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**CASTE, CLASS AND FOLK LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF MULK  
RAJ ANNAND'S PORTRAYAL OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Mulk Raj Anand's Literature does not only signify a Literary contribution but in correlation with the pressing social issues existing at the time namely, highly hierarchical caste systems and economic disparity entrenched in Indian society whose ill effects were widely visible among indigenous people. To expose how personal experiences help expose the inherent brutality of social structures in Indian society, Anand's novels like *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) focus on the lived realities of these dispossessed people through characters Bakha and Munoo. Untouchability is not merely a cultural or religious practice: it represents an entrenched economic and mental architecture for the maintenance of social hierarchy. Through Bakha's daily trials and the fraudulent moral verdicts Nevertheless, Anand's representation of class wars is broader than only caste-based jobs; it also tells the story of a wider colonial framework that uses workers. Through Munoo's various it helps, Anand challenges claims of the caste system being valid in traditional Indian society. to serving as a Coolie demonstrate how to be ostracized based on your caste strongly corresponds with being discriminated against due to your class, which creates an ongoing feeling of financial precarity. By placing his characters in a rapidly modernizing and economically but paradoxical world, Anand calls out the problem in trying to develop without equity for all unaltered India. If we are going to truly understand the lives of those less fortunate, we've got to look at his commentary on class instead of serendipity.

**KEYWORDS:** Caste, Class System, Folk Tradition, Untouchability, Economic System, Colonial System, Indian Society.

## INTRODUCTION

Inspired by Indian independence and social-political movements in the late 1900s, Indian English literature became a powerful tool for reflecting the problems of broken society and drawing attention to societal advancement: Keeping in mind multiple classes existing more prominently (before/after India's independence) within that community. Mulk Raj Anand, one of the key players of this movement is famous for his unsugared descriptions of social injustice. He touches topics such as the class animosity between different socio-economic classes, untouchability and the habit of regional cultural productions like folk art to go unnoticed. Not only entertaining, Anand's stories are also a potent critique of the boring injustice wrought by caste and economic insecurity in India as well as cultural loss. Untouchability, among the most degrading practices in the Hindu caste system, is a core theme of many of Anand's substantial works. By creating characters such as Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Munoo in *Coolie* and Bakha in *Untouchable*, Anand sheds light on the plight of people who have been made pariahs by society. By peering as well beyond sympathizing with the victim, his representation of untouchability shows how caste discrimination acts as a social and economic force that robs people of their rights and dignity. Anand's stories demonstrate how economic disparity perpetuates caste distinctions, resulting in an exploitative cycle that harms the individuals engaged while reminding us of deeper inequities permeating Indian society. The present essay attempts to explore class conflict and untouchability in Mulk Raj Anand. and folk art that contributes may be the most significant view of Indian culture. Based on the analysis of some specific novels, and short tales, this study explores Anand's commitment to real social problems and his belief that literature could help change society. Ultimately, Anand's prose is marked both by a scathing indictment of social injustice and an earnest case for equality, respect for human rights and real culture in India, a fast developing country. This work by Mulk Raj Anand is therefore explored through the lenses of untouchability, class struggle, and folk art as a qualitative analytical interpretive research approach. A spoiler alert: What does Indian society look like? To interpret the social vision through literary analysis and critical theory, Anand's works draw from multiple fictional texts. The study uses a theoretical framework of Marxist literary criticism, cultural studies and postcolonial studies. In this way, Anand's work provides an understanding of the intersections between caste, class and culture in repressive hierarchies.

**DISCUSSION:** In Anand's 1935 novel *Untouchable*, the character of Bakha, a young boy who cleans the streets in a single day, vividly exemplifies the concept of untouchability.

Bakha shows the brutality of the caste system while being ostracized, ridiculed and marginalized. Despite his friendly demeanor and kind-heartedness, he is considered filthy and subhuman; therefore, he must be banned from common areas. Anand's portrayal of Bakha is closely related to B. R. Ambedkar's criticism of the caste system. For Ambedkar, it is a means of depriving people of their rights and pressuring unfair divisions onto them. Bakha's misery is caused not just by individual acts of cruelty but by an entrenched social system. Anand shows how that outlook is formed by untouchability; Bakha's dismay and bewilderment remind us that caste discrimination occurs both inside and outside. Through vivid emotion and meticulous detail, Anand turns Bakha into an everyman for the untouchables, rendering *Untouchable* a searing indictment of caste-based discrimination in Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand is one of the best writers to reveal the unpleasant and bitter reality. In his stories, especially in the book *Untouchable* (1935), Anand proves that untouchability is not merely a custom but a serious violation of human rights faced by lower castes. There's an openhearted generosity, a keen moral compass and an unquenchable desire for social justice on display in his writing. Anand's *Untouchable* is about Bakha, a small boy who sweeps the streets, facing shame, exclusion and a bad reputation he inherits. Bakha is denied even the simplest rights — access to free drinking water, entry to public spaces, education and respect. As Anand's narrative makes clear, untouchability dehumanizes people by denying them their identity, liberty and self-respect. The insult, if you will; it then becomes verbally attempting to remove a cultural corrosive: Then the violence against the spirit that finds its way into breath and breathings of godly wisdom: The purging words in the great book: Physically separate from that which pollutes your palate or bathes your children or lingers in filth while oscillating about gutter lines. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchables*: All-India novelist (Publishers Weekly) His *Untouchable* is, after all, a blistering critique of caste-based prejudice. His work restores dignity and a voice to the voiceless in our world today, as he powerfully portrays the actual lives of people who inhabit the margins making His work an important social justice contribution and a plaintive call for equality and compassion between human beings.

**Class Struggles and Economic Exploitation:** Both of them focused on social injustice and class struggle, Mulk Raj Anand especially highlighted the plight of the economically disadvantaged. The concepts of Marxism, human values and the reality of society were deep engraved in his cerebrum. Writing often about the lives of people who went underreported — farmers, factory workers, plantation workers, city poor people — Anand found that both native wealthy establishments and British colonialism wreaked havoc on their characters'

lives. His stories bring out the difficult economic conditions existing for India's working class prior to independence. In his novels *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, and *Untouchable*, Anand illustrates that economic injustice manifests in two of its most prominent forms: class divisions (especially involving affluent empresarios who are the exploiters) and mistreatment of workers. Munoo, the child protagonist in *Coolie*, graduates from working on a farm to working in a city factory where he is exploited by managers who treat him as nothing but another opportunity to make cuts. This is also the case in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, where Gangu, a peasant, is tricked into labouring on Assam tea estates, where imperial overseers insist on horrendous working conditions, meager pay and even resort to violence against native peoples. Anand shows how this unjust system was maintained by colonial officials with the help of local middlemen. Anand's portrayal of class struggle is different from mere statements on financial hardships — it highlights how the ones affected are dehumanized. What's more, the worker isn't paid a fair wage — but they're often denied safety, respect, and basic rights. Anand contends that poverty is a factor of unequal power balances rather than simple moral failings. His unpretentious narrative expresses the mundane agonies of the impoverished with vividly wrought emotions and apparent social themes. Anand also notes of the oppressed people's growing consciousness to their condition. His characters' growing awareness of the injustices around them suggests that although they may not always be able to stand together, society can change. Instead of glorifying revolutions, Anand uses his pen to enable readers gaze at the stark reality of class bias. Mulk Raj Anand's perspective on economic disparity and class conflict Ultimately, *Inequality* is a scathing critique of social injustice and colonial capitalism. His immortal stories of resistance will help build a more just and equitable society.

**Folk Art and Cultural Marginalization:** Amidst social and economic injustice, these cultural artifacts offer the oppressed a channel for expressing their feelings, resisting oppression, and constructing identities. Despite their socially excluded status, the oppressed are able to sustain their cultural history and express their humanity through folk art. They also highlight how folk culture is pushed aside by strong social structures, Anand. Folk art, which is championed by upper-caste norms and colonial modernity, is at times dismissed as simple or not enough, a reflection of the low status of its producers. Anand does so because he questions the cultural order, when he incorporates folk customs into his work. An RF Gelb, an ethnic Indian and former ambassador of India. Folk art is, ultimately, a form of cultural resistance (to borrow a phrase from Mulk Raj Anand). It is through the artistic expressions and life

experiences of the downtrodden, rather than the culturally imperial or wealthy classes, that real national culture should derive its source (124).

**The Interrelatedness of Caste, Class and Culture:** Caste, in Anand's stories, is a rigid social hierarchy that determines an individual's right to work, property and respect. In *Untouchable*, Bakha is restricted in his options for low-paying jobs; caste-based persecution leads to financial difficulties. On the same token, novels like *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* also stand in assuming that social class system inequalities perdure to keep the downtrodden poor. Anand shows how caste generally carries class across generations, making it hard for lower castes to escape the clutches of their environment. Caste discrimination and class disparity are often consolidated through religious ceremonies, social customs and cultural traditions. At the same time, Anand keeps traditional culture as a form of resistance. To resist, construct a new identity and keep themselves alive the oppressed have turned to their songs, stories and oral traditions. Through these forms of cultural expression, marginalized populations contest the dominant society's views of their value. Anand's humanist perspective endeavours to overthrow this tyrannical social order by exposing its moral failures. Anand points to this social transformation — one that can be achieved by addressing caste inequalities, but also economic injustice and cultural isolation — as a requisite for emerging from the maelstrom together. His thinking drew on socialist perspectives, Gandhi's reform ideas and Ambedkar's critiques.

**CONCLUSION:** Mulk Raj Anand makes Indian society realize the importance of equality, justice and respect for one another. By probing the lot of the untouchables, social upheaval, and cultural marginalization, he exposes the chronic injustices of colonial periods. Anand's works are powerful vehicles for social critique, for they directly challenge the unjust caste system, the exploitation of workers, and a wilful indifference to lower rank. By depicting the daily lives of those who suffer oppression, Anand presents storytelling as resistance and a type of ethical action. His characters endure adversity, and instead of accepting their lot, their adventures compel readers to confront unpleasant social realities. Anand's abiding faith in the potential of human compassion, and commitment to its realistic portrayals, allow him to show how caste discrimination, economic exploitation and cultural exclusion all reinforce inequity. Anand wrote about the past, but his work is not without relevance today. The wisdom they provide and the moral compass they offer come in a world that is still haunted by poverty, cultural decay and caste discrimination. Through Anand's writing, we learn that only

kindness and justice and respect for each person's dignity can bring about the societal change we need. Overall, his legacy provides a critique of present-day inequities but also directs hope toward a welfare state that is more equitable and inclusive.

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