



## Study on critical evaluation by various renowned critics on selected novels by Mulk Raj Anand

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### Abstract

An analysis has been done in this paper to bring to light critical evaluation by various renowned critics on selected novels by Mulk Raj Anand. Mulk Raj Anand's half-dozen novels are related to social issues in independent India. Speaking as a novelist, he said that he came across people who forced him to put them in his novels. Throughout his literary life, Anand wrote about real people whom he knew quite closely. Critics argue that his socially conscious compositions have given deep insight into Indian affairs and enriched his country's literary heritage.

**Keywords:** critical, renowned critics, novels, Mulk Raj Anand

### Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand (12 December 1905-28 September 2004) was an Indian writer in English notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. One of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction, he, together with R.K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an international readership<sup>[1]</sup>.

Untouchable is the first novel by Mulk Raj Anand. A classic a novel which imprint a character sketch in our heart and then spell out some solutions too for the poignant states of affairs... Simply excellent! (Caste system should go). It is over 60 years of independence and at least half of Indians are carrying the burdens of slavery in the name of casts. When will the government have the courage to abort the casts? Untouchability- the problem still prevails especially in the central belt of India. If you notice, Maoism only spread in these states where the emotionally enslaved people are ready to go any extend to get freedom. If there is Maoism, the soil for it was watered by the cast system. Cast system should go), Read Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable to see the sad sate of affairs!

'Untouchable' is the story form the life of 18 years old Bakha, who lives in the pre independence era, as a Bhangi (one who clean toilets). Bakha is not weak, where he is 'strong and able-bodied'. He is all enthusiastic and has his own set of dreams. His dreams vary from of dress like a 'Tommie' (Englishmen) in 'fashion' to play Hockey. However, his limited means and the circumstances force him to literally beg for the food and get humiliated in each turn of the road. The 'dirty' nature of their work pulls down 'bhangi's to the last of the table of casts. They were not permitted even to take water from a well and had to wait for hours for the mercy of the upper caste. The food will be given to them by throwing and if they touch anybody by accident they will be punished. Even if they are ready to pay, nobody will teach them. The upper class however doesn't find this untouchability when they molest their teen girls. It is a typical day in the life of the Bhangi, mixed with

hunger, hope, small pleasures, insults and setbacks. Add to all the problems, they have no right to protest or express their emotions!!<sup>[2]</sup>

Deprived of hope and Fed up with humiliations, Bakha have a difficult day. Like in the story of good Samaritan, 3 options are placed in front of Bakha. First, a Christian missionary, who invite him to join Christianity so that the untouchability based on the caste can be removed. The second option he considers is the idea of sacrifice from Mahatma Gandhi, who came there to preach against the discrimination of the lower caste. The third option he considers as a solution to the entire problem is a flush system.

Mulk Raj Anand considers that the caste system can only prevail with the job one carries and the easy way to remove it is to upgrade the work environment and bring dignity to each work. We have no right to downgrade any work. The novel simply shows a way to solve two problems still lingers India. 1. Sanitation (No need of explanation for this problem, if one travel by train in early morning or walk in a rainy day through the roads of a not so clean Indian metro...)<sup>[3]</sup>. Castism.

The novel simply shook our conscience. The author criticizes the social injustice with his powerful words. He rips apart the hypocrisy of the powerful. Meaninglessness of worship and its uselessness when it it not practiced is stressed. The book is also a small reminder of ignorance of strength by the lower caste and the need for moral rejuvenation. Above all, 'any social revolution should be practical' is another message the book manages to convey. On a larger canvas, the author must have viewed the untouchable living in all of us. Citizens deprived of rights and burdens with obligations. The hurdle we have to overtake and how the knowledge, civilization and technology can make a better world. However, I wish to believe that the obvious is the intended. We don't have to imagine for the sake of it where the obvious give a handful of duty and responsibility. There is another strong message I felt from the novel. Most of the problems of India were self

created. The British could rule India only because the masses were not seriously disturbed by their presence. In the novel, the protagonist is not fearful of the British. This view only reiterates the conclusion that political freedom alone will not solve human misery <sup>[4]</sup>. 'Untouchable' is a reminder for us to be aware of the unsolved questions. The message from this book, written in pre-independent era is still valid. The story is heart touching and the message is convincing <sup>[5]</sup>.

Her figure could have vied with the sculptured images of Konark and Khajuraho, but she has been condemned by birth to walk the path of the outcastes and to suffer their mortification <sup>[6, 7]</sup>. When the Pundit tries to molest her she screams to protest, but when the priest accuses her for polluting him she remains wonderstruck. She realizes that no one will believe. She stops her brother from taking any aggressive action against the priest and returns home. She accepts her humiliation with the docile humility of the woman of her caste.

Bakha's father Lakha is the symbol of passive submission to the exploitation by the high castes. He represents the force of tradition, orthodoxy and conservatism. He does not blame the high caste for the exploitation but blames himself for this fate. He believes that his birth in the low caste is the result of their sins committed by him in the previous birth. He does not get angry even when Bakha tells him about the molestation of his daughter. He cannot even think about revolt <sup>[53]</sup> against the stubborn order. He is so afraid of them all that when Bakha talks about retaliation he says. 'We cannot do that. They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient against all that we might say before the police. They are our masters. We must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind'. (109)

Bakha's thought of retaliation against the established system becomes significant when we compare it with the passive submission of Lakha to it. Pundit Kali Nath is the priest of the temple in the town. This so called custodian of Hindu religion and culture turns out an ill humoured devil. Though the character of Kali Nath, Anand brings out the underlying hypocrisy of the high caste advocates of the so called morality and culture. It has been a custom in most of the villages of India to convert the low caste girls into 'Devdasis'. The girls are married to the god but are used by the priests to satisfy their sex hunger. Those who firmly believe that the touch of the outcaste defile them, do not get defiled when they sleep with the untouchable women.

Colonel Hutchinson, the chief of the local Salvation Army, and a Christian missionary is a symbol of the Christian assault on the Hindu religion. They were always behind the untouchables because they knew they could be easily converted into Christianity. Hutchinson represents this colonial exploitation. He always carries a number of copies of Hindustani translation of the Bible of the Gospels and always looks for the possible 'victims'. When he finds Bakha in a miserable condition, he takes him to the church but fails to persuade him to be converted. Anand holds the character of Hutchinson as a caricature of a missionary.

A few characters like Havildar Charat Singh, Pandit Kalinath, Colonel Hutchinson do not belong to the low caste society. But all these characters are rooted in reality. They are true to life and convincing. Anand says that his

characters are concrete human beings and not generalized symbols. He says that he has tried to create rough characters in all their authenticity. Some of the critics say that his characters are type characters. But Pramod Kumar Singh in Contemporary Indian Novelists says. Type characters are condition of the socialistic novels... The plot moves in space and characters are fixed to their intended roles or behavior <sup>[8]</sup>. As exploitation is the major theme of Untouchable, it deals with different types of exploitation such as social, economic, political, religious and sexual exploitation. But social exploitation is at the root of all other exploitations. The class discrimination on the basis of birth, which gives some castes undue advantage over other castes, can be called social exploitation.

Untouchable is an inner conflict of an individual who is caught in the web of an age old caste system. P.K. Rajan in his Studies in Mulk Raj Anand says. It is the individual's quest for freedom in a social system of ruthless exploitation. Bakha as an untouchable seeks his freedom in the feudal society with its unquestionable faith in the infallibility of caste discrimination, with its hypocrisy, cruelty, deceit and inhumanity. We see him stand passive and bewildered at the immensity of horror, hoping for a change <sup>[9]</sup>.

### Conclusion

Anand shows his concern over the organized evil in the society which is the cause of the miseries of the outcaste downtrodden. This organized evil is the real enemy of the society. It deliberately denies the basic human rights to the unprivileged class. Caste system kills the human dignity by giving an unfair advantage to a certain class over the others on the basis of their birth which damages the homogeneity of the society.

Bakha's retreat at the temple shows his submission to the tradition and established norms, rather than the defeat of his conscience. He becomes acutely conscious of his social exploitation. This awareness alienates him not only from the higher caste but also from his own caste. The slice of bread thrown by a woman of a big house complete the process of alimentation. Bakha's oscillation between rage and despair comes to an end. With every incident of exploitation by the high caste, Bakha is alienated from the society. He shows his anguish over humiliation of his friends by asking them to throw the sweets at him. The shame of untouchability accompanies him like a shadow. When he joins the crowd at Golbagh to listen to Gandhi, he observes everything with the same detachment.

This rigidity of the high caste youth compels the low caste youth to think about going far away from their birth places. Bhikhu fails to emancipate himself from his caste bonds and decides to desert his own people. His decision to go to a place where he cannot be recognized by his caste is symbolic. It could be realized as an escape of the protagonist from the bondage of the orthodox of the village life and an attempt to plunge into the wide arena of the modernity of the city life.

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