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SOCIAL ALIENATION IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *UNTOUCHABLE*

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand a socially committed novelist, he produced a good deal of literature, It brought to him immense popularity. The aim of this paper is to bring out the social and realistic lives in early 19th century in which India struggled for independence. It portrayed the picture of untouchable sweeper who is known as bhaka's one day life in the novel.

There are many occasions in the novel which reveal the stark and naked realities in the society. The present paper is concerned with evil of untouchability and the need for radical empathy. The reader will realize the humiliation and physical assault as well as mental agonies of the untouchables throughout the novel.

Keywords: alienation, humiliation, social discrimination, human dignity, suppression.

INTRODUCTION:

Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand's debut novel and magnum opus. It is a social novel based on the theme of the evil of untouchability in India. To expose the evil in an impressive way, the novel records the experiences of bakha, an eighteen-year-old sweeper boy in the course of single day. The sweeper boy, bakha has work of keeping the public latrines of the town clean. It is very tedious and laborious as well as degrading. Untouchable shows Anand's sympathies with the underdog or the weaker section of the society in India.

The social Alienation is of vital importance in untouchability. Essentially, social alienation is what defines bhaka's life. It depicts Bakha as one who is filled with dreams and aspiration for his future. In other words, Bakha is no different than any other human being. This is the condition that allows his social alienation to continue. Social alienation exists in the form of a caste system relegates people to fixed roles. This is the reality in which Bakha lives and against which struggle is inevitable. Anand's condemnation of the caste system is made on the grounds that a system that labels people like Bakha as "Untouchable" is rooted in social alienation.

BAKHA AS SYMBOL OF EXPLOITATION

The primary theme of 'Untouchable' is thus exploitation of the young adult. Bakha is denied their fundamental right to grow into respectable citizen of society. Bakha's life is condemned from the beginning to be a sweeper irrespective of his dream to transcend his miserable existence. E.M. Forster points this out in Preface to Untouchable.

Boys of bakha, their age should be for attending school is obliged to work for a living. He longs to go to school but bakha knows that he cannot. His admiration for the school going boys brings out this longing in him. If he has had protected childhood, he would have gone to school and studied like other children.

Bakha noticed the ardent, enthusiastic look that lip up the little one's face. The anxiety of going to school! How beautiful it felt! How nice it must be too able to read and write!

Once bakha had "wept and cried to be allowed to go to school" but he was told by his father that "schools were meant for the babus, and not for the bhangis; He had not understood the reason for that then The reason is, the education would have made them revolt against injustice. The ignorance of the exploited is bliss for the exploiters.

STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL EXISTENCE:

Anand, as has been suggested by Prof.H.M. Williams, exemplifies the problem of 'untouchability', the treatment of the latrine-cleaning class condemned to isolation and deprivation as handlers of excrement; he exposes this is a social evil and suggests its remedy."

There are many occasions in the novel which reveal the stark and naked realities in the society. One such occasion is when the untouchables are victimized, ravished and their morale shattered into pieces. The well incident in the novel poignantly describes how these ill-fated people are usurped by the so called high class touchable. Bakha's sister once goes to the village well for fetching water. She waits to be given a little water from the well, as she is not allowed, being untouchable, to touch anything there. Ultimately, the village priest does the needful and asks her to come to his house for cleaning. But, seeing nobody around, when she goes to house, he tries to molest her. The priest tries to fish in the troubled waters. The cruller think is when people gather, the priest impenitently indicts the innocent girl that she has defiled his religion. He returns home desperately and tells his father Lakha about his insult and sohini's molestation by the pandit' he says;

"They think we are mere dirt, because we clean their dirt";

If we view the incident from humanitarian perspective, we must say that might is right. The untouchables, being weak, have no justice, we can see from the beginning of the novel the lives of bakha and his sister were struggling for financial, identity and social, existence in the novel.

TOUCHING EPISODE

On the fateful day the story of Untouchable takes place Bakha has a series of disturbing and even 'edifying' experiences. The first of them is 'touching' episode. He feels panic-stricken when, enjoying the taste of jelebi; he accidentally touches a caste Hindu man who is on his way to work. This 'defiled' man slaps and roundly abuses him. The people who gather there too fault only Bakha. His protestations fall on deaf ears. After this, as he moves ahead, he is conscious of his presence in a public place and takes care to announce his approach. The disturbing experience of the man's unkindness to him and crowd's cruelty repeatedly come back to his mind. He painfully realizes his unenviable position of a sweeper boy. He does not have a step-mother but society itself seem to act as punishing step-mother as for as he is concerned.

All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused? Because we are sweepers. Because we are touch dung..... They [Muhammadans] don't mind touching us..... It is only the Hindus, and the outcastes who are not sweepers. For them I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable.

E.M.FORSTER RIGHTLY HOLDS THE VIEW

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he can't escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself he pollutes other when he touches them.....

CONCLUSION

Thus the novel presents the real picture of harsh reality and the curse of Untouchability. The manifest plea in the novel is for the total abolition of Untouchability. Mulk Raj Anand has fashioned with Untouchable a novel that articulates the abuse of an exploited class through sheer sympathy in the traditionalist manner of the realist novel. Anand has been an effective writer and he can be compared to Dickens in this respect. There is clear ray of hope of seeing India free from all bigotry, and callousness, and from disparity discrimination. An eternal beauty of equality and togetherness may prevail in our country soon!

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