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A Study of Social Evils in Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable

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ABSTRACT: Anand's father had a prominent role in the British army's Dogra regiment, and his mother came from a rural background. Born in Peshawar in 1905, Anand's father, a coppersmith, supported the family after completing high school. Anand's life can be divided into three periods: his early years, his time abroad, and his later years in India. Anand embraces humanism, valuing the interests and dignity of individuals and drawing inspiration from Western and Asian influences. He focuses on writing for marginalized communities, addressing issues like caste discrimination and advocating compassion and upliftment. In his works "Apologies for Heroism" and the essay "Prolegomena to New Humanism in Lines Written to an Indian Air," Anand discusses his humanistic beliefs, emphasizing compassion (Karuna) and its transformative potential. He highlights ideologies challenging caste barriers, such as Nehru's advocacy for peaceful coexistence, M.N. Roy's doctrine of radical humanism, and the concept of brotherhood expressed by poet-saints like Kabir Das and Nanak. Anand, a humanist and prolific novelist, focuses on writing for marginalized communities to uplift them, shedding light on the struggles faced by characters like Sohini and Gulabo, who endure suffering, discrimination, and dependence on higher castes for their basic needs.

KEYWORDS: Humanism, Western Influences, Marginalized, Radical Humanism, Discrimination.

I. INTRODUCTION

Humanism is the love of the human being as a whole, including all of his flaws, urges, and inclinations. It can be characterised as a way of thinking wherein the interests, values, and dignity of people are held in high regard. Humanism entails attention to human needs; It is a way of thinking that focuses on human actions in the supernatural realm and the natural world of the so called animal kingdom. The renaissance saw the rise of mediaeval pre occupation with the supernatural and the other world, which is when western humanism got its start. In contrast to an earlier belief that man was evil, worthless, and destined to ruin both in this life and the next, humanism in a renaissance concept that affirms the fundamental greatness and dignity of man. Renaissance humanists came to believe that a human being has the means of living a life of dignity, reason, morality and happiness after studying old poets, historians, and philosophers.

II. CASTE-HINDU'S CALLOUSNESS

The Hindus of the callous caste overpower the untouchables; they also subject them to enormous suffering. They are unable to climb the well's steps or collect water from it because doing so would contaminate the well. Hours of waiting are required for a pitcher of water, which Sohini, Gulabo, and others can only have if a caste Hindu is willing to draw water for them. They are unable to prepare food, drink tea, or clean their utensils until they have a after a long wait, a pitcher of water. Even for their daily bread and water supply, they have to depend heavily on others. When Bakha travels to the city to get food, an upper-window throws a loaf of bread at him as if he were a dog. As a result of his great humiliation, Bakha is enraged. They are fed on these leftovers and crumbs, which are frequently slimy and filthy.

III. THE IRREVERENCE

Even the shadow of an untouchable is said to cause pollution when it is touched. When Bakha accidentally bumps only slightly into a Hindu of upper caste, he receives a face slap, is verbally abused, and the jalebis in his hand—jalebis that the shopkeeper had defrauded him of and gave to him as to a leper—fall to the ground. Bakha becomes extremely ashamed, and tears start to form in his eyes. He then proceeds to wander through the bazaar while yelling, "Posh, Posh, sweeper coming." Nothing could be more demeaning to Bakha's delicate nature. He is outraged, but I am powerless in the face of these horrible, centuries-old norms and traditions. When a little boy is hurt during a hockey game in the evening, he takes After the hockey game, if a boy gets hurt, he brings him to his mother so that his wound may be wrapped and he can get the care he needs. However, the ungrateful mother insults him for contaminating her home and her son instead of saying thank you. Havildar Charat Singh, in contrast to this callousness, treats him with kindness,



invites him over for tea, and offers him a brand-new hockey stick to play with. The Muslim tongawalla has been as kind to him. But in ardent juxtaposition, they focus on the cold-heartedness of caste Hindus, who are fortified and prejudiced within the feeling of 6000 years of superiority. This is a sentiment which refuses to recognise the truth that the everyone is a human being and that no one should be treated as a lesser being, to be ignored, bullied, or exploited, and that Sohini, Bakha's sister, should be treated like a delectable morsel of girlhood to be used as needed. The betel leaf salesman from Bakha who buys cigarettes is motivated by the same attitude that allows the temple priest to act without consequence and throws the packet at the untouchable "as a might throw a bone to an insistent dog sniffing around the corner of his shop." A caste Hindus are first-water hypocrites. They forbid untouchables from using their wells to get water, climbing even the steps to a temple, or even casting a shadow on an untouchable.

IV. MORAL DECADENCE A RESULT OF SERVITUDE

Bakha is adamantly angry and wants to get revenge on the priest, but he is paralysed even when he tries because of the generations' worth of servitude that have been imprinted in him, he hazily considers taking revenge. A throng surrounds him after he unintentionally touches and pollutes a man on the street. His initial reaction was to flee the suffering by just shooting across the crowd. Then he understood that there was a barrier around him that was moral rather than physical. Similar to how Bakha's first response is "I will go and kill him" when Sohini tells him about being molested by the priest while they are at the temple. But the next instant, he felt his body's cells return to being cold. However, he felt the frost return to his body's cells. His eyes observed the exquisite sculptures above the doors that reached the apex. They appeared enormous, terrifying, and oppressive. He retreated in fear. He gradually began to feel afraid. He lowered his head. His eyes had become dull. His tight fists released tension and landed lazily at his side. He needed assistance since he felt weak. "Weakness corrupts, and total weakness corrupts," The untouchable has been degraded by centuries of social exclusion; his mind and heart have been wounded, and he has become completely inert and powerless and unable to exert himself. He has grown to see the caste Hindus as his people and his place in society as divinely predetermined.

V. THE TOOL OF SOCIAL CRITICISM: IRONY

Irony serves as the weapon in "Untouchable" stinging condemnation of Hindu civilization. The novel is filled with irony, which is the contradiction between appearance and reality. According to Saros, irony, which primarily functions by contrasting appearance with reality, is a particularly effective tool for dispelling the myth that Indian characters have "contentment," "mystical silence," and "spiritual attainments," which was created around them by novelists of the 19th century. Untouchability is especially open to a sarcastic treatment because it cannot have a moral, religious, or even aesthetic sanction. In the Preface to the book, E.M. Forster claims that "really it takes the human mind to evolve anything so devilish." No animal could have gotten close to it.

VI. CASTE: HINDUS ARE TREATED IRONICALLY

Irony is heavily implied within the novel's thematic concerns; it is significantly more common and pervading here than in other novels of the author. In the tale we see a modern-day Indian child, who is being restricted within the restrictions of ancient customs.

"Hindus, who take great pleasure in their cleanliness, spit and gargle in the stream, polluting the water, while a person who is incomparably cleaner than themselves is treated like trash." Mensquat right in the open to release themselves. Rich Hindu businessmen overfeed idle priests but resent others asking and raising questions on what they are doing. Mohammedans meander around with their hands in their pyjamas, liberating themselves in a formulaic way before they visit a mosque. The menial merchants and moneylenders up their rates for the poor and many others manipulate the scales to deceive the outcasts. We observe the peculiar Hindu concepts of "pollution by touch" and "pollution from a distance," as well as the hypocrisy of Hindu women who treat the sweepers as pariahs but want to be called "mother" by them. Orthodox Hindus can and will worship a bull which emits rather foul and disgusting odours, but they would not touch a fellow human being.

VII. CONCLUSION

As a result, Anand's book is still relevant today. It is still relevant and necessary today. Additionally, it is a wonderful work of art that provides the novelist's emotional experience artistic form and expression rather than being merely a brochure or propagandist tract. Till the date English literature is approached, read and appreciated for what it is, it will continue to provide aesthetic pleasure.



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