



## INJUSTICE WITH UNTOUCHABLES IN "UNTOUCHABLE"

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## ABSTRACT

Social awareness is necessary for the development of any country. Many evils are prevailing in the society such as child labour, discrimination between rich and poor last but not least the untouchability.

Anand who is a social reformer, his first novel 'untouchable' (1935) is highly concerned with injustice and exploitation of the poor and intangible class. It reflects the lives of the untouchables which faces injustice at every stage of their life.

**KEYWORDS** : Injustice, exploitation, suppressed members, pitiable condition.

**INTRODUCTION** : one of south Asia's best known novelist, short story writer, art-critic professor and above all a major voice against social injustice, He is one of the three greatest Indian novelists writing in English the other two being Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. He is a prolific writer. He is notable for his depiction of the lives of the poor castes in the traditional society. Anand was born in a Hindu family. From the childhood he had noticed the poor people's exploitation as well as had seen the life of the peasant y. Anand himself says;

*"I grew in a Hotch-Potch world of which I early began to perceive the inconsistency."*

M.K. Naik also observe this quality in Anand;

*"A bright and sensitive child, he was quick to note the little hypocrisy held towards religion."*

Mulk Raj Anand does not like to write merely for the sake of art. According to him, Art should have some purpose. He handles novels as weapon of social reform and tries to expose the weaknesses and evils of Indian society like Bernard Shaw and Charles Dickens. The works of Mulk Raj Anand have drawn world wide attention. Anand started to write at early age.

Although Punjabi and Hindustani were Anand's mother tongue, he wrote in English. His writing career has spanned over three quarters of century, and has written more than two dozen books. They include novels, short stories, and critic essays. He is the Champion of the downtrodden people. All his novels deal with the down trodden section of the Indian Society. It was 28 September 2004 when the world of literature was stunned to have lost its genius Mulk Raj Anand, after enjoying 99 springs of life, he passed away. His contribution reveals that he was a man of miracles, skills, truth and love towards his profession. In nut shell we can say that we have lost a great son of India, one of the best writer, best novelist and among all the "father of Indian English Novel." India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh said after Anand's death that his: "Realistic and Sympathetic portrayal of the lives of the poor would always remembered."

From the ancient time Hindu society is divided into the four main castes:

1. The Brahmins
2. The Kshatriya
3. The vaisya
4. The Sudra

The Brahmins belongs to the highest point of the social Pyramid, they are the priests. The Kshatriyas are the warriors belongs to military class. The vaisyas are the business class and their duty is trade and commerce. The Surdas are the weaker section of the society. The Surdas are only once-born outsiders and inferior creatures. Among the surdas the sweepers are regarded as

untouchables as they have to clean toilets with their hands. Mulk raj anand started his literary career as novelist with his first novel Untouchable under the deep influence of Gandhi. The novel became famous all over the literary circle of the world. He focuses on the oppressed and downtrodden class of the society Anand's 'Untouchable' shows the realistic picture of Indian Society of the nineteen thirties dealing with the injustice with the lower caste. This novel is usually held as Anand's most artistically satisfying novel. Anand's first novel "Untouchable" deals with the injustice which is done by high caste people to untouchables. Through a particular character Bakha, the novelist has tried to bring out a real picture of the miserable condition of the untouchables. As Jheklind say;

**"He begins with the particular Bakha, the untouchables lad-but generalizes upon his life and suffering by concentrating upon his suffering to epic dimensions."**

Anand located the protagonist Bakha. The one day action of the hero represent fairly incomplete sociological experience. He is aware of his low position. He is born in a sweeper family that's why he is deprived of all things that makes him an educated and civil man. The novel "Untouchable" follows a day in the life of Bakha-Central hero of the story. He is a bhangi boy whose work is to clean toilets of the people. Although his job is dirty but he himself remain clean. He goes to clean toilets in the outcastes colony. He has a sister named Sohini. In 1930s people of lower caste were considered to be untouchables. If any untouchable touched any high caste people unfortunately he was given a severe punishment for it. Bakha also accidentally touches a high caste hindu and thus pollutes him. Hindu shouts at him and people gathered there are cursing Bakha for this act.

when this novel was written at that time lower caste people were not allowed to enter in to the temple. They believed that only the high caste people had privilege to worship God and Goddess. That's the reason when Bakha enters the temple, people cries at him:

**"Polluted, Polluted, Polluted rends the air" (P, 53)**

So it is injustice against human being on the ground of caste.

The untouchables are not allowed to draw water from the well. They have to depend on the mercy of caste Hindus for it. Here Anand presents the real picture of the harsh reality of untouchables. The water episode is heart touching. The out caste don't have their well. As Anand narrates:

*"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...."*

Sohini is the sister of Bakha. She is the outcaste girl. She stands in queue to get water. Pandit Kali Nath who is attracted by sohini,

pours water into Sohini's picture and suggest her to come to his house to clean courtyard. But at his home Pandit tries to molest her. She shouts at Pandit. Pandit makes a loud cry that she defiled him. Actually it is not he but sohini is polluted by his lustful touch. Pandit Kalinath is a priest belong to higher class of the caste system. So on one could doubt at him. Anand has presented the fact that nobody listened untouchables even though they were right. The sufferer are not the victim of upper caste lust but of society which is man made.

Bakha comes at time. When he comes to know Pandit Kali Nath's attempt to molest Sohini, his sister. Here Sohini tries to tell the truth but nobody is ready to believe her. So this is injustice with Sohini that due to her lower caste no one has given her chance to speak in her own protest. Sohini is innocent girl who is a victim of caste system. Later Bakha decides to go school and get education but as he is untouchable, so he is not allowed to read and write. Because the people of higher caste think that they are dirty and they would impure their children. Bakha who has strong yearning for education he is deprived of school, books, pens.

**"The parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be touched by low caste man's sons"**

In this novel Bakha begs for the food as a reward for his work. He goes to houses doorsteps to get his wages in the form of bread. He does not get bread in to his hand. The lady of the house throws it towards bakha and then bakha picks it up. Bakha cries:

**"Bread for the sweeper, mother bread for the sweeper.....the sweeper has come for the food. mother! the sweeper come for the food".**

It is to be noted that even after doing their job untouchables did not get their wages they have to beg for it. Untouchable could not enough and hygienic food as a result they became the victim of any disease. They couldn't get medicine due to untouchability.

Bakha feels insult and goes to his house and tells his father about his insult as well as Sohini's molestation by the Pandit. Lakha after hearing his son Bakha's experience he is helpless to do anything due to the limitations of their caste in the society. In the words of Saros Cowasjee.

**"He is like a tiger in cage, securely imprisoned by the conventions his superiors have built upto protest themselves against the fury of those whom they exploit."**

After narrating the nasty experience, Bakha leaves the house to meet his friends. Then he goes to play hockey. In the playground the son of high caste Hindu is hurt in the quarrel that takes place after the match. When Bakha takes the wounded boy to his mother, instead of giving thanks, she shouts at Bakha for defiling her son as well as the house. Here also Bakha feels insulted and humiliated. Later Bakha runs away and meets colonel Hutchinson, a priest from the church, he asks Bakha to change his religion. Bakha is not at all interested in changing his religion. But when Bakha meets his (colonel) wife she calls him dirty. At this moment Bakha realized that replacing one religion with another will not change people's attitudes. In Untouchable Anand has made a caricature of the white missionaries. Colonel Hunchison a missionsry takes advantages of Bakhas miserable condition and tries to attract him towards christianity. Ironically, Bakha does not find anything attractive in the christian religion.

Later in the story we see that Bakha's younger brother becomes ill. Lakha Bakha's father goes to hakim ji for the treatment. But as they belongs to lower caste Hakim ji paid no attention to him. Then Lakha catches Hakim's feet and said:

**"still there is a little breath left in my son's body, Hakim ji, I shall be your sla e all my eye. Take pity, God will be kind to you."**

But Hakim ji instead of giving medicine cried.

**"Bhangji Bhangji!"**

People gathered there and curses Lakha for defiling feet of Hakim ji. It's too pathetic scene which shows that the inner soul of every one is dead. Here nobody has paid need to Lakha's son who is near to death but paid need to Hakim ji's defected feet. Here Anand has reflected the picture of injustice which is done by Hakim ji. It is duty of doctors or Hakims to save the life of patient without any discrimination of caste or creed. But Hakim ji doesn't give medicine just because Lakha is an untouchable.

Conclusion: In this novel Anand has shown bad condition of the untouchables in the Indian Society. The caste system has played a great role in Indian society. As cite says:

**"There are degrees of caste along the low caste people, their being none low without being lower still."**

This novel arouse the conscience of the educated Indians to the problems of untouchability and injustice in India. while reading this novel it seems as if Anand had seen these miserable condition of the untouchables or poorer ones with his own eyes. Therefore, it is rightly puts:

**"Mulk Raj Anand as a child had mined freely with the children of sweepers attached to his fathers renounts....."**

Bakha who is the hero of the novel represents universal sufferings of the under-dogs. The sufferings of Bakha equally appeals everyone without the discrimination of caste or nationality. The heart rending suffering of Bakha can melt even a stone hearted man.

Anand says:

**"He began to feel hungry as if rats were running around his belly, searching for food. He began to spit a while flocluent spittle on the dust as the seat tuckling sown his face from under his turban as soon as he got with open."**

From Bakha we see that the untouchables are neither permitted to a place of worship no can draw water from well. They are insulted and humiliated at every stage of their life. Anand's novel not only protest against injustice with untouchables but also a strong protest against all anti human exploitation forces. Here Anand shows his love, sympathy, kindness towards the down-trodden people. Thus Anand undoubtedly has succeeded in his intention of exposing social injustice with untouchables through his first novel untouchables.

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