

THEMES OF CASTE, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVEL UNTOUCHABLE: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:

In India, the untouchables are forced to accept menial jobs so that they could be branded forever as low born caste. When the people from this low category were known about this man made conspiracy they started to prevent themselves from this conspiracy and make a loud cry against it. These suffered people from all the lower category seem to scorn the economic and social structure built by the so called master class founded on the principle of injustice and inequality. Many Indian writer writing in English has taken these social issues seriously in their writings. Mulk Raj Anand's novel Untouchable is one of the best and greatest novel in this list of writing. In this article, researcher has tried to find the themes of caste, religion and politics in this novel.

Keywords: *Untouchable, Caste, Injustice*

Mulk Raj Anand certainly occupies one of the topmost position in Indo- Anglian literature. The three names are very great and pioneering in the Indian writing in English, R. K. Narayan and Raja rao with Mulk Raj Anand. Their writings and works are successful in attracting the attention of not only Indian Critics but also from abroad. There are many novels on the credit of Mulk raj Anand and all are equally gain name and fame from the country and abroad. He is very famous for sociological novel and the social burning topics which he very seriously, successfully and effectively covered in his novels. They deal with some glaring social evils and problems of the society. Untouchability, social evils, exploitation of labours are the prominent themes of his novels. The novel Untouchability and Coolie are the best example of this facts. Naval Kishor Singh, a writer, writes about the strong and firm social background of Anand as: "Anand was born into the Kshatriya warrior caste, which is placed one below the top caste of the Brahmins priests. He had always befriended and played with the children of sweepers and as a child he had been shocked and disgusted by the suicide of a relative who had been disowned by his family for daring to share her food with a Muslim, for this too was

regarded as pollution. Anand had always been disgusted with and apposed religious sectarianism, communalism and caste society. (Singh, pg. 79)

Among the Indian untouchables there is a sweeper caste. Unlike the sweepers in any other part of the world, the Indian sweepers not only clean the premises with their brooms, but they have been forced to clean the latrines with their brooms and carry the human dung in the pots on their shoulders. For generations the sweepers have been doing this abominable work despite the development of science and technology and the nation got Independence. It is for the first time in the history of Indian literature Mulk Raj Anand wrote this novel in 1935 on the sweepers theme, titled Untouchable. There was a hue and cry filled with contempt among the contemporary publisher. And it is said that they could not tolerate the realities which a sweeper is confronted with in the Indian social structure. The publishers said that a sweeper cannot become the hero of the novel and added no reader would touch such literature.

Finally, Anand had to rush to England to get this novel published. While telling the role of art and artist, Mulk Raj Anand said as K. K. Sharma quoted G. S. Balaram Gupta in the following lines: 'According to Anand "in this conception of the function of art in society approximates to the real need of people in our time, then artist is a revolutionary in the true sense. And as he can perceive reality at its highest, and disclose the way to a new life. The artist stands as an inspiring force behind all those men and women who face the task of reconstructing the future society out of the shambles of a near prehistoric present. (Sharma, pg.6).

Mulk Raj Anand novel's special feature is that they are mostly about the downtrodden people of the society. It is the reason the critics call him 'underdog'. His novels deal with social evils and problems. His novels Untouchable too depicts the miserable life of the sweepers. The central theme of the novel is untouchability as a social evil. The fact is revealed by the example of the character Bakha, the hero of the novel. He is a sweeper boy in the novel. Different aspects of untouchability

are dealt with by the author. Hunger, poverty and illness is the aftermath of the sweeper job which decorate his habitual made of rags and bamboo-walls. As we see that the novelist presents the sensibility of Bakha, the hero of the novel in the opening lines: "And all together the ramparts of human and animal refuses that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an 'uncongenial' place to live in." (Anand, pg.13). many aspects of untouchability are dealt with are dealt with by the author in this novel such as: he describes the degraded and wretched plight of the untouchables. How they face different problems while living measurable life in separate colony. How they are treated inhumanly by the high caste people. They cannot even get water and food easily. Even the touch of Bakha irritates the high caste man who beats him. we can see the highest social evil when the priest molests Bakha's sister, Sohoni, but announces that she herself polluted him by her forbidden touch. R. T. Robertson writes this event in his article. Untouchable-as an archetypal Novel as- "Anand is undoubtedly writing a message for his own culture in untouchable: much of the novel contrasts the innate decency of Bakha with the gap between the protestation and practice of untouchability among caste Hindus in India-chiefly in the hypocrisy of the priest who claims Bakha's sister has defiled him when himself fondled the young girl's breasts..." (Rao and Rajeshwar, pg. 56).

A high caste woman throws a 'Chapati', the sweet vendor throws the 'Jallebi' at Bakha. This inhuman condition is described by Ramesh Srivastava in his article 'Is Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable Dirty?' as in the following lines: "When Bakha goes with a packet of jalebis in his hands, he happens to pollute an upper caste man by his touch, and is abused as a 'low-caste vermin, "a cock-eyed son of a bow legged scorpion," a "swine, dog," careless, irresponsible, swine," "son of a swine," and "rape sister." Even the woman whose child was hit by a stone called Bakha as "eater of your master" and a "dirty sweepers", and The 'pan-cigarette' shop-keeper too insults Bakha. The whole novels depicted the social measuring condition of untouchables.

Conclusion:

When we study the human history, we see that all the great personalities, saints, social workers of the world have considered humanity, brotherhood, liberty, equality, Justice and freedom on the top in their lives. They didn't have any place to caste, creed, religion and tradition. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Rajarshee Shahu Maharaj, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule and many great social thinkers, activists and workers worked for the welfare, progress, upliftment and development of the society. In the same way many popular and renowned Indian writers writing in English has written about many social evil issues and problems of the society. Mulk Raj Anand's novel Untouchable is the best work in this category.

Citation:

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