

Humanistic Principles in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

Prof. (Dr.) S. C Roy¹, Raksha Kumari²

¹Prof. & Head, Department of English, Marwari College, Bhagalpur Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur, Bihar

²Research Scholar, Department of English Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur

Abstract—History and literature have a tight link, and both are loaded with books, articles, essays, poetry, and novels. Indian English writers have always been aware of emerging social challenges and theoretical changes in society. The first Indian English novels were produced to address critical social issues at the time. *Rajmohan's Wife*, written by Bankimchandra Chatterji, is regarded as the first Indian English novel. It was a social fiction about Matangini's disastrous marriage to Rajmohan. The early Indian authors were social reformers, and as such, they attempted to confront the vices of society that they were explicitly criticising in their novels in a realistic manner. Similarly, writers such as Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand attempted to depict the lives of the middle class as well as the plight of the poor. Their primary goal in creating fiction was to capture the essence of the country's culture.

Humanism constitutes a philosophical as well as intellectual perspective that enlightens us with knowledge, inspires us with art, and encourages compassion. Humanism emphasises the value of humans, their place, and nature in the universe. Humanism constitutes a philosophical as well as intellectual perspective that enlightens us with knowledge, inspires us with art, and encourages compassion. Humanism emphasises the value of humans, their place, and nature in the universe. Humanism promotes human dignity and encourages individual liberty. It argues that humans have the right along with the obligation to direct their own life. It enhances and nourishes people's lives while also energising the discovery process. It explores fresh information and considers new choices. Humanism prioritises human wants and principles over religious beliefs. The guy is steadfast in his principles and envious of having knowledge of the cosmos. A believer in humanity isn't scared to question and investigate. The writer Mulk Raj Anand serves as an author whose focus is human psychology. His work of literature celebrates the human condition while conveying a feeling of life and character through colored glass. He is steeped in humanity's flowing, dynamic core, and he feels its anguish deep inside his bones. As a humanist, Anand has skilfully presented Indian society as unfriendly and

unsympathetic to the plight of the lowly. His earliest work, *'Untouchable,'* recounts a day in the life of its protagonist, Bakha, an untouchable sweeper child. It depicts the feelings, goals, and concerns of a sweeper child who faces numerous challenges as a low-caste in Indian society. The author explores his plight sympathetically while remaining objective.

Index Terms—Social issues, social reformers, Untouchables, Middle class, Culture, Humanistic, Caste system, Shudras

I. INTRODUCTION

Mulk Raj Anand, an extraordinary writer having an immense passion for humanity, is recognised for subjects coming from a political issue, socioeconomic, and cultural elements, as well as social issues such as casteism, customs, dead habits, and mankind's pains. He ultimately adheres to the humanist credo, attempting to sympathetically project the problems, conflicts, and aspirations of the underdog in Indian society. Social reality is often associated with a sense of protest, but in the case of Mulk Raj Anand, it becomes more typical, because he neither disparages nor worships anything Indian. Being an ardent Socialist, he despises exploitation in a situation the fact that it is British imperialism and the Indian caste system; the government should be endowed with 'the truth of the heart' in abundance. Protesting against anti-human forces is essential for progressive social realism, therefore Anand's protagonists oppose the social evils, metaphysical dogmas, and anti-human biases that push the situation beyond tolerance. *Untouchable* could only have been written by an Indian observing from the outside. A friendly European could not have created Bakha because he would not have been aware of his problems. And no untouchable could have written a book because he would have been overcome with rage and self-pity.

Untouchable impresses us because a portrait of a location, a civilization, and certain people who will not be forgotten; it also serves as a portrayal of the horrors of a corrupt and twisted orthodoxy. As it can be an author dedicated to exposing specific challenges, Anand has proved as successful as the author himself. The written work depicts a sequence of unpleasant circumstances resulting in Bakha, on aware of his true social self and of being denied human care because he is *Untouchable* and is born to be exploited at all levels by men and women of all castes and religions. The outcastes' colony, where even an animal cannot survive, is described first. Anand's descriptions are vivid.

Mulk Raj Anand's artwork captures the realities of his day. He decided to write a record of the lives of the underprivileged. Some of his early works, such as *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, examine the lives of the oppressed who are exploited by the powerful. The Aryans established the caste system, which was originally based on work classifications. Mulk Raj Anand's artwork reflects the realities of his day. He wanted to write about the lives of the underprivileged. His earlier works, such as *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, explore the lives of the underprivileged who are exploited by the wealthy created by the Aryans. His early components, such as *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, examine the lives of the poor who are exploited by the wealthy. The caste system was first devised by the Aryans as a classification based on the type of job that people did. Mulk Raj Anand's work captures the realities of his time. He decided to write a record of the life of the underprivileged. His earlier pieces, including *Coolie*, *Untouchable*, and *Two Leaves and a Bud*, examine the lives of the underprivileged who are exploited by the wealthy. Originally devised by the Aryans, the caste system was a classification based on the type of job that people did. With the Brahmins at the top, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas at the bottom, and the Shudras at the bottom, the pyramid devolved into a rigid hierarchy. It was designed to be an all-inclusive order with no unifying ideology and to give each group as much autonomy as possible. This was disastrous for anyone at the pyramid's base. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* revolves around the Shudras's dilemma. E. M. Forster mentions this element of the novel in his introduction. The sweeper is in a worse condition than

a slave because, unlike a slave, who can change his master, his obligations, and even his freedom, the sweeper is ensnared in a position from which he cannot leave, is barred from social connections, and is not permitted to enjoy the benefits of his faith. He pollutes others when he touches them because he is unclean himself. As a result, the sweeper appears to be someone whose presence elicits contempt. Bakha's humiliation in the marketplace, the events in the temple, the well incident, and the endeavor to restore Sohini's dignity are just a few examples of how this has been depicted.

The event at the temple where the priest touches an untouchable virgin and, in complete hypocrisy, fabricates the situation by claiming that the damsel is polluted is the pinnacle of the sin of untouchability. Bakha felt uneasy because he had not touched anyone, but he quickly learned about the whole incident. A few steps below him, a small priest stood with his hands uplifted. His sister, Sohini, the woman he had noticed behind the priest, lingered discreetly in the courtyard. fortunately, Bakha later became aware of all that he had done. The devotees were condemning him for not maintaining the necessary distance, as they shouted. According to sacred writings, a low-caste man entering within sixty-nine yards of a temple can pollute it, and he was right there on the steps, at the door. To purify the temple, a sacrificial fire is required. Anand further stated that defilement and pollution are religiously motivated and have nothing to do with hygienic practices within the Hindu community. Bakha scrubbing the toilets at the beginning of the book is an intriguing illustration. This implies that, despite Bakha's cleanliness and hygiene, he was exposed to abuse because he was born into a specific caste and was thus responsible for washing the dirt of others.

The initial paragraph of *Untouchables* eloquently illustrates the enormous disparities among the community's various people. The outcasts' colony was made up of two rows of mud-walled cottages that were outside the town and cantonment's boundaries but remained under their shadow. The ugliness, squalor, and sadness that characterised this small village, combined with the walls of animal and human excrement that encircled it, created an "uncongenial" environment in which to live. Anand has depicted a clear line of division in Indian society. On the surface, it appears to be a coherent whole, with people

celebrating many religious holidays together, yet looking into people's daily lives exposes a stark contrast between different types of people. The society belongs to a higher caste. People who do not belong to this class are divided and compelled to live outside the boundaries that surround the upper castes. *Untouchables* call these subalterns scavengers, leather-workers, washermen, barbers, water carriers, and grass cutters, along with other Hindu outcastes. They are the unfortunate individuals who are denied access to hegemonic power. The wide gap in living conditions across castes represents the downtrodden people's desire for power, while the upper castes hold the reigns of authority. Oppressed people are frequently subjected to severe exploitation on an individual, community, economic, and political level. Mulk Raj Anand addresses the heinous evil of untouchability in pre-partitioned Hindu society, against the backdrop of caste contradictions that have unsuccessfully stifled the healthy growth of a significant section of the Indian community for centuries. Anand vividly depicts the plight of the unfortunate untouchables, implying that they can only be freed from the manacles of killing orthodoxy and tradition if men instil sympathy and tenderness in their hearts, and if men who are humiliated as untouchables muster the courage to live bolder and fearless lives. To better understand the purpose of Mulk Raj Anand's writings, one must first understand his humanist perspective. In his book *Apology for Heroism*, he says he believes in humanity and the entire person. Mulk Raj Anand discusses the horrible evil of untouchability in pre-partitioned Hindu culture against the backdrop of caste inconsistencies that have failed to impede the healthy flourishing of a substantial segment of the Indian community for generations. Anand portrays the plight of the unfortunate untouchables, implying that they can only be freed from the manacles of killing orthodoxy and tradition if men develop sympathy and tenderness in their hearts, and if men who are humiliated as untouchables muster the courage to live bolder and fearless lives. To examine the intentions underlying Mulk Raj Anand's writings, one must first comprehend his philosophy of humanism. In his book, *Apology for Heroism*, he states that he believes, first and foremost, in human beings, in Man, and the whole man. In the large backdrop of the caste contradictions within the Hindu society that have unsuccessfully stifled the healthy growth of a considerable section of

the Indian community for centuries, Mulk Raj Anand deals with the ghastly evil of untouchability touching the Hindu society of the pre-partitioned era. Anand vividly depicts the plight of the unfortunate untouchables, implying that they can only be freed from the manacles of killing orthodoxy and tradition if men develop sympathy and tenderness in their hearts, and if men who are humiliated as untouchables muster the courage to live bolder and fearless lives.

To investigate the goals driving Mulk Raj Anand's writings, first of all, one must have to understand his perspective on humanism. In his book *Apology for Heroism*, he underlines his faith in mankind and the whole individual. Anand, who believes in human dignity and equality, is disturbed by the severe treatment of the pariahs. Bakha's commonly repeated remark stresses the degradation and humiliation experienced by society's underprivileged people.

It's just one example of how the subaltern becomes institutionalised. Bakha follows the Indian way of ablution, keeping himself clean just like everyone else. However, he is still bound to continue the tradition established by his forebears. He has been trained to believe that he belongs to the lowest class of humanity, unsuitable to touch others. This may be seen in the way the confectioner throws the jalebis at Bakha, avoiding direct contact with him. More humorous is the assistant's splashing of water on the coins Bakha lays on the board as a means of washing the coins that had previously been touched by an outcaste. Furthermore, a Hindu can absolve oneself of the sin of accidentally contacting an untouchable by cancelling it by touching a Mussulman passing by. The touch of caste Brahmin alone unleashing a barrage of abusive words, along with Bakha's physical assault, emphasises the embarrassing situation of the marginalised. Aside from being isolated from their property and prevented from contacting it, the outcastes were denied basic required necessities like water. The outcastes were not allowed to climb the platform surrounding the well since drawing water from it would be considered dirty by Hindus of the three upper castes. They were also barred from using the nearby brook because doing so would contaminate it. The fact that untouchables were denied access to the platform that surrounds the well exemplifies the caste system's depravity. They had to wait several hours for upper-caste Hindus to pour water into their pitchers.

Ironically, Arundhati Roy's debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, delves into the theme of touch and the plight of the *Untouchables*. Velutha, like Bakha in Anand's story, was not allowed to visit the upper castes' homes or touch anything they were permitted to touch. According to Roy, Mammachi recalls a time when paravanes were expected to sweep away their footsteps with a broom to prevent Brahmins or Syrian Christians from walking into them. Bakha and Velutha were in comparable situations; however, Bakha was enraged at his wrongdoers, but Velutha was quiet and cool. Throughout the entire narrative, Hindus are seen treating Bakha worse than people treat their animals, and the food Bakha requests is repeatedly thrown at him. The upper caste's verbal and physical assaults on him originate only from his birth as an untouchable. The community depicted in *Untouchable* is full of superstitions and reeks of hypocrisy. The Hindu Brahmins are portrayed as the worst of the caste Hindus because they uphold the tradition of untouchability while also molesting lower-class females like Bakha did. A woman who does not belong to an upper caste is oppressed more than a male because she is more vulnerable to falling victim to not only society's unfair patriarchy but also the shadows of silence to which she is expected to adhere.

After all, her birthplace places her in the unlucky circle of a caste that must conquer all challenges in life without ever fighting back. Mulk Raj Anand's depiction of the unrestricted exploitation of outcasts by upper castes through the figure of Bakha puts into question the traditional ideals underlying Hinduism's untouchability. Anand's writing shows the growing resistance to the practice of untouchability in the historical context in which he writes. He exposes the Humanism that he believes certain acts undermine through internal monologues that drive Bakha to rethink his behaviour and the restrictions on outbursts that his social position permits. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* explores the situation of the oppressed and exposes the exploitation of untouchables under the veil of religion. The novel depicts.

Anand offers three answers at the book's conclusion, but they appear too simple to be deemed successful in shifting the social viewpoint. With the assistance of the Salvation Army Missionary, Hutchinson, Bakha could convert to Christianity; he could rely on Gandhi's pledge to eradicate the negative effects of untouchability; and, finally, the poet's promise to

introduce a water closet, which would make the sweeper's jobs easier. For Bakha, all of these remedies offer a haven of hope and escape from the vile drudgery plaguing Indian society, despite their idealistic design and seeming lack of social change effectiveness. *Untouchable* impresses us as a representation of a location, a culture, and some individuals who are difficult to forget; it also serves as a critique of the vices of a corrupt and decadent orthodoxy. Anand, it must be admitted, has been just as successful as the author himself as a novelist when it comes to exposing certain atrocities.

II. CONCLUSION

All of this demonstrates not just humiliation, exploitation, and even sexual harassment of the oppressed, as they are not allowed by the cast of Hindus to retain their virginity, but also a simmering uprising, as Premila Paul observes. Anand's heroes are never satisfied with their position; they rebel against it in order to avoid being trapped by it, whether or not they succeed. When Sohini's honour is threatened, Bakha's buried passions ignite. The nasty crowd that has cornered Bakha is unprepared to confront the retaliation of a suppressed individual. However, because Bakha is burdened by the weight of hereditary serfdom, his resistance is still in its early stages.

Accordingly, *Untouchable* offers a peculiar intersection where two streams of utopian vision and social realism blend to create a compound in which social realism is energised to advance by an undercurrent of idealistic imagination, which from then on becomes invisible like the Saraswati River in Allahabad. This may be the core that allows M.K. Naik to pass his landmark verdict. From the head of Jove, Anand's fictional genius appeared in *Untouchable*, armed to the teeth like Pallas Athene. He never wrote another book with such a flawless fusion of form and content, a creative success that achieved the greatest impact with the fewest resources. A remarkable writer who cares deeply about people, Mulk Raj Anand is well-known for his topics that stem from political, economic, social, and cultural elements. These themes are based on social issues including casteism, traditions, dead habits, and human suffering. He adheres to humanism and makes an effort to sympathetically portray the issues, disputes, and goals of the "underdog" in Indian society. Poverty,

exploitation, brutality, greed, and selfishness are the causes of this human tragedy. The catastrophe is not the result of fate or the Almighty. It's interesting to note that social exploitation has a religious foundation and is driven by lust, greed, and the desire to rise in society. Hypocrisy, physical suffering, and the exploited people's unquestioning sense of enduring their fate all contribute to these reasons. The implications include the conflict between oppressed castes and enlightened characters against the upper castes, as well as the proselytisation of untouchables by followers of various religions.

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