

---

**Dalits' Conflict in Anand's *Untouchable***

---

**Dr. Deen Dayal**

Asst. Prof. of English, Govt. P.G. College Mant, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India

---

**Article Received:** 23/04/2025**Article Accepted:** 29/05/2025**Published Online:** 30/05/2025**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2025.19.05.824**Abstract**

Indian English literature has played a crucial role in foregrounding the lived realities of marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, by exposing the brutalities of caste-based discrimination. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) stands as a pioneering text that powerfully depicts the social, psychological, and emotional trauma inflicted upon Dalits in a rigidly stratified Hindu society governed by the codes of Smritis and Puranas. This paper examines the pervasive humiliation, exclusion, and dehumanization experienced by Bakha, the novel's protagonist, whose everyday existence is marked by untouchability, spatial segregation, verbal abuse, and denial of basic human dignity. Drawing on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's radical critique of religious orthodoxy and caste oppression, along with insights from Sharmila Rege and Rabindranath Tagore, the study highlights how religion, tradition, and social customs collectively perpetuate Dalit suffering. The paper argues that *Untouchable* not only exposes the cruelty of caste hierarchies but also anticipates the urgent need for social reform, education, and equality. In the context of globalization and modern democratic values, the study reiterates that true national progress is impossible without annihilating caste and ensuring justice, fraternity, and human dignity for all.

**Keywords:** Dalit oppression, Untouchability, Caste system, Mulk Raj Anand, Social discrimination

India is a land of great thinkers and writers for Dalits like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mulk Raj Anand, Omprakash Valmiki, Jyotirao Phule, Swami Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi, Bama, Namdeo Dhasai etc have always made efforts for the people to be away from bad social evils and customs imposed on society by Purans and Smritis. In an address to Dalits, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar says, "Generations after generation have been burnt out by the wilderness, but not missed their visit to the deity.... Many generations of our community

---

have made the steps of temple flatter by rubbing their foreheads against the stone, and yet, the god ever take pity on you?... You are not worshipping God but you are perpetuating your ignorance. Several generations have sunk because of this innocent belief in God! What has God given you? Now, it's time to learn something different. Separate the new generation from God, begin to give good values to your children, send them schools, educate them and see the result" (Rege, 295).

Mulk Raj Anand (1905- 2004) was a pioneer Indian English writers , philosopher and activist wrote for Dalits through Novels depicting India's poor and oppressed like Untouchables. Dalits Basties or Muhallas in Indian villages are located outside the villages as villages are still following codes of Smritis. They (Dalits) were kept out the villages lest they should contaminate or pollute the people of higher in hierarchical order through their several visits in streets. In 'Untouchable' by Mulk Raj Anand, Bakha is the main protagonist who lives in separate villages with their families in very congenial, disgusting, suffocated and hatred state. Bakha's house was near a brook soiled by dirt and filth of public excrete or latrine having bad stink of the hides and skins of dead carcasses and dung.

'Untouchable' is Anand's pioneering 1935 novel represents the plight and psychological struggle of India's Dalit community. Bakha is a young strong Dalit boy expresses realities, humiliation and dehumanization of caste system.

Anand's Untouchable reveals how Bakha was humiliated or disgraced when he had to come along the street for sweeping or in market to buy anything or while going to visit any fair (Mela). How his conscience was pricked when he announced his arrival. "Posh keep away, posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh coming, posh, posh sweeper coming" (Untouchable, 42). Words repeatedly uttered by Bakha show his mental agony, emotionally shattered and humiliated condition. Affect of such humiliation echoes throughout in the ears of these Dalits. How humiliated Bakha felt when he went to market and all of a sudden he felt he had touched someone, he ran fast in the crowd, and also the people behind him. He thought of the crowd at no cause, they were rushing behind him. "The cruel crowd, all of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused.... For them I am a sweeper, sweeper, Untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That is the word! Untouchable, I am a Untouchable!" (Untouchable, 43). When uncontrollable feelings caused by humiliation and disgrace, make someone to over repeat the words, It means that an injustice or in-lawful act is being imposed on him scale of Justice is not balanced and thus, he feels that he is not being consider a social creature living in the society born as a social one. Mulk Raj Anand has made the scene alive whenever Bakha passed , he had to announced, " Posh, posh, sweeper coming, Untouchable, Untouchable was in his heart, the warning shout Posh, posh, sweeper coming! was in his mouth" (Untouchable, 44).

---

Way of humiliation in first introduction is also depicted in Anand's Untouchable, " You are becoming a gentleman, Ohe Bakhya!... come this afternoon, Bakhe"(Untouchable,..).

Sweepers and other low class people were not allowed even to go to or enter temples. Once Bakha could not prevent him self from entering to temple where a crowd in beautiful clothes assembled there. After hearing the rhythm of Arati "Om, Santi Deva, and last hoarse shout of triumphant worship, 'Sri Ram Chandra Ki Jay', Bakha was deeply moved, but instead he was badly moved when he heard,'polluted, polluted, polluted'. A shout rang through the air"(Untouchable, 52).

Life of these untouchables were really very miserable. They were not free to do their own will. They were treated worse than animals and they were humiliated at every point. Bakha, the main protagonist in Anand's Untouchable is treated by the people of high caste in very disgusting or hatred way. "keep to side of road, you low-caste vermin!... 'You swine, you dog, why don't you shout and warn me of your approach',...Don't you know, you brute, that you must not touch me!" (Untouchable, 38). Bakha, the main protagonist of 'Untouchable' only proceeds his steps to enter the temple of high caste people, how humiliated, shameful and disgraceful he feels when he hears "Polluted, polluted, polluted shouted the Brahmin below.... Get off the steps, you scavenger, off with you! You have defiled our whole service. You have defiled our temple. Now we will have to pay for the Purificatory Ceremony" (Untouchable, 53).These are the traumas of the Dalits. What kind God lies in these temples, who also teaches distinction between higher and low class people or there is no God, all these are men made gods. Many a time Tagore also cautioned the people, " Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!... as the dusty soils" (Tagore, 13).

Whether someone is Untouchable or belongs to higher caste, his children are his future. That is why Valmiki's father did not want at all Valmiki to sweep school. These words uttered by head master continued to echo in the ears of bakha through out his life.

How miserable condition Dalits faced, is out of description and away from imagination. They were not allowed even to consult a doctor when other higher caste patients were surrounding Hakim Sahib (Doctor), as their arrival in consultancy room was considered to make the doctor, his medicine and even to his rupees polluted. Once, on Bakha's childhood, he became seriously ill. His father, Lakha made several request to Hakim Sahib forcefully entering into consultancy room, as Bakha was going to take last breath of his life. "I caught the Hakim's feet and said, 'Still there is a little breath left in my child's body, Hakimji, I shall be your slave throughout my life. The meaning of my life is my child. Hakimji take pity. God will kind to you" (Untouchable, 72). There was uproar of getting polluted the rupee, the place. Hakimji abused me, Chandal! low cast by whose orders have you come here?... You have polluted hundred of rupees worth of medicine. Will you pay for

---

it" (Untouchable, 73).

From the above description, it is clear that Untouchables were humiliated, disgraced, degraded and also physically tortured in the past. They had to face all kind of humiliation; physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, but this is the age of Globalization, fast competitive Era, Untouchables should be equally treated, otherwise wheel of Nation's progress cannot make a smooth and fast run. A true Nation stands on the foundation where there is no discrimination of caste, creed, culture and religion among the people living there. If India wants to come in the list of the top most world countries, there is a need of equality and brotherhood among all people, because all are flowing same blood in their veins. This is not a time when 'Codes of Smritis', and 'Purans' should be imposed on people to be followed. If it happens even then, the day is not far, dire consequences will have to be faced.

This was the wages that Dalit got after perspiring for months. Dalits were not allowed to pull water to pull water from the wells of higher caste people as they were also under their domination. They had to wait for hours to get water on the pity of arrival of high caste people. They made several request to the way-walkers of high caste near by the well to draw water for them. " Oh, Maharaj! Maharaj! Won't you draw us some water please? We beg you. We have been waiting here for a long time, we will be grateful, shouted the chorus of voices as he passed towards them, some standing up, bending and joining their palms in beggary" (Untouchable, 18).

On the one hand, the people higher in hierarchy pretended to be polluted or contaminated at their touch, but their intention toward Dalits' daughters or women were not fair. As the Pundit drawing water to Dalit women, he was amorous to Bakha's sister. " Pundit recognized her as sweeper's daughter... the fresh young form whose full breast with their dark beads of nipples stood out so conspicuously under her muslin shirt.... He was inclined to be kind to her" (Untouchable, 21).

### **Work Cited**

Anand, Mulkaraj. *Untouchable*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 2001. Print.  
Ambedker, Dr. B.R. *Annihilation of Caste* (Series 01). New Delhi: Blue Moon. 2014. Print.  
Rege, Sharmila. *Writing Caste/Writing Gender*. New Delhi: Jubaan Publication. 2006. Print.  
Tagore, R. *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*. New Delhi: Peacock Books. 2013. Print.