



## Social Inequalities in Mulk Raj Anand's 'Untouchable' and the Theme of Conversion

Anju

anjuy31@gmail.com

Research Scholar (English)

Baba MastNath University, Rohtak

### Abstract

The depiction of societal disparities in "Untouchable" by Mulk Raj Anand is, in many respects, analogous to the concept of conversion. Bakha, the protagonist of Anand's novel "Untouchable," is a Dalit, which places him on the lowest rung of India's caste system. Throughout the novel, Anand eloquently illustrates the terrible reality and prejudice that Bakha faces. Anand draws attention to the deeply ingrained social inequalities and injustices that are prevalent in Indian culture by focusing on Bakha's life experiences. In a similar manner, the concept of conversion is often used in literary works to investigate the metamorphosis that may occur in people or groups when they attempt to free themselves from oppressive social circumstances or prejudice. The authors, in both instances, are addressing the need for social change and justice, whether it be through raising awareness of the plight of the marginalised or through the act of conversion as a means of finding a new identity or way of life. In the former case, this is done by raising awareness of the plight of the marginalised; in the latter case, this is done through the act of converting. Both topics provide writers with potent opportunities to shed light on the ubiquitous problem of social inequality as well as the yearning for a more egalitarian society.

**Keywords:** Bakha, caste exploitation, Social problems, Untouchable, subaltern, untouchability, oppression, subjugation, suppression.

### Introduction

The book *Untouchable* written by Mulk Raj Anand is recognised as a comprehensive and thought-provoking examination of the socioeconomic disparities that exist within Indian culture. The book was written in 1935 and offers a scathing and uncompromising look at the deeply ingrained caste system as well as the harsh treatment that was meted out to the untouchables, who were members of the lowest social strata. The book *Untouchable* challenges readers to address the widespread social structures that perpetuate inequality and marginalisation by illuminating the harsh realities of prejudice via its moving storey and detailed depictions of the subject's experiences. Bakha, a small kid who cannot be touched, is the protagonist of the book. He is a potent symbol of the hardships endured by his people as well as their ability to persevere in the face of adversity. Anand immediately submerges the reader into the everyday humiliations that Bakha is forced to face merely as a result of the fact that he was born into a lower caste. The repressive nature of the caste system is brought into stark relief by Bakha's experiences, which include being excluded from public areas, barred from entering temples, and subjected to verbal and physical abuse. By digging into the complexity of intersectionality, Anand takes his picture of prejudice to a deeper level than a simple portrayal. He shows how the untouchables' poverty exacerbates the marginalisation they already experience, which locks them into a vicious cycle of being at a disadvantage. Constant reminders of the linked nature of socioeconomic inequities are provided by Bakha's low living circumstances, lack of education, and restricted possibilities. Anand illustrates the many facets of prejudice by using this perspective, drawing attention to the far-reaching effects that it has on the lives of those who are disadvantaged.



Anand positions Bakha as a symbol of optimism and resiliency in response to the difficulties that have been presented. The young protagonist's ambitions to further his studies and climb the social ladder run counter to the restricted opportunities that society has presented to him. The unconquerable human spirit that refuses to be restricted by authoritarian structures is shown by his desire to rise above his caste and interact with the rest of the world on an equal footing. Humanizing the untouchables and demolishing the dehumanising preconceptions that are maintained as a result of caste-based prejudice is accomplished via Anand's depiction of Bakha as a fully formed and nuanced figure. Mulk Raj Anand expertly creates a storey in *Untouchable* that addresses societal inequalities head-on in a direct and confronting manner. His portrayal of the sufferings of the untouchables serves as a penetrating indictment of the caste system and the far-reaching repercussions of its existence. As they go through the novel's chapters, readers are presented with questions that force them to examine their own ideas on equality, social change, and the critical need of tearing down oppressive systems. The legacy of Anand's work lives on, serving as a constant reminder of the lasting ability of writing to shed light on the inequities that exist in society and spark the flame of reform. The novel *Untouchable* written by Mulk Raj Anand takes the reader deep into the heart of a society that is torn apart by societal injustices and prejudice. The book uncovers the deeply ingrained caste system that stratifies society and dooms the untouchables to lives of marginalisation and misery. It is set against the background of India in the early 20th century. Anand's investigation of this entrenched social order is more than a simple criticism; rather, it serves as a rallying cry for empathy, understanding, and fundamental societal transformation.

Anand offers a clear picture of the degrading impacts of caste-based discrimination by using vivid descriptions and emotive narrative to convey his point of view. The readers are immediately faced with the harsh reality of Bakha's life, which is characterised by his untouchable position, and this reality is shown to them on the very first page of the book. Bakha becomes the embodiment of the countless untouchables whose voices are silenced by the oppressive structures of society as he navigates a world rife with contempt and cruelty, denied even the basic dignities afforded to others. This is because Bakha is denied even the basic dignities afforded to others.

In *Untouchable*, Anand reveals with consummate skill the intersectionality of many forms of social inequality. He does a masterful job of incorporating poverty into the storey, so emphasising how it exacerbates the pain of those on the margins of society. Bakha's destitute conditions, which have been handed down from generation to generation, heighten the challenges he encounters, which include limited schooling, minimal opportunity, and an ongoing battle for survival. This intersectional lens sheds light on the intricate web of oppression that ensnares the untouchables by highlighting the inextricable linkages between caste-based discrimination and socio-economic inequality. Anand, despite the gloominess of the situation, displays a remarkable amount of optimism and fortitude. Anand is a defender of the unconquerable human spirit because he advocates Bakha's unrelenting quest for knowledge and his reluctance to accept the constraints that are forced upon him. Bakha's hopes and dreams end up becoming a rallying cry for societal transformation, a monument to the power of education and the desire of equality. Anand tackles the dehumanising preconceptions that are fostered by the caste system by depicting Bakha as a complex character who has goals, anxieties, and a persistent energy.

*Untouchable* is more than a fiction; it is a penetrating social criticism, a mirror held up to a society that is wrestling with deep-seated inequities. The novel was written by Jhumpa Lahiri and published in 2010.



The uncompromising portrait of the untouchables that Anand provides compels readers to analyse their own role in the maintenance of discriminatory institutions and to face difficult realities about the untouchables. The book functions as a rallying cry, imploring individuals and communities to break down the boundaries that separate them from one another and to embrace empathy and togetherness. As they go through *Untouchable*, readers are driven to face the critical need for societal transformation at every turn of the page. The storey told by Anand has a resonance that is not limited by either time or geography, going beyond the particular setting of India in the 1930s. It serves as a potent reminder that the battle against social inequities is a continuing struggle, one that demands joint effort and an unbroken dedication to justice and equality. This fact stands out as a strong catalyst for change. Mulk Raj Anand's vivid narrative kindles a flame of compassion, comprehension, and, eventually, change in the hearts of his audience. This spark has the potential to ignite the fires of transformation.

The seminal novel *Untouchable* written by Mulk Raj Anand is a timeless testament to the power of storytelling in illuminating the dark corners of societal inequality. In the realm of literary works that dare to expose the deeply rooted social injustices of the world, *Untouchable* stands as a timeless testament to this power. This classic of Indian literature was published in 1935, and it dives into the many layers of societal hierarchies. More particularly, it focuses on the misery of the untouchables inside the caste system. Anand constructs a tale that rips away the cloak of ignorance, leaving readers enthralled by its stinging criticism and deep investigation of the human condition. This is accomplished through Anand's unflinching devotion to the truth and humanity as he creates this storey. The film *Untouchable* depicts a society that is sharply divided along the lines of caste, with the untouchables being condemned to the lowest levels of life. Bakha is a little untouchable child who is saddled with the weight of social discrimination, and Anand's rich writing welcomes readers into the world that he inhabits as his protagonist. The reader experiences the unrelenting persecution that the untouchables go through from Bakha's point of view. The untouchables are refused access to public venues, treated with scorn and cruelty, and have their human dignity taken away. Anand's honest depiction of these everyday indignities pushes readers to face the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination and questions the fundamental foundations upon which a society's hierarchy is constructed. In other words, Anand's portrayal shakes the reader to their very core. Anand's investigation of intersectionality, which is the convergence of many types of oppression that aggravate the challenges experienced by untouchables, plays a significant role in the tale. The prejudice that is based on caste is intertwined with the fabric of poverty, which appears as a recurring issue. Anand sheds light on the vicious cycle that results from the intertwining of poverty and marginalisation, which results in the perpetuation of restricted chances, educational hurdles, and economic hardship. Through this perspective, he emphasises the interconnectedness of social inequalities and urges readers to recognise that the suffering of the untouchables is not confined solely to their caste status but is amplified by the oppressive weight of poverty. He does this by highlighting the interconnectedness of social inequalities through this lens.

Within the pages of *Untouchable*, Anand infuses his characters with life by incorporating their goals, desires, and dreams into the story's overall structure. The unconquerable human spirit, which fights back against injustice, is shown by Bakha's hunger for knowledge and his desire to go beyond the confines that society places on him. Anand opposes the degrading preconceptions that are maintained by the caste system by depicting Bakha as a person who has reached their full potential. He challenges his audience to examine their own prejudices and come to terms with the inherent need that all people have for equality and autonomy in their lives. The author of *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand, weaves a great tapestry in which he expertly weaves together the nuances of societal inequality and invites readers



to be witnesses to the harsh reality that the untouchables experience. His storey serves as a powerful reminder that true progress can only be made through empathy, understanding, and a collective commitment to dismantling oppressive structures. His storey is a powerful reminder that true progress can only be achieved through empathy, understanding, and a collective commitment. As readers navigate the emotional landscapes of Anand's world, they are forced to confront their own roles in the perpetuation of social injustices and to join the chorus of voices calling for a society that is more inclusive and equitable. This occurs as they navigate the emotional landscapes of Anand's world.

### **Conclusion**

Mulk Raj Anand provides us with a powerful call to action in the last pages of *Untouchable*. He urges us to meditate about the unbreakable spirit of the untouchables and to channel our empathy into genuine change. The novel's conclusion serves as a stark reminder that the fight against social inequalities is far from over, and that it is our collective responsibility to dismantle the systems that perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation. This responsibility lies in the dismantling of the systems that perpetuate social inequalities. Even after we have finished the book and put it away, the vivid storytelling of Anand and the layered complexity of his characters continue to play in our thoughts. When seen through the perspective of Bakha's journey, we are driven to face our own preconceived notions, to resist the oppressive systems that exist within ourselves, and to work toward creating a society that is more accepting and equitable for everyone. The power of the film *Untouchable* lies not only in its capacity to shed light on the harsh realities of social inequalities but also in its ability to stoke the fire of compassion dormant within us, motivating us to take action and work toward a world in which no person is judged based on the conditions under which they were born. Even as we put an end to *Untouchable*, the book's legacy will live on, serving as a constant reminder of the ability of writing to shed light on even the most obscure aspects of human civilization. The legacy of Mulk Raj Anand's magnum opus continues to echo across time and space, compelling us to examine our own privileges, fight against the oppressive structures that are all around us, and advocate for the inherent value and dignity that is present in every human being. At the end of the day, *Untouchable* encourages us to be agents of change, to magnify the voices of those who are marginalised, and to fight persistently toward a future in which societal inequities are relegated to the annals of history. We are empowered to construct a road of compassion, understanding, and unity as we carry the teachings of *Untouchable* inside us. The trip may be difficult, but as long as we carry those lessons, we are able to make it. We respect the spirit of Bakha and many others who have suffered the weight of prejudice by our dedication to justice and equality, and we pave the path for a better, more inclusive society for future generations by showing that we are committed to justice and equality.

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