



Exposure of Social Injustice and Humiliation in Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand

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Introduction

An examination of Mulk Raj Anand's renowned novel, *Untouchable*, written in 1935, reveals the exposure of social injustice and humiliation borne by members of the so-called untouchable or Dalit community. The story focuses on a fifteen-year-old boy named Bakha who belongs to the low caste in a hierarchical and discriminatory society that ostracises certain groups of people, consigning them to menial and demeaning jobs.

Caste distinctions have defined the structures of South Asian society for centuries, determining what an individual could or could not do compared to other social groups. The irony is that such supposedly divinely ordained concepts, micro-managing and controlling the lives of millions of individuals, are still justified in the name of Hinduism, the main religion in modern India, which also sanctions the conversion of 'lower' caste individuals into Sikhism and other religions.

Historical Context of Untouchability

Untouchable is set in the early twentieth century in British-occupied India during a period that witnessed the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi and various Hindu social reform movements: movements that strove to abolish the degrading practice of Untouchability. Mulk Raj Anand depicts the societal dogmas and inner conflict of a young boy named Bakha, whose social class, derived from birth and caste, is considered "Untouchable." Anand explores the ideas that dominated the Indian caste system that were central to the Outer Dark of Indian culture—the outer darkness of the outer realm of hell where the souls of the Untouchables ended up after they died. Although these beliefs were especially popular in Hinduism, it had become common in most of the prominent religions of India at that time.

The novelist sees Gandhi as a messianic figure who would liberate the Untouchables from social, political, and economic oppression. Bakha, however, does not see it quite that way; what he wishes for are good clothes, capable boots, and a good meal after the day's work of cleaning latrines, sweeping the streets, and removing animal carcasses. Bakha tries to relate to Christianity and other religions outside the Hindu caste and class system without being sure whether they would welcome or accept him. Anand's criticism of Gandhian anti-Untouchability movements—presented through a new Nimkar, a hostile boy of the same age—reveals his own commitment to social reform and liberation.

Character Analysis

Bakha is the protagonist of the novel *Untouchable*. He is a boy of seventeen years, the son of Sohini, and belongs to the lowest caste, the sweeper caste. His struggle against the injustice of his position in the caste system occupies the central place in the novel. The other members of the family are his father, Chota; his grandfather, Bishtu; and his little sister, Sohini, who is an embodiment of affection and love, though born in the ranks of the Unseeables. Kavita Panjabi writes that "The text presents Bakha's vulnerable position through the consciousness which speaks directly to the reader when some particularly acute humiliation or rejection strikes. On the surface, Bakha is a confident, happy-go-lucky boy, and this cheerful air is partly necessary to the guts that make him pick up the Indian and British officers' linen in the Raj, parts of which are draped over the mahogany furnishings in their homes." Kavita Panjabi further adds that the final point of the consciousness, where it addresses the reader directly, creates a sense of involved partnership in that one can strongly feel the impracticality of the call itself and the present unsuitability of the world, which has so long tolerated the conditions that make such inequality inevitable. Sen elaborates on the consciousness when he says: "He becomes an embarrassing reminder of degradation, projecting the harsh stench of inescapable servitude into the genteel chambers of the citadels of power and authority."

The toilet in the novel is not only a mean occupation, but a symbol of all that is repulsive and unwelcome in an untouchable's life. The drum that

the Englishman mistakenly thinks is a present and the Sikh's kirpan or sword enjoy for Bakha a symbolic significance in projecting a Chandal's awakening spirits. Anand depicts Bakha as a sensitive young man who questions the logic of the system that forces him to perform his filthy work and at the same time forbids him to share even the common facilities such as water and road."

Bakha: The Protagonist

The novel's protagonist is Bakha, the effervescent thirteen-year-old son of a sweeper. It presents a day in his humdrum life. He idealizes the West at the end of the nineteenth century, but his was indeed a special situation, for he had grown up under the influence of Marx and the ideal of a new proletariat. He was passionate in his grasp of things intelligible, and expressed himself through an unusual gift for writing and a capacity for rapid command of languages. He was not uncertain about the political and social advances he wanted to achieve for his country in the twentieth century, and he had always lived and worked with people active in social reform movements. He was enamoured with the idea of liberating the untouchables through education. His heart went out tenderly to young girls enduring the suffering of child-marriage and a lack of freedom.

Set against the background of the rigid caste system in India, the novel highlights how British rule has perpetuated all sorts of exploitations and discriminations in the name of religion and tradition. It presents religious hypocrisy in the wrong use of Hinduism to maintain disparate social order and at the same time, it also uses Sikhism to give hope and inspiration to the oppressed. The first scene in the novel describes a sundowner walking at one end of a street in a north Indian cantonment town. A sweepers' quarter aligned along the other footpath of this street provides the backdrop.

Supporting Characters

Anand sketches many characters surrounding Bakha, revealing the yawning gap between the two opposing segments of society in India. Characters such as the Colonel, the Christian Missionary, the Hindu lady and the Mahatma are identified with different strata of the society. Rao Sahib, the house owner of the Colonel, is shown as a typical image of the so-called upper classes of colonial India.

Supporting characters occupy pivotal places in the novel. The Christian Missionary urges Bakha to become a Christian in order to get relief from social disabilities through education. The Religious Teacher advises Bakha to turn to a higher religion—Sikhism. The Mahatma suggests that social injustices can be eradicated through piety and social service. In marked contrast, the Colonel, the British ruler, dehumanises him by addressing Bohri with the exclamation "Get out of here, you wretched little

untouchable!" The daughter of the Colonel is an innocent instrument in his policies of subjugation. The Raosahb Pandit sitting in the Rajpraatha is the novel's indictment of the high placed Indians and especially the power-loving Janajathrs.

Themes of Social Injustice

Caste system establishes the hierarchy in society based on birth and is considered an injustice to the untouchables. The untouchables are assigned residue roles by society, they collect garbage, skin dead animals for leather, clean toilet, and remove human's excrement from toilets. The table, offered by the caste system, is the supper segregation and is opposition of human values. These features bring numerous inequalities in society and they result into social humiliation for the untouchables. The unequal treatment can be witnessed in every sphere of life at home, in the street, at work, and so on.

In the story, Bakha feels humiliated for his social identity. He has studied Sahaja religion and believes in equality and freedom for all. He feels the burden of the caste system and the hatred and humiliation that it involves. The general system demands from the low castes ideals and standards of behavior and public deportment, but it denies their acceptance when they try to qualify themselves. Both caste and class struggle are discussed in *Untouchable*. Bakha's attempt to go beyond his role as an untouchable determines an encounter with a new set of rules. The police, who represent the dominant groups, are contemptuous of his desire for education and progress.

Caste System and Its Implications

Caste is an exclusive stratum of society, the members of which are rigidly confined to certain occupations, and marriages within the same caste in the group are a principle of caste purity. The Hindu society of India was very rigid and this rigidity was at the top of the mast. The Indian social structure is divided into groups in which they are ranked according to their social status and such hierarchy is accepted by them. The basic reason for the inception of caste among the Hindus was the quest of purity and the theory of Paraninda. Those people whose work had some connection with pollution like dealing with the dead, disposal of liquid waste, cleaning the streets and so on, were: considered untouchables. Untouchables were at the bottom of the caste pyramid. They were neither allowed to enter temples, nor permitted to touch anything belonging to high-caste people, nor participate in social functions like marriages and births in the upper-caste families. Indeed, the whole Purity and Pollution doctrine was applied to them more strictly and, because Pudgal was the source of pollution, they were assigned the lowest rank in the particular caste hierarchy. Being Parajan, their names were not written in the Hindu Family Register.' The identification of their names was done separately in

another register called ROR coupled with Extinctions Register. Being Parajan, they were denied certain social privileges enjoyed by others, such as wearing dress above waist, bearing arms and so on.

The strongest prop of caste system was the Hindu religion, namely, Hinduism, which supported subordination of the castes. Amongst the non-Hindus, the Sikhs are the only religious sect, which has militantly attacked caste system and preached absolute seamlessness of all human beings without any distinction of caste or colour. Hindus have been the loyal and stubborn upholders of caste system, and over a period of time, the term- “Hindus” and “caste” became synonymous to the word “India” and “Indian” respectively. No doubt, casteism had set its foundation in the Hindu society, but the spirit of Hinduism abhorred such type of egoism. The individual who has realised identity of Atma with Paramatma has forsaken all egoism and discriminations upon the basis of caste, sex and faith.

Discrimination and Marginalization

The social and economic humiliation emerging out of the discriminatory caste system represents the primary focus in *Untouchable*. Hinduism, which introduced the caste system, enforces social discrimination more sternly than any other religion in India. Untouchability arises from the so-called polluted activities practiced by the lower orders; close contact with the lower caste pollutes the upper caste. The practice implies social death, for the outcaste remains beyond the pale of social and religious life. The Brahman tournament is the democratic form of preserving this state of social death by denying human contact through discriminatory practices. The untouchable remains on the margins of the social order. Yet his very presence, his face and his attitude, annoy the upper caste, who find in him the suppressant of their consciousness of security and of social superiority and therefore ask for the death of its glorified essence, that is, of the untouchable himself.

Bakha is the scapegoat for social and religious oppression. On Saturday morning, as he is on his way to work, he becomes aware that some of the high-class people in his neighborhood have found it unacceptable for a sweeper to sit in the sunlight. A man throws a handful of dust at him, which makes Bakha realize how atrociously humiliated he is. A packed latrine proves capable of creating a social revolution in his heart. He suddenly begins to ask what life is all about. A kind-hearted Sikh preaches a humanitarian doctrine and urges education as the way of clearing the darkness of prejudice and ignorance.

Humiliation and Personal Identity

Since Vedic times, Hindu society has maintained a caste system and has discriminated

against those belonging to the untouchables, who form the lowest and the most degraded section of society. Caste-wise division of labour has made the community of the untouchables serve at the disposal of the members of other communities for their menial jobs and self-expression on the part of the untouchables has been denied. Untouchables have, therefore, become a marginalised community in every way. Though a member of a low and degraded sect of society, young Bakha, the protagonist of Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable*, is sensitive and dignified. He is aware of his situation and suffers much humiliation and mental torture. He is conscious of the stigma of being an untouchable and dislikes his occupation, yet he is engaged in the work of cleansing latrines, drains and sewers.

The Impact of Humiliation on Bakha

An analysis of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* reveals the pervasive humiliation faced by Bakha at the hands of the caste Hindus. Bakha's social identity is not defined by self-awareness but by an awareness of how oppressive society perceives him. The humiliations he suffers daily at the hands of the upper castes are all internalized and experienced through a stream of consciousness narrative technique. Anand employs this technique to suggest that Bakha's shame forms an integral part of his personality.

The toilet symbolically represents that which generates Bakha's deepest humiliation and questions, who made, the pooja, and who permitted the pooja; they ask why must the harijan labour at night? The holy feast day brings similar anxiety, and Bakha's oppressed state is emphasized in his reflections upon the drums, drums borne by the hands of the Untouchables. These drums designate the social inferiority of the Untouchables, but when Bakha overlooks caste demarcations and identifies his personal humiliation with the collective humiliation of the harijans, the drums take on a new meaning.

Societal Perceptions of Untouchables

It is one thing for Bakha to regard himself with tolerance and even to be able to joke about his occupation. It is quite another for those members of the higher castes whom he serves to regard him with anything but utter disgust. Society itself regards untouchables as invisible low-lives. They have no place in the divine plan for the world, and they would be better dead than to contaminate those who are fit to live. Ankhu, the ragged child left behind by the votaries of Vishnu, is at the same time the incarnation of the ignorance of the whole of Hindu society. His suffering and humiliation are universal, and all those who remain silent are wither the pun-ishers or the passive victims. His injury is the injury of human nature at large.

But beyond these facets of the untouchables' oppression lies still a fourth which is deeper and

more difficult to handle. Bakha's tragic fate is not simply that of a man persecuted: it is that of a man who cannot manage to subsist without humiliation in the society of which he is a part and who, though he wishes to escape from it, is unable even to imagine any other society without the risk of his life being threatened and slaughtered at the slightest provocation.

Symbolism in Untouchable

The degradation of untouchables is revealed in the very choice of Bakha's profession: the scavenger, or human dustbin, who keeps the nashe-duck-daks—the city—clean by cleaning all filth and faeces. He is shunned by men and women alike, who hold the untouchables in contempt. Despite this, Bakha is an intelligent youth who is nevertheless despised by all—self, family, society, and by colonial masters. The foul stench of the latrines reminds him again of the hopelessness of his condition. Two symbols have been very effectively used: the toilet and the drum. The toilets are the only things which the Panchayat—representing the 'higher' caste—does not want cleaned and Bakha himself considers the cleansing of the toilets at the Golden Temple in Amritsar as a lofty service to mankind. The drum of the parasham-tool (tambourine) represents religion and is beaten and sounded at the behest of the lord of the village to remind the untouchable that he is lowly.

The freedom from sordidness of life one experiences in communing with the beauties of nature, which is so frequently revealed in Western literature, is skillfully and beautifully expressed in the chapter "Bhangis in the Park". Here, the profound contradictions of human life are demonstrated—a freedom is depicted whose very achievement is possible only through the sordidness. At the same moment that Bakha is enjoying the sun, and the blossoms, and the song of birds, he is also uncomfortably aware that he partakes of nothing in the world to which these living things belong; that the sun himself is shining more brightly for those who own the luxuries of the world and that the lowly monkey who is sneering at him sits on a green carpet while Bakha's eyes search for a spot to drop the excreta of men's luxuries.

The Role of the Toilet

Bakha, a thirteen-year-old sweepers' son, lives on the margins of society that spits on him and the others who "walk with the dirtiness of the lower class clinging to them." Bakha and his people, the sweepers, are labeled as "untouchables." Called "the children of God," they attend to the Hindu upper class—washing their pots and pans, sweeping their washing places, and attending to every human need that their masters bar their own caste from performing. Yet, Bakha listens to his mother's warnings and chooses a different path: "But I don't want to be a sweeper," he asserts, declaring a desire

to become a soldier. "They are free men," he proclaims, contrasting their status with the shackled freedom of his own people. Bakha's nocturnal sweep through the city streets underscores his exclusion: "All respectable men and women held their breath and drew back behind their curtains when he passed under their windows to enter the sweeper's quarter to the side of the mosque."

The toilets in Anand's *Untouchable* highlight not only Bakha's political status but also his social power and position. Black and Fawcett (Jewitt, 2011) observe that in sewerage and industrialized contexts, the excreta removal system is publicly subsidized, raising questions about the fairness of expecting the poorest to bear the entire cost themselves. The document analyzes tensions between the dignity of the upper classes and the humiliations of the lower, pitted in an ultimately unresolvable conflict. Mukhopadhyay, cited therein, critiques descriptions that link open defecation, humiliation, victimization, and lack of dignity—connections not necessarily shared by slum dwellers themselves. Gay Hawkins notes that the inability to establish distance from one's own waste denies slum dwellers dignity and status. The location of the toilets villainously sustaining Bakha's battle with identity is precisely an overspilling, all-consuming social demand that Bakha's people pay the economic cost of a process that the upper classes enjoy the benefits of (Jewitt, 2011).

The Significance of the Drum

In one of the leading passages of *Untouchable* a drum beat is felt by the protagonist Bakha when he is visualizing his suffering. The drum represents his passion, his perennial protest against centuries old social stigma as well as the hope of liberation. Anand uses vivid imagery stressing that the drum during night was stoking him to give proper shape to his feelings and enrich them with the power of demonstration.

The drum beats of Bakha are simultaneously heartbeats, and because of the constant beating his heartbeat has become erratic and precariously disjointed. Anand used the description of Bakha's mother stitching a cap to symbolize the human need for sterilization and cleanliness. In the old India, toilets were considered unfit for certain children of the Merchants' class and they used to play an interesting game by throwing stones at the sweepers' children while they were going to empty defecation places. Bakha resented that game and felt certain humiliation and dismay as a leader in the universal social hierarchy. He considered the toilet the dirtiest, the most abominated, the most despicable part of his body and he hated all honourable people of the India who had different valuations. The boy felt that he would never become a part of this nation even if he might be born as a Hindu again and again as neither the

blessings of the Untouchables' God nor the curses of the Merhcants' God were taken into consideration.

Modern Interpretations

Anand's depiction of social injustice in *Untouchable* is strikingly modern. Characterized by Shashi Tharoor as "primitively modern," the novel anticipates the social-novel wave of the 1980s as represented by Nayantara Sahgal. While Anand addresses a specific form of discrimination, socio-anthropologist and writer Vivek Dhareshwar sees the novel encompassing "race, sex and class, all forms of discrimination and subjugation."

Being a Marxist and a humanist, Anand was deeply concerned about the oppressed class. He sought a classless society and envisioned a world governed by human relationships based on kindness and amity. Such concerns permeate the novel, which lays bare not only the plight of the poor and untouchables but also the author's own suffering from a mental illness during his early years.

The Role of Religion

In the pre-Independence era when *Anand's Untouchable* was published, the Indian caste system, an aspect of Hinduism that traces its origins back to around 1500 BCE, confined individuals to hereditary occupations and dictated social interactions. Only those born into the dominant upper castes could access religious knowledge or direct contact with deities; those born into the lower echelons faced marginalisation at every turn. Untouchability, a deeply ingrained practice of social ostracism, sentenced an individual to permanent exclusion from normal activities within their community. Mandated segregation ensured the protection of upper castes from contact with the so-called "pollution" of the lowest groups. As Bakha (the 18-year-old son of a sweeper [or "scavenger"] whose livelihood depends on cleaning latrines and sweeping the streets) struggles to understand why, his educational and social aspirations continually collide with the assumptions of a culture that defines him solely by his circumstance.

When *Anand's* novel begins, Bakha is carrying out his daily tasks in the summer heat of 1930—clearing latrines, removing rubbish pile by pile, and sweeping filth into the gutters. His passion for cricket and his determination to stay clean (in an environment in which everyone, from children to the prime minister, defecates in the open) reveal a pride that challenges any notion of dark-skinned inferiority. The story of his struggle is interspersed with various incidents drawn from the daily lives of those around him, pinpointing the many ways in which the caste system brutalises the individual: the rancorous encounters between servants trapped in the domestic maelstrom of a wealthy family; the awkward marriage of one of Bakha's friends, who cannot afford the customary bride-price but

nevertheless faces endless societal scrutiny; the brutal Colaba bombing attacks, the aftermath of which leave Bakha desperate to declare the innocence of his Muslim friends; the indifferent doctor who refuses to treat Bakha's fevered father solely on the young man's caste; and Bakha's decision, in the closing pages, to enter a Sikh temple—a place that does not exclude the untouchables—as a defiant refuge from the humiliations visited on the Hindu undercaste.

Sunlight streamed from the back windows of the temple, shining on a great steel bowl. A few Sikhs knelt on the marble floor, washing their feet before entering the temple itself. Watching them, Bakha felt a strong attraction. When two worshippers were about to go inside, he entered the temple. He found the great doors standing wide open, and a gentle draught came through the inner sanctuary, blowing out the lamp on the altar. Dominating the whole place was a great portrait of the Guru Gobind Singh, with long flowing hair and a blue turban. Bakha took a step forward to enter the inner sanctuary...and stopped almost at once. Out of almost timidity, he seemed to hear the echoes of Hindu religion, and the indescribable sense of fear and exclusion that accompanied them (Editor, 1999).

The Role of Education

Education occupies a vital position in *Anand's* conception of an emancipated society. Bakha's deep desire for education exposes the inadequacy of the Hindu caste system. Despite his personal commitment, he cannot be equated with the caste Hindus in such a society, as they consider it detrimental to their own interests. Education, therefore, is not seen as a means of liberation by the dominant sections of society.

"The prim Hindu banned my learning to read and write. He boasted that he had never learnt it and yet was a Brahmin. What was the use of your education?" shouted the illiterate leader of a barbarous tribe. It did not teach him to distinguish between wheat and barley or horse's tail and cow's tail." (p. 105). This attitude makes relief from untouchability impossible."

Education as a Means of Liberation

Bakha, the protagonist of the short novel *Untouchable*, dreams of going to school and the books which he may read there. His desire to be educated is met with Wyndham's intention to educate the low-caste children. The man in charge of the sweepers' quarters helps Bakha by getting the newspaper on Sundays. Bakha's bold desire to clean Sir John's boots that are never cleaned by sweepers is an indication of the pressing need to be free from the shackles of untouchability and to go beyond the narrow and galling rules of the caste system. The novel caught the moment. There was the Swadeshi movement led by B. G. Tilak and the National

Education movement shaped by Aurobindo Goswami. If the question of education is seen in that light, new answers emerge.

Bakha's Aspirations for Education

Bakha, the hero of the novel, is a bright boy with a yearning for education. He clearly feels that emancipation and social justice for his people can come only through education or through any attempt to raise their status of depravity from a political prophet and his sermons. But the way is blocked, as he cannot afford to pay tuition fees for formal schooling. Feeling humiliated and degraded, Bakha watches a Sikh procession to liven up his poor and humdrum life. The Sikh missionaries consider all men equal, irrespective of their caste or creed or religion. Sakham, an ex-soldier, entertains and advises the young boy to have faith in himself and to look on the bright side.

Social Reform Movements

Mulk Raj Anand was a social reformer, playing an active role in various social reform movements and encouraging his readers to stand united against injustice and discrimination. He sought to integrate Buddhism into the Hindu fold and establish a universal religion, believing that it would unite India. His active opposition to untouchability in India was reflected both in his activism and his writing. Contemporary reviews recognized that Anand's fiction was propagated by a burning desire to expose social injustices. Some did not appreciate his stance, questioning the desirability of bringing out political particulars of the country in his novel. In contrast, Hindu supporters of Anand considered it a shame for Indians to keep their backs to the accumulation of contemptuous facts and to be willing to allow their own writings to remain free from them.

The historical origin of untouchability can be traced to paleo-Dravidian tribes and their social position in the fourfold social structure known as varn. The Shudras embraced a category of people without caste status but whose social and religious position was nonetheless recognized. These people performed religiously polluting yet socially necessary functions such as leatherwork and scavenging, thereby keeping society clean and unpolluted inside. Untouchables performed tasks that were considered so foul that they had to stay outside society, leading to their marginalization and discrimination. The humiliation and degradation involved in their role created a sense of inferiority and identity crisis. Bakha, the protagonist, tried to study Sikhism and embraced the teaching that minstrelism and menial service were incompatible with self-respect. These sections have been drawn from the chapters titled "Mulk Raj Anand and Untouchable."

Impact of the Social Reform Movement on Anand

Mulk Raj Anand clearly belongs to the group of creative writers who are inescapably attracted towards the cause of the masses. They are inclined to write on popular topics. Social activities exert a profound influence upon them, and they derive a sincere satisfaction from the development of a social reform movement because it seems to carry their country forward toward greater freedom and a better future. Viewed in this perspective, the social reform movement is an immeasurably rich source of material for writers like Anand. In such a movement they find an endless variety of subject-matters; they do not neglect any aspect or phase of the struggle; they are conscious of the different fields it covers: political, economic, educational, social and cultural. And the socialist structure that is needed as the ultimate goal of the movement seems infinitely preferable to any existing structure of society; it promises means of livelihood to all the people; in addition, it is a movement of the depressed classes, devised for their annihilation.

I do not consider himself an immature writer, for I write only on what is close to me and deeply appeals to me. In Indian literature—and I refer especially to Indian English literature—such a passionate concern with the poor and the deprived is shown by two other writers, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. Both alike follow the same humanistic approach to their subject. Raja Rao is primarily a poet; he moves, therefore, on a different level. Narayan, on the other hand, is mainly a sensitive "observer." Anand proceeds on a Marxist line: he portrays the sufferings of the people, but his attitude is also that of an idealist and, in its tone and message, his writing is at times powerful and stirring. None of these writers seeks to unveil the mystery of life.

Anand's Role in Social Advocacy

Mulk Raj Anand distinguished himself as a vigorous campaigner and reformer who persistently highlighted social injustice and discrimination toward the low castes. The publication of *Untouchable* played a notable part in this advocacy. The novel embodies Anand's philosophy, particularly pronounced in his writings of the 1930s and 1940s, including *Coolie*. Initiated by the Marxist-oriented Jose Approach Group of the Progressive Writers Movement, these efforts extended to other significant figures such as Sarau Sarvadhaksa and R. Venkat Rao. Anand's narrative transcended mere literary boundaries, addressing poignant issues of social and economic oppression—in the case of *Untouchable*, the system of religious and economic segregation that inherent in the caste hierarchy.

While Sarau Sarvadhaksa composed a manual of social work, Anand opted for the medium

of fiction. Both approaches converged during a 1939 conference organized by the Association of Progressive Writers; it was here that *Untouchable* made its debut. The subject converged with the political platform established by the Youth League, itself animated by the Sikh spiritualist Bhagat Singh. This multifaceted social and cultural environment implicitly shaped the character of Bakha, the young protagonist of *Untouchable*.

Conclusion

Mulk Raj Anand's heart-rending, impactful novel *Untouchable* exposes the evils of the caste system and the resulting humiliations suffered by the so-called untouchables, or harijans. Most of the story centers on Bakha, a young man who sweeps toilets, empties the slops-filled latrines of the wealthy, and does other jobs considered unclean in the eyes of Hinduism. Bakha's portrayal conveys his mental and emotional responses to a world that mocks his loneliness and humiliation—a world that locks him into a chattel-like existence, unable to live as a normal human being. The narrative probes deeply into Bakha's psyche, revealing his desire for freedom and human rights, while the stream of consciousness technique subtly conveys his internal conflicts.

Anand draws inspiration from Marx and the great humanists to advocate for a communist society, yet he also grounds his work firmly in Indian history and philosophy. He highlights Buddhism and Jainism in ancient Indian society, as well as the influence of Sikhism, which uniquely reiterates the spirit of communism. He identifies Hinduism as the principal force imposing social service, mandating that the untouchables perform the most menial tasks for the so-called twice-born castes. The novel illustrates how the policy of separating the untouchables from the rest, and branding them as dirty and sub-human, created a wall of untouchability that transformed a large segment of the Indian population into a sub-human class of society.

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