



# Depiction of Caste Annihilation and Class Abrogation in Mulk Raj Anand's UNTOUCHABLE and COOLIE

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**Abstract**— Since civilization has started caste system based on profession not by birth. Later on it turns into a power game and the whole human society were divided into four varnas. Manusmriti, widely regarded to be the important and authoritative book on Hindu law and dating back to at least 1000 years before Christ was born “acknowledges and justifies the caste system as the basis of order and regularity of society.” (Web) The caste divides Hindu into four main categories – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Many believe that the groups originated from Brahma, The Hindu God of Creation. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power and privilege. In recent years Violence has become a common phenomenon in India. It has engulfed the entire political, social, economic, cultural and even our personal lives. Violence of social justice and caste discriminations of complex characters have added additional burden to our society whereas we Indians have been specially advised to practice “non-violence”. The growing trend in violence thus provokes us to talk about non-violence and identify the roots of violence in India. Caste Violence is perhaps one of the most hazardous forms of violence in India. It often intermingles with the most political, social, cultural, and class atrocity. So caste discriminations and atrocities against the socially weaker sections with age-old traditional and unconventional norms deserve a careful historical investigation. Indian Caste system is the most widely discussed subject all over the world. Caste system is a social evil in which the higher caste people exploits and persecutes the lower caste people and forced them to live sub-human lives like beasts. This paper is based on caste and vulgarism of ‘Untouchable’ and ‘Coolie’ poignantly portrayed by M R Anand. It is an attempt to explore its origin, nature, gravity, and deprivation.

**Keywords**— Instinct, slaying, ferocity, hazardous, atrocities.



## I. INTRODUCTION

“You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste. You can not build up a nation. You cannot build up a morality.”

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

From the time immemorial caste annihilation and class conflict have become the subject of the great concern of the world. Since ages the soil of India has also been provoked caste violence as a trend. The canvas of Indian fabric is stained by the acts of misdemeanor towards the poor and the down trodden. Mulk Raj Anand is the first Indo- Anglian novelist to depict the tragic plight of the underdogs of Indian

Society writes realistically in his fiction about the doomed lines of the down- trodden and oppressed such as sweepers, a coolie, a peasant, subalterns and female subalterns etc. Who are all agonised victims of capitalistic exploitation, poverty, class- caste hatred, race hatred, and inhuman cruelty. India is known for its rich culture and heritage but the social evil of untouchability has destroyed the unity among the people Anand has a deep and sympathetic condition of Indian females and caste – class system. India is a hierarchical society. Society hierarchy is evident in caste groups, among individuals and in family. The ills of

Indian Society stem from the very essence of Hinduism and its traditions, principally the deplorable condition, treatment of females and of untouchables. Generally, high status is associated with purity and low status with pollution.

Untouchable(1935) is the first novel of MulkRajAnand, which explicates realistically a day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper boy, the son of Lakha and brings out the impact on him of the various events which take place by giving us his "stream of consciousness."The novel gives a vivid picture of the caste system that exists in our country. It opens with the out caste colon's descriptions.If we observe the lower caste males perspective of discrimination they have a perennial conflict against the caste system. Bakha in Untouchable and Munno in Coolie struggle throughout their life to survive in the class centered society. The novel clearly foregrounds the trials and tribulations of the lives of untouchables in pre-independence Indian society which was marked by caste consciousness among people. It traces the inhuman treatment out to the marginalized by the upper dominating castes. They don't have access even to the basic amenities of life. The scavengers, the lowest of the lowly castes, are the worst sufferers as they are considered most polluted and have to announce their arrival by shouting, ' *Posh, posh, sweeper coming*'(Untouchable, 55) lest they should accidentally touch any upper- caste Hindu and pollute him. The oppression of the rural poor and the use of the state power have been exceedingly highlighted by the novelist. The novel traces how the master discourse of the upper castes does not allow the untouchables any room for resistance and how under the panoptic an gaze of the dominating discourse the marginalized untouchables are forced to internalize the dominating ideology. Thus, Anand lays bare the evils of the caste-system in Hindu dominated society. The line, '*They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt*' (untouchable, p.39) sums up the novelist's understanding of the grim realities of India's social life. Untouchable shows the evils of caste system a long with a panacea for its social malaise.

Mulk Raj Anand's '*Coolie*' (1936), deals with labour problem of textile mills and pitiable conditions of the domestic servants. Coolie portrays the class distinction between the rich and the poor .It depicts the sad life of Munoo. To Anand coolie is the symbol of human degradation. Munoo is a universal figure, larger than life, symbolizing the suffering and misery of the down-trodden and exploited masses of India. The worst thing that Munoo suffers from is rebuking nature of Bibiji, the wife of Babu Natho Ram. He is continually abused, warned and threatened with a copious flow of words. munoo is humiliated with a series of words like 'you eater of your masters' 'shameless brute' 'dog' 'vulgar stupid hill boy' 'an utter brute' 'a savage' 'son of bitch' 'unveiled brute'

'monkey' 'owl' ect. Munno is continually abused as Bakha in Untouchable. Bakha is illtreated due to his marginalized caste being an untouchable where Munno receives subhuman treatment due to his marginalized class. The class conflict is seen when Prabha pleases Sir Todal Mal with his free gifts where the capitalist or the higher class always stood at the privileges and the lower strata of the society remains poor and helpless. However, it is also evident in the novel where Munoo travels to Bombay. Munoo suffered in the place Shimla. He was taken by Mrs. Mainwaring and she slaps him and tortured him. It is evident in the discrimination where Munoo is treated as a subhuman being by Mrs. Mainwaring. Since Munoo belongs to the lowest strata of the society, he is treated as subhuman and exploited that reflects the caste conflict and bias in the society. The novelist depicts the turn down and upturns in the life of Munoo through his story of repression. Munoo is deprived of happiness. He is disgraced for relieving outside the wall and abuse is showered on him. Munoo bears physical and psychological torture and this represents repression in the form of child labour. He is thoroughly disappointed at the first contact with actuality. "*The bigger a city is, the more cruel it is to the sons of Adam. You have to pay even for the breath that you breathe*". (Coolie, 13) Munoo becomes very upset when he sees a coolie lying huddled at the corner of a footpath in Bombay: "*pillowing his head on his arm, shrinking into himself, as if he were afraid to occupy too much space*" (Coolie, 14)Munno, in the novel, more or less at each stage he comes crossway merely tenderness and unkindness which make his life a painful story of agony. He is forced to become a sort of an aimless vagabond with apparently no control on his fate. Munoo's troubles and travails are sharp pointers to man's cruel enjoyment in torturing child domestics. Munoo represents those countless children whose childhood is lost in continuous physical labour in the swamp of caste and class dispute. Due to the caste system in Indian society, not only males are exploited, but women have to undergo double marginalization. They are exploited by the system and patriarchy. Sohini, sister of Bakha was also a victim of Untouchability. When she smiles, that even irritates a washewoman Gulabo and she explodes as, "*You annoy me with your silence. Eater of dung and drinker of urine. Bitch of a sweeper woman. I will show you how to insult one old enough to be your mother*". They are considered as a sin and if they have touched them by mistake then they need to sanctify. He says- "*.....All of them Abused , Abused , Abused why we always Abused? The sanitary inspector that day abused my father. They always abused us. Because we are sweepers, because we touch. They hate dung. I hate it to. That's why, I came here. I.....that's why they do not touch us.*" (

Untouchable , P.no. 58-59) When Pandit Kali Nath tries to molest her, she screams to protest, but when the priest accuses her for polluting him she remains wonder struck. This molestation episode shows a remarkable sense of integrity of her character and moral loftiness. This novel deals with subaltern's voices that are marginalization and casteism, exploitation of weaker sex, hypocrisy and poverty in India. PanditKali Nath says: **"You people have only been Polluted by a distance ..... I have been defiled by contact ."**( Anand , P. no . 53 )Sohini has to face a series of humiliations, because she is an outcaste and submissive female .The hypocritical priest , Pandit Kali Nath , is fascinated by her beauty and filling up her pitcher first at the well . The incident at the well tells us how the untouchables have to wait on the mercy of a high caste Hindu even for a pot of water . The outcaste were not allowed to draw water from the well . As we see here :**"The outcaste were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well , because if they were ever to draw water from it , the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the near -by brook as their use of it would contaminate the stream ....."**(Untouchable , page no 33 )Both Bakha and Sohini are treated by society because of their caste and societal status . Sohini always tortured under the patriarchal pressure. She has been a victims of various discrimination and abuses. **"Bitch, why do not you speak ! Prostitute why do not you answer me?....."**(Untouchable , page no. 25 ) The Dalits remain to be the most oppressed section of social order in India .Sohini could speak a little bit against Pandit Kali Nath when he molest her: **"He -e-e just teased me .....and then when I was bending down to work ,he came and held me by my breasts .** (Untouchable ,page no 54-55). Marginalization is a chain of events taking place in a society to create certain restrictions for few and power for the gender ,caste , class are further divided into layers , creating a stratified structure where power dynamics moulds and produces identities ,not for recognition but for submissiveness , oppression. when the temple incident happens , we can see how woman and particularly her bodily identities is victim of our hypocrite, caste -based society: **"A thumping crowd of worshippers rushed out of the temple and stoddarrayed as in the grand final of an opera show .The lanky priest stood with upraised hands ,a few steps below him. His sister Sohini .....lingered modestly in the courtyard ."**(Untouchable ,page no. 52-) Anand, in his works, deals with the ritual and religious basis of caste and class discrimination in Indian society. He reveals the essential dignity of the underdogs of India society. According to Prof.P.P.Mehta : **" Dr.Anand in all his novels**

**emphasizes the fact that nobility and dignity are not the monopoly of the rich. The poor have their greatness ,honour as well as the richness. Mute inglorious Miltons and Cromwellsare not uncommon in the ranks of the poor."**(Untouchable ,A critical study P. no . 45 )

## II. CONCLUSION

The Indian caste system is a complex of social structure where in social roles like one's profession become hereditary resulting in restricted social mobility and fixed status hierarchies. High caste norms are associated with moral values while the lower caste norms are associated with immorality. The India society is divided into various sects and classes. This is because of the caste system prevalent in the country. The roots of the caste system go back to the ancient Vedas dividing people on the basis of occupation. Many villages and town are separated by caste and they may not cross the line dividing them from the higher castes. One of the most common social problems of the caste system was the discrimination of low caste members. Indian society is a caste based group where the upper caste exploits the lower caste.

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