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# Mulk Raj Anand's Social Realism in Untouchable and Coolie-A Study

\*<sup>1</sup>Dr. Honnegowda CS\*<sup>1</sup>Head, Department of English, JSS College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Nanjangud, Karnataka, India.

### Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand, a well-known novelist India has ever produced. As a young man, Anand had suffered at the hands of the police during Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1921. Indeed, His writings reflect his urgent social concern, preoccupations and the social impulse and made the reader to be aware of the exploitation faced by the downtrodden through the heart-touching description of the wretched state. Mulk Raj Anand's two novels Untouchable and Coolie reflect the hard core reality of the Indian Society of early decades of twentieth century. Here, it is a notable thing to say that he was aware of sufferings of the poor at a large extent. Religious hypocrisy, East-West encounter, the place of woman in the society, superstitions, poverty, hunger and exploitation are found as the major themes in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. He produces a tragic vision of life but also finds resolutions to the problems it presents. In his novels he envisions a world permeated with love and good will. As for as the novel "Untouchable" is concerned, it has social concern which focuses on the social consciousness and some of the worst customs and traditions which authorise the caste Hindus to exploit the outcastes for their selfish interests.

**Keywords:** Industrialism, colonisation, curse of untouchability, poverty, religious belief, prejudices, etc.

### Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand, a well-known novelist, India has ever produced. As a young man, Anand had suffered at the hands of the police during Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1921. Indeed, His writings reflect his urgent social concern, preoccupations and the social impulse and made the reader to be aware of the exploitation faced by the downtrodden through the heart-touching description of the wretched state. Mulk Raj Anand's two novels Untouchable and Coolie reflect the hard core reality of the Indian Society of early decades of twentieth century. Here, it is a notable thing to say that he was aware of sufferings of the poor at a large extent. Religious hypocrisy, East-West encounter, the place of woman in the society, superstitions, poverty, hunger and exploitation are found as the major themes in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. He produces a tragic vision of life but also finds resolutions to the problems it presents. In his novels he envisions a world permeated with love and good will. As for as the novel "Untouchable" is concerned, it has social concern which focuses on the social consciousness and some of the worst customs and traditions which authorise the caste Hindus to exploit the outcastes for their selfish interests. Hindu society in the 1930's practiced untouchability and treated the untouchables as pigs. The injustice, humiliations and degradation faced by a particular section of the society is even visible in modern Indian society. The theme of untouchability is portrayed at two levels in the novel. Firstly, we have socially untouchables or parvan who are on no account permitted basic human rights. Secondly, we have symbolic

untouchables in high castes. Here, bias communicates itself in marginalising the women in their personal and public life. of course, the novel revolves around the argument for eradicating the caste system and depicts a day in the life of Bakha, a young sweeper who is untouchable due to his work of cleaning the public latrines. Modern India has changed a bit from its counterpart, yet, there is a certain distinction of class that separates its people; the class system still exists to a certain degree, and it has diminished greatly, but it is still there. The protagonist of the novel Bakha is an intelligent boy but he is an outcaste and untouchable as his presence and touch is considered impure and corruptive.

Mulk Raj Anand in this novel challenges the rules and barriers made for untouchables and argues for their education. Anand is a committed writer, a novelist with a purpose, his purpose being to focus attention on the suffering, misery and wretchedness of the poor. "Untouchable" is a forceful indictment of the evils of a perverted and a decadent orthodoxy. It is also a great work of art which presents reality with photographic fidelity and yet enlists the sympathy of the readers for the waifs and outcastes of society.

As for as the novel "Coolie" is considered, it is also known as another great epic of misery. It conducts us on a guided tour of India and gives us a cross-section of India and Indian society. While talking about the novel Coolie, it is found that the hunger, starvation, poverty, degradation, class consciousness, racial relations, capitalism, industrialism, communalism, racism are as major themes. The story of the novel revolves around a 14 year old boy, Munoo, and his

plight due to poverty and exploitation aided by the social and political structures in place. A hilly boy, Munoo moves from the village to the town, from the town to the city, and then up to the mountains. He traverses an experience, and is finally swept away to his doom. Indeed, the novelist Mulk Raj Anand has comprehended greater variety and deeper levels of degradation than does *Untouchable*. The *Coolie* touches the pathetic and the sublime areas of human experience.

The tragedy of Munoo is an indictment of the evils of capitalism on the minor segment of society. The novel is of the realities of the human situation as one sees and understands them. The characterisation of Munoo is vivid, dramatic and powerful. He is conceived as a romantic hero. He is first and last, a victim rather than a rebel and, therefore, is capable of rising to a tragic structure. *Coolie* is hardly less poetical than *Untouchable* and also it is a landmark in Indo-Anglian fiction. Munoo is a universal, larger than life, figure, symbolising the suffering and misery of the down-trodden and exploited masses of India. In its enormous range and multiplicity of action, *Coolie* has an almost epic quality.

### Conclusion

Mulk Raj Anand's realism is seen in his themes and which is proved in the novels: *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. In these novels, the novelist has dealt with the misery and wretchedness of the poor and their struggle for a better life. While thinking the conceptual note of these two novels; it is found that Education is the right of every child barring caste and creed. But being a boy from the family of an outcaste he is not able to get admission in the school because children from higher caste families will be contaminated with his touch. His caste supersedes his talent. His talent is not valued rather his caste is given priority. Bakha is dazzled with the glamour of the English people and dreams to be like them in dressing up and in playing hockey. Unfortunately, he fails to realise his dreams due to limited means and circumstances. He has to face insults and live on the mercy of other people. Munoo, the protagonist, from the novel *Coolie*, is another example of exploitation. He moves from one place to another place in search of food and is exploited at every level and everywhere. He is a representative of his class.

Thus, both Bakha in the novel "*Untouchable*" and Munoo in the novel "*Coolie*" represent their class and caste. The truth is of all ages that it is class and caste differentiates a man from man.

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