



Untouchability in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* presents an incisive critique of the rigid caste system and the deep-rooted practice of untouchability in early twentieth-century India. Written in 1935, the novel foregrounds the life of Bakha, an "untouchable" young man whose daily interactions, internal struggles, and encounters with nationalist and reformist ideas expose the complexities of caste oppression. This research paper explores the representation of untouchability, caste hierarchy, social othering, colonial context, and possibilities for reform. Through close textual analysis and socio-historical perspectives, the paper demonstrates how Anand not only portrays the suffering of the oppressed but also interrogates the psychological impact of social discrimination. The study situates *Untouchable* as a seminal anti-caste narrative that exposes the social injustices of caste and advocates for human dignity and reform.

Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand (1905–2004) occupies a central place in Indian English literature as one of the earliest novelists to represent marginalized voices. His novel *Untouchable*, first published in 1935, dramatizes a single day in the life of Bakha, a young sweeper boy who belongs to a caste considered "untouchable." By meticulously detailing Bakha's experiences, interactions, and inner reflections, Anand lays bare the cruelty of caste prejudice and the psychological trauma borne by those designated as "untouchables."



In colonial India, caste was not merely a social label but an institutional force that regulated daily life, dictating occupation, spatial segregation, purity laws, and social exclusion. The term “untouchable” referred to groups placed outside the varna hierarchy and subjected to extreme segregation and discrimination. This novel emerges within a historical period marked by anti-colonial struggle and reform efforts against caste oppression, including the early Gandhian emphasis on the uplift of “Harijans” (children of God). Anand’s work bridges literary representation and social critique, making *Untouchable* one of the earliest Indian English novels to challenge caste discrimination.

This paper examines how Anand uses narrative techniques, characterization, symbolism, and socio-cultural contexts to portray the practice of untouchability. It also discusses the novel’s engagement with reformist ideologies, including Gandhi’s approach, and assesses its contribution to anti-caste discourse.

Historical and Social Context: Caste and Untouchability in India

To understand *Untouchable*, it is essential to grasp the historical backdrop of caste and untouchability in India. The caste system, with roots in ancient texts and social norms, classified society into hierarchical groups (varna and jati). Certain occupations such as manual scavenging, leatherwork, and sweeping were designated as polluting and assigned to marginalized communities. Untouchability enforced these hierarchies through strict spatial segregation; “untouchables” were forbidden from entering temples, drawing water from common wells, or even being touched by so-called “upper” caste members.

By the early twentieth century, reform movements and nationalist leaders increasingly critiqued caste discrimination. Figures like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar called for the annihilation of caste and the political empowerment of oppressed communities, while Mahatma Gandhi focused on the uplift of Harijans within the framework of Hindu renewal. Anand’s novel appears amid these debates, capturing the tensions between social reform, tradition, and personal dignity.

Bakha as a Representative Voice: Identity and Alienation

In *Untouchable*, **Mulk Raj Anand** does not present Bakha merely as an isolated fictional character; rather, he constructs him as a symbolic representative of the entire untouchable community. Bakha’s life is shaped from birth by rigid caste laws that determine his occupation, social interactions, and even his physical movements in public space. He inhabits a world in which his very existence is perceived as contaminating, and where the ideology of purity and pollution governs every aspect of daily life. From the opening scene of the novel, Bakha is shown waking at dawn to perform his hereditary task of cleaning latrines and sweeping streets work considered essential yet despised. This paradox reflects the



social contradiction of the caste system: untouchables are indispensable for maintaining public hygiene, yet are treated as morally and physically defiling.

Even the most routine aspects of Bakha's life are charged with humiliation. His labour is not viewed as service but as evidence of his supposed inferiority. He must shout warnings to announce his presence in public spaces so that higher-caste individuals can avoid accidental contact with him. Such rituals of segregation transform ordinary actions walking, eating, speaking into experiences of anxiety and shame. Anand thereby demonstrates how untouchability operates not only as a social structure but also as a psychological condition imposed upon its victims.

Bakha's inner life reveals a tension between submission and revolt. He has been trained from childhood to accept his caste position as destiny, yet he harbours a deep longing for dignity and recognition as a human being. This conflict is evident when he questions the logic of his degradation:

“Why should this stigma cling to me?”

This moment of introspection is crucial, for it marks the beginning of Bakha's self-awareness. His question challenges the ideological foundations of caste and exposes its arbitrariness. Anand employs interior monologue to reveal how caste oppression penetrates the psyche, producing feelings of self-doubt, anger, and confusion. Bakha internalizes the contempt directed at him, even as he resists it emotionally. His desire to dress like the British soldiers, to speak English, and to escape his inherited occupation reflects a search for an alternative identity beyond caste boundaries.

Alienation is further intensified by the spatial organization of the village. The untouchables' colony is located on the outskirts, physically separated from the main settlement. This geographical marginalization mirrors their social exclusion. The village is not merely a physical setting but a symbolic map of caste hierarchy, where space itself becomes an instrument of oppression. Bakha's movement through the village becomes a journey through zones of hostility and fear, reinforcing his sense of being an outsider within his own society.

Moreover, Bakha's alienation is not limited to external exclusion; it manifests internally as well. He oscillates between pride in his physical strength and despair over his social worthlessness. This psychological fragmentation illustrates how systemic oppression creates divided selves individuals who aspire to dignity yet are constantly reminded of their supposed inferiority. Anand thus portrays untouchability not simply as a social injustice but as a condition that corrodes identity and self-respect.



Through Bakha, Anand universalizes the untouchable experience. Bakha's humiliation, isolation, and longing for respect are not exceptional but typical of millions condemned by caste ideology. His story becomes a microcosm of the broader social reality of colonial India, where political freedom was being imagined while social equality remained unrealized. By giving Bakha a voice and an inner life, Anand challenges dominant narratives that silenced the oppressed and insists on recognizing untouchables as thinking, feeling human beings rather than abstract social categories.

In this way, Bakha functions as both an individual and a collective symbol. His alienation is spatial, social, and psychological, demonstrating that untouchability is not merely a practice of exclusion but a system that reshapes consciousness itself. Anand's portrayal thus transforms Bakha into a powerful representative voice that exposes the moral bankruptcy of caste society and demands a reimagining of human relations based on dignity and equality.

Narrative Technique and Symbolism

In *Untouchable*, **Mulk Raj Anand** adopts a third-person limited narrative perspective that remains closely aligned with Bakha's consciousness. This narrative choice is crucial because it allows the reader to perceive the social world through the eyes of an untouchable subject rather than through the detached viewpoint of an upper-caste observer. The reader experiences events as Bakha does through humiliation, fear, anger, and fleeting hope. Anand's narration frequently slips into Bakha's interior monologue, revealing his private thoughts and emotional responses. This technique humanizes Bakha and resists the objectification of untouchables common in dominant caste discourse.

By filtering social reality through Bakha's perception, Anand exposes the cruelty of caste from within lived experience rather than abstract ideology. The smells, sounds, and physical sensations of Bakha's daily routine especially his work with refuse and excrement are rendered with vivid realism. Such sensory detail immerses the reader in Bakha's environment and compels an emotional engagement with his suffering. This narrative closeness fosters empathy and transforms the novel into a moral argument against untouchability. Instead of presenting caste discrimination as a sociological fact, Anand presents it as a psychological wound inflicted daily upon an individual consciousness.

At the same time, the limited perspective highlights Bakha's incomplete understanding of the social forces that oppress him. His confusion, self-doubt, and emotional volatility reflect how deeply caste ideology is internalized by its victims. Thus, narrative technique itself becomes a form of social critique: the reader sees how injustice is experienced but also how it restricts knowledge and agency.



The Latrine as a Symbol

The latrine functions as one of the most powerful symbols in the novel. It is both Bakha's workplace and the central image of degradation. As a physical structure, the latrine is a place of filth and waste, but symbolically it represents the position assigned to untouchables within the caste hierarchy. Society's impurities human excrement, garbage, and dirt are transferred onto Bakha, making him the bearer of pollution even though he performs the essential labour of cleaning it.

The latrine enforces the ideological separation between "pure" and "impure" bodies. Those who use it remain socially "pure," while the one who cleans it is branded as inherently impure. Anand thus exposes the hypocrisy of caste logic: impurity is not a natural condition but a socially produced stigma attached to certain kinds of labour. The latrine becomes a ritualized space where contempt is enacted daily. Bakha's repeated visits to this space symbolize how untouchability is not an occasional insult but a continuous performance of exclusion.

Moreover, the latrine represents the paradox of visibility and invisibility. Bakha's work is necessary for public hygiene, yet he himself must remain unseen and unheard. His presence is required but his humanity denied. Through this symbol, Anand critiques a system that depends on untouchables while simultaneously denying them dignity.

Bathing and Purity

Water and bathing operate as recurring motifs associated with purity, desire, and unattainable dignity. Bakha's frequent urge to bathe reflects not merely physical discomfort but a deeper psychological longing to wash away the stigma of caste. His concern with cleanliness indicates a desire to prove himself morally and physically superior to the stereotypes imposed upon him. Bathing becomes a symbolic attempt at self-reconstruction, a ritual through which Bakha seeks acceptance into the world that excludes him.

However, the novel makes it clear that purity is not determined by cleanliness but by caste status. No amount of washing can erase Bakha's "polluted" identity in the eyes of society. This contradiction exposes the arbitrariness of caste ideology: impurity is not linked to dirt or hygiene but to birth. Anand thereby deconstructs the religious justification of untouchability by showing that pollution is a social fiction rather than a moral or biological truth.



The motif of water also highlights the irony of denial. Bakha is forbidden to draw water freely from public wells, even though he is obsessed with cleanliness. His exclusion from sources of purity underscores the cruelty of the system: the very means of purification are denied to those most desperate for it. Thus, bathing becomes a symbol of impossible aspiration of a dignity constantly sought but never granted.

Symbolism and Moral Vision

Through the combined use of narrative technique and symbolism, Anand transforms everyday objects into instruments of social critique. The latrine and water are not incidental details; they structure the moral economy of the novel. They reveal how caste hierarchy is reproduced through space, labour, and ritual. Anand's symbolic method allows him to move beyond mere realism into a form of ethical realism, where physical objects mirror social values and injustices.

The close narrative alignment with Bakha ensures that these symbols are not abstract metaphors but lived experiences. The reader does not merely observe symbolic meaning; the reader feels it through Bakha's humiliation and yearning. In this way, narrative perspective and symbolism work together to dismantle caste ideology by exposing its emotional and moral cost.

Ultimately, Anand's technique insists that untouchability is not only a social evil but also a psychological trauma and moral failure. By embedding symbolism within the daily routine of an oppressed character, the novel argues that caste discrimination operates at the level of both body and mind. The latrine symbolizes imposed degradation, bathing symbolizes denied dignity, and Bakha's consciousness becomes the site where social injustice is most painfully inscribed.

Encounters with Society: Humiliation and Resistance

In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand structures Bakha's day as a continuous series of social encounters that expose the everyday functioning of untouchability. These encounters are not isolated incidents but repetitive rituals through which caste hierarchy is enforced and normalized. Anand deliberately sets the novel within a single day to emphasize how humiliation is not exceptional but routine, woven into the fabric of ordinary life.

1. Street Encounters

Bakha's movement through public spaces becomes a site of social policing. As he walks through the streets, upper-caste men shove him aside or shout warnings to keep their distance, while women avert



their gaze in fear of ritual pollution. These gestures communicate more than personal dislike; they are symbolic acts that reaffirm caste superiority. Bakha is not treated as a citizen of the village but as a contaminating object whose proximity threatens social order. Anand shows how the street, supposedly a shared public space, is in reality regulated by caste boundaries. Bakha's body becomes a marker of danger, and his presence triggers alarm rather than recognition.

These encounters demonstrate how untouchability is maintained through everyday conduct. The shoving and shouting are not acts of individual cruelty alone but expressions of collective ideology. Bakha's humiliation thus takes place in full public view, reinforcing his status as inferior and reminding him of his "place" within the social order.

2. Food and Space

Food becomes another arena of exclusion. Bakha must eat separately from upper castes and is denied service at restaurants and shops. The act of eating, which should affirm life and community, instead becomes a reminder of segregation. Anand uses these scenes to illustrate how caste regulates not only labour but also appetite and survival. Bakha's dependence on others for leftover food or scraps underscores his vulnerability and social dependence.

Spatial segregation further intensifies this humiliation. Bakha is restricted to certain areas of the village and is forbidden from entering temples or drawing water from public wells. Space is thus divided into zones of purity and pollution. Anand shows that caste is mapped onto geography: the centre belongs to the "pure," while the margins belong to the "impure." Bakha's physical marginalization mirrors his social invisibility.

Through these details, Anand exposes how untouchability invades the most intimate aspects of existence. It dictates where one may sit, eat, or stand, turning basic human needs into occasions for shame. The denial of shared food and space signals a denial of shared humanity.

3. Touch and Proximity

The most intense form of humiliation occurs when Bakha accidentally brushes against an upper-caste passerby. This minor, unintended act results in public outrage and immediate reprimand. The reaction reveals how touch itself is politicized and moralized within caste ideology. Bakha's body is imagined as infectious, and physical contact is treated as moral contamination. Anand uses this incident to show how



caste fear is projected onto the body of the untouchable, transforming him into a living symbol of defilement.

This episode also exposes the cruelty of the system's logic. The blame is placed entirely on Bakha, even though the encounter is accidental. The punishment he receives reflects the idea that untouchables must constantly police their own movements to protect the purity of others. Bodily autonomy is denied to Bakha; even his physical presence must be regulated.

These moments collectively demonstrate that untouchability operates at multiple social levels through language, gesture, space, and ritual. It affects Bakha's dignity, restricts his movements, and reduces his social identity to that of a pollutant. Anand thus presents caste discrimination as a total system that governs not only public institutions but also private interactions.

Humiliation and the Emergence of Resistance

Despite repeated humiliations, Bakha does not remain a passive victim. Anand portrays moments of emotional revolt and psychological resistance that signal the beginnings of consciousness and dissent. Bakha bursts into anger when insulted, silently curses his oppressors, and questions the justice of the system that condemns him. These reactions may not yet translate into organized rebellion, but they indicate a refusal to accept humiliation as natural.

Bakha's fantasies about a world without caste are particularly significant. He imagines a society in which people are judged by their character rather than their birth. Such imaginings represent a radical break from the fatalism imposed upon him since childhood. His anger and dreams form an inner counter-narrative to the ideology of caste, suggesting that resistance first emerges at the level of thought and emotion.

Anand uses Bakha's internal defiance to suggest the possibility of both individual and collective awakening. While Bakha lacks the social power to overthrow caste, his questioning of norms challenges the moral legitimacy of the system. His struggle reflects a transitional moment in Indian society, when traditional hierarchies were increasingly confronted by ideas of equality, reform, and human rights.

Social Critique Through Encounter

Each encounter Bakha experiences serves as a microcosm of caste society. The street shoves, denial of food, and punishment for touch reveal how untouchability is sustained through ordinary behaviour rather than extraordinary violence. Anand's realism lies in showing that cruelty is embedded in custom. By



focusing on daily humiliation rather than spectacular brutality, Anand emphasizes the banality of oppression and its devastating psychological effects.

At the same time, Bakha's moments of resistance complicate the narrative. They prevent the novel from becoming a mere chronicle of suffering. Instead, they transform it into a story of emerging awareness. Bakha's humiliation exposes the injustice of caste, while his resistance points toward the moral necessity of change.

Thus, Anand presents encounters with society as sites of both oppression and awakening. They degrade Bakha, but they also provoke his consciousness. Through these encounters, *Untouchable* reveals that social transformation begins not only through political reform but also through the refusal of the oppressed to internalize their degradation.

Religion, Reform, and Gandhi's Visit

In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand situates the question of untouchability within the broader framework of religion and social reform. Anand does not present caste oppression as merely a social or economic problem; he traces its roots to religious ideology and ritual practice. Hindu notions of purity and pollution, derived from orthodox interpretations of scripture and custom, become the moral justification for the exclusion of untouchables. Through Bakha's encounters and reflections, religion is shown to be both the source of his degradation and a possible means of his redemption.

The novel introduces reformist discourse through the public speech and symbolic presence of Mahatma Gandhi, whose visit becomes a turning point in Bakha's psychological journey. Gandhi's condemnation of untouchability offers Bakha something he has never received from society: moral recognition. For the first time, a revered public figure articulates that untouchability is a sin and that those who practice it are morally wrong. This moment legitimizes the suffering of untouchables by acknowledging it as unjust rather than divinely ordained. Bakha hears that Gandhi advocates dignity and equality for "Harijans," and this introduces a new possibility into his consciousness that his condition is not natural but reformable.

Gandhi's message awakens hope in Bakha because it reframes his identity. Instead of being seen as impure by birth, he is addressed as a moral equal whose humanity deserves respect. This recognition is psychologically transformative. It challenges Bakha's internalized sense of inferiority and allows him to imagine a different future. Religion, in this reformist context, becomes a tool of moral persuasion rather than social exclusion. Anand thus shows that religious language, when reinterpreted, can function as a force for ethical change.



However, Anand does not present Gandhi's reformist ideology as a complete or unquestioned solution. The novel subtly exposes the limitations of Gandhian strategy. Gandhi's emphasis lies primarily on moral reform within Hindu society rather than on dismantling caste as a structural system. His call urges upper castes to purify their hearts and treat untouchables with compassion, but it does not directly challenge the caste hierarchy itself. As a result, the framework of reform remains paternalistic: untouchables are to be uplifted, not empowered.

This ambiguity becomes clear when Bakha listens to the debate that follows Gandhi's speech. Different viewpoints emerge some support Gandhi's moral appeal, while others argue for technological or institutional change, such as the introduction of the flush toilet, which would eliminate the need for manual scavenging. Anand uses this moment to show that reform is contested terrain. Gandhian ethics provide emotional hope but not a concrete plan for social transformation. Bakha is caught between these competing visions of change, unsure whether dignity will come from moral persuasion, technological progress, or political action.

Through this ambivalence, Anand critiques religion's double role. On one level, religion has been the ideological foundation of untouchability, sanctifying hierarchy in the name of purity. On another level, it offers a vocabulary of conscience and compassion through which reform can be articulated. Bakha's encounter with Gandhian discourse forces him to confront this contradiction. He is encouraged to see himself as worthy of respect, yet he remains trapped in the same social position at the end of the day. Thus, religion appears as both a source of suffering and a potential catalyst for reform.

Anand's treatment of Gandhi is therefore nuanced rather than devotional. Gandhi is portrayed as sincere and morally authoritative, but his vision is shown to be incomplete. Anand implies that true liberation requires more than moral exhortation; it demands structural change in social relations and economic roles. By placing Bakha at the centre of these ideological debates, Anand dramatizes the gap between reformist ideals and lived reality.

Ultimately, Bakha's exposure to Gandhi's ideas marks a shift from passive endurance to conscious questioning. His faith in the inevitability of caste begins to weaken, replaced by curiosity about alternatives. The novel does not resolve this tension but leaves Bakha in a state of intellectual awakening. Religion and reform are thus presented not as final answers but as fields of struggle where meanings of justice, purity, and humanity are contested.



Through this section of the novel, Anand transforms *Untouchable* into more than a social document; he turns it into a philosophical inquiry into the nature of reform itself. By juxtaposing religious tradition with reformist reinterpretation, he highlights the need to rethink inherited beliefs. Bakha's encounter with Gandhian discourse becomes symbolic of a society at the crossroads torn between ritual hierarchy and ethical equality, between inherited faith and emerging humanism.

Colonial Backdrop and Social Change

In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand situates the problem of untouchability within the wider context of colonial India, a period marked by nationalist movements and calls for social reform. While political discourse focused largely on liberation from British rule, Anand draws attention to the persistence of internal oppression within Indian society itself. Through Bakha's experiences, the novel exposes the contradiction between the ideal of national freedom and the reality of caste-based subjugation.

Anand suggests that political independence alone cannot guarantee true freedom if social hierarchies remain unchallenged. Unlike colonial rule, which was imposed from outside, caste oppression is indigenous and embedded in religious and cultural traditions. By highlighting this distinction, the novel critiques a nationalism that prioritizes external sovereignty while overlooking the need for internal social transformation. Bakha's marginal position thus becomes a reminder that genuine liberation must include the dismantling of caste structures and the recognition of equal human dignity.

Language and Power

In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand shows that language itself becomes an instrument of domination. Upper-caste characters speak to Bakha in the form of commands, insults, and derogatory terms, using speech to assert authority and reinforce social distance. Their condescending tone and verbal abuse function as daily reminders of Bakha's inferior status, demonstrating that power is exercised not only through physical exclusion but also through linguistic humiliation. These speech acts normalize hierarchy by presenting contempt as customary and unquestionable.

At the same time, Bakha's fascination with English and modern modes of expression reflects his desire for empowerment and a wider social identity beyond caste. His attempt to acquire a new language symbolizes a search for self-respect and social mobility. Language thus becomes a site of struggle where domination is imposed through abuse and where resistance is imagined through self-expression. However, Bakha's inability to articulate open protest reveals the larger silencing of untouchables in



public discourse. His broken or hesitant speech mirrors the political voicelessness of his community, showing that the denial of language is also a denial of agency and recognition.

Gender and Untouchability

In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand extends the critique of caste by revealing its intersection with patriarchy through the character of Sohini, Bakha's sister. While Bakha suffers public humiliation due to caste, Sohini experiences an additional layer of vulnerability because of her gender. Upper-caste men look at her with desire and authority, transforming her body into an object of the male gaze that is both sexualized and threatening. This shows that untouchable women are not only socially degraded but also sexually exposed and unprotected.

Sohini's limited agency highlights how caste and patriarchy work together to restrict her choices and safety. Unlike Bakha, whose suffering is primarily linked to labour and public insult, Sohini's oppression is intimate and bodily, revealing the gendered nature of caste discrimination. Through her character, Anand demonstrates that untouchable women endure multiple forms of marginalization social, sexual, and psychological thereby exposing the complex, layered structure of oppression within traditional society.

Resistance and Possibility of Change

In *Untouchable*, **Mulk Raj Anand** does not limit his portrayal to suffering alone; he also embeds within Bakha's experience the seeds of resistance and the potential for social transformation. Although Bakha is trapped within a rigid caste hierarchy, his psychological responses to humiliation reveal an emerging critical consciousness. His repeated questioning of why he must endure such degradation indicates a shift from passive acceptance to reflective awareness. This inner struggle is significant because it challenges the fatalism that caste ideology depends upon. Once Bakha begins to question the justice of his condition, the moral authority of the caste system is weakened.

Bakha's exposure to reformist ideas, particularly through discussions surrounding social reform and the condemnation of untouchability, expands his intellectual horizon. These encounters introduce him to the notion that his suffering is not divinely ordained but socially constructed. Such realizations mark the beginning of ideological resistance. Even though Bakha does not immediately rebel against his circumstances, his growing self-respect and awareness of injustice function as forms of silent defiance. His desire to imagine a society free from caste distinctions reflects an aspiration toward equality that challenges inherited norms.



Anand suggests that liberation begins not with external revolution alone but with internal awakening. Bakha's developing sense of self-worth demonstrates that resistance can first take shape within consciousness. This inward change is essential because social hierarchies rely on psychological submission as much as on physical control. By portraying Bakha's emotional revolt and moral questioning, Anand implies that the dismantling of oppression requires the oppressed to recognize their own humanity and reject imposed inferiority.

However, Anand does not romanticize change as immediate or effortless. The novel makes it clear that structural injustice cannot be undone through individual awareness alone. Social transformation is portrayed as a gradual and collective process that must involve reform movements, ethical reorientation, and technological or institutional change. Bakha's journey remains incomplete at the end of the novel, emphasizing that awareness is only the first step in a longer struggle toward equality.

Through this narrative, Anand aligns his vision with broader humanist ideals. He advocates for empathy across social boundaries and insists on the universal dignity of human beings. Resistance, in this sense, is not merely political but moral: it involves rejecting inherited prejudice and recognizing shared humanity. The possibility of change thus emerges from the convergence of personal awakening and social reform, suggesting that the fight against untouchability must be both internal and collective.

Ultimately, Anand's portrayal of resistance is quiet but powerful. Bakha does not overthrow the caste system, but he begins to see himself differently and this shift in perception is revolutionary in itself. The novel therefore presents change not as a sudden event but as a process of consciousness, solidarity, and sustained effort aimed at dismantling oppressive structures and restoring human dignity.

Conclusion

Untouchable remains a powerful indictment of the caste system and the practice of untouchability. Through Bakha's lived experience, Mulk Raj Anand exposes the moral brutality of caste discrimination, the daily humiliations that shape identity, and the psychological costs of social exclusion. Anand's narrative technique, symbolic imagery, and moral engagement offer both critique and hope. The novel challenges readers to confront social injustice, consider the limits of reformist ideologies, and reflect on the dignity of all human beings.

In a contemporary context, while legal reforms have outlawed untouchability, caste-based discrimination continues in various forms. Anand's work thus remains relevant, reminding us that social liberation requires not only legal prohibition but also shifts in social consciousness and cultural norms.



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