments of crisis. Anand's *Untouchable*, (1935) the first novel, written by Anand has been regarded as, "the first authentic Dalit novel in English literature and the harbinger of social realism in Indo-Anglian fiction." <sup>1</sup>This novel shows him coming to grips with the major aspect of the theme of tradition versus modernity and handling it with a great artistic power. This novel almost established Anand's reputation as a novelist. It is translated into twenty world languages. In this novel he "treats untouchability as a social crime against human dignity." <sup>2</sup> His choice of a sweeper, Bakha, as the hero of his novel was indeed, "revolutionary trend so far as the subalterns are considered." <sup>3</sup> In this novel his main concern is with the suffering of an untouchable boy, Bakha, growing into manhood in an orthodox and caste ridden society who was humiliated at several times. The novelist writes:

*Cigarettes are flung at him as a bone is flung at an insistent sniffing dog. Jalebis are thrown at him like the waste thrown at a pig and thin paper like pancakes flies down to him like a kite from the third floor. The mental depression of all untouchables find its expression in Bakha's agonized interrogation: "what I have done to deserve all this?"*

This novel got immense popularity for its theme of injustice of Hindu society committed on the social outcaste. According to K.R.S. Iyengar, Anand became the advocate of downtrodden and unprivileged. Further he remarks that Anand explores the by lanes of the outcasts and the pageants, the sepoy and the working people. He is more concerned with poverties and traumas and deal with the untouchable and urban laborers. His novels are concerned with all form of social discriminations and he attempts to telescope the Indian milieu and its ambient structure. Bakha is forced into the profession of a scavenger. He had to clean a row of latrines in the morning. He has some independent thoughts. He is physically strong but he is forced into doing the dirty job. Bakha hates his predicament as a scavenger. He is threatened by his merciless father and is compelled to perform the job of cleaning the latrines. He feels that the whole society has turned inimical towards him. Bakha's morning rounds of duties are painstaking. He has to clean three rows of latrine single-handedly several times. By portraying the protagonist like Bakha, Anand describes the critical situation of downtrodden in Indian villages. Caste barriers are so powerful that the untouchables are not allowed to draw water from the same well as the caste Hindus.

Bakha's sister Sohini on one of the fateful days goes to pandit Kalinath to draw water for her. He pours water into her pot and suggests that she should come to his house later to clean the courtyard. When she goes there he tries to molest her and when she repels his advances and starts screaming he shouts, "Polluted", "Polluted" and so called upper caste people gathered there. When Bakha comes there he becomes furious to see his sister in embarrassing situation. Even if he has physical power to beat up Kalinath he remains passive and returns home to tell his father 'They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt'. (U.P.107) Bakha's frustration and restlessness is added when he is treated by upper class

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women as animal. He narrates the story that how the women in the silver smith's alley had flung the bread down at him from the top of theirhouse. (U.P. 107) It is like throwing crumbs of food particles to animals from a distance

At the end three possible suggestions to his problems are suggested to Bakha. First a missionary tries to persuade him to become a Christian. He listens to Gandhiji's eradication of untouchability and appeal of shedding their dirty habits. Bakha also hears a young poet advocating modern mechanized situation as the only cure for the removal of untouchability. When the novel ends we find Bakha "thinking of everything he had heard, though he could not understand it all it all" (p.133) Similarly Anand does not approve of any kind of pity and sympathy on the basis of poverty and helplessness of his protagonists. In fact he has a great esteem for Bakha and other protagonists who are the representatives of have not. Thus Bakha as a protagonist win our admiration and we come to the conclusion that he is a great in his own right and deserve our full praise. He suffers with extra ordinary patience that is truly heroic. It is true that the people like Bakha and other protagonists of him suffered intensely for long time but a day will come when they are likely to live with prosperity, joy and peace.

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**Note-** All textual quotations are taken from Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchables*, New Delhi; Orient Paper Book, 1970