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## **Mulk Raj Anand's untouchable: An exploration into inner space**

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### **Abstract**

Untouchable is Anand's first novel, and his most artistically satisfying work. He depicts ACT" suffering and anguish of the untouchables as a result of oppression and exploitation. It is revealed through the stream of consciousness technique. Anand had learned this technique from a study of James Joyce's Ulysses.

**Keywords:** untouchable, technique, novel

### **Introduction**

Untouchable is one of the earliest examples in Indian English literature, which makes extensive use of stream of consciousness. "It was a phrase used by William James in his Principles of Psychology (1890) to describe the unbroken flow of perceptions, thoughts and feelings in the waking mind." It is a narrative technique through which the author attempts the fluid and eruptive nature of human thought. The narrative is anchored in the interior life of a character rather than the perspective of an objective third-person narrator. Thus Anand's novel begins with the thinking trance of Bakha. He thoughts uncongenially of his home as he lay half-awake in the morning of an autumn day, covered by a greasy blanket. Even though, Anand is careful to mark changes of scene clearly, the reader has to keep his wit about him in order to follow the transitions that occur, when Anand moves from presenting the outer scene to presenting what is going on in Bakha's mind.

"Another coincidence was my introduction to James Joyee's Ulysses, through a borrowed copy of his banned book which I got from the library of my friend and literary mentor at that time, Bonamy Dobree. The fascination of this novel for my generation is absolute. We accepted Joyce's defects of obscurity, overwriting and formalist imposition of the Homaric symbolism on contemporary reality."

Instead of traditional story, Untouchable has a relatively modern plot sequence. The series of events took place and a change taking place in the inner conscious of the illiterate hero. After repeated humiliation, Bakha reaches a point where he no more thinks of escaping into the white man's world. His last movement as the fateful day ends in the direction of his house. He walks home with a new willingness to talk to his father about what he has seen and heard in the evening. The change is to accept reality with some hope, not total despair

Untouchable is a novel that reveals the mind, the inner being of a character. It does not follow the clock or calendar. It is flashed backward or forward. Now we are in the present, then we are sent back to the past and then all of a sudden the future creeps in. Instead of external action revealed through dialogue in the traditional novel, this novel concentrates on the internal action. Anand's main emphasis in Untouchable is not on the action of the novel but on the way the mind of its hero works. He presents Bakha as a young sweeper boy with a highly sensitive type of temperament. He therefore, thinks and thinks on everything that happens to him. He is exposed to one humiliating incident after another in the course of an autumn day and is therefore, given to an unbroken process of thinking from dawn to dusk. The technique miraculously helps Anand to project the inner drama of his soul on the pages of his book. There could be no method more effective than it to apprise us with torments that an outcast in Indian society is destined to suffer on account of the murderous cast-system that we have so religiously been observing for more than two thousand years.

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The injury done by the cast system is not physical, it is in fact mental. It could be expressed by conversation, as follows.

"Here is your portion, said Ram Charan,  
Unfolding the handkerchief which he carried.  
There were three sugar-plums in it, all slightly broken.  
"Throw me one said Bakha.  
Take it said Ram Charan.  
But Bakha hesitated and didn't hold hands out.  
Take it, why don't you take it? Ram Charan grumbled.  
"No, give it to me, throw it', Bakha said."

With this incident both Ram Charan and Chota were surprised. They had never seen before Bakha's behavior like that, when he touched caste Hindu in the market of Bulashah. He earns for his transgression much abuse from the public and slap from the man he has polluted. The slap on cheek does not hurt a physically but mentally give more shock. The inside of Bakha is expressed with the help of his own soliloquies, which is a major technique of this type of fiction

Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him! And to think that I was so eager to come to the town this morning. Why don't I shout to warn the people of my approach? That comes of not looking after one's work. I should have seen the high-caste people in the street. That man! That he should have bit me! My poor jalebis! I should have eaten them. But why couldn't I say something? Couldn't I have joined my hands to him and then go away? The slap on my face! The liar! Let me come across him one day. He know I was being abused. Not one of them spoke for me. The cruel crowd! All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused?

The fantasies and nightmares of Bakha are also revealed to us. He had often felt like reading Waris Shah's *Hir and Ranjah*. While he was in the British barracks, he had felt a burning desire to speak tish-mish, tish-mish English. But his father told him that "schools were meant for the Babus, not for the lowly sweeper". He had began to work at the latrines at the age of six and resigned himself to the hereditary life of the croft, but he dreamed of becoming a sahib. He decided to take a self-education. But his self-education hadn't proceeded beyond the alphabet.

While going to the marriage of Ram Charan's sister, Bakha's mind turns romantic. He remembered how, he had been playing with her brother and Chota in the barracks, they had come and started to play at marriage. Ram Charan's little sister was made to act the wife because she were a skirt. Bakha was chosen to play the husband because he was wearing the gold-embroidered cap. Bakha always felt proud of having once acted as her husband. When his thoughts darkened, he felt as if he could forcibly gather the girl in his embrace and ravish her.

The working of Lakha's mind is also revealed through the technique of stream of conscious at some places. When Rakha, Bakha's younger brother is away to barracks to fetch the left-over of the sepoy's launch, the hungry Lakha wistfully remembers the left over of feasts that he had seen in the cantonment and the town. His mind travels to the great big piles of cooked food, which he had received on the occasion of marriage in the alleys of the city. There were fried bread and chingri puffs, vegetables, curries and semolina pudding, sweets and pickles. Even he recalled how

the wooden box, where his wife kept sweets was never empty that year.

The flash back technique is also a major aspect of stream of consciousness technique in the novel. It is used to show the memories or feeling of the character. Lakha narrated his nasty experience to Bakha, when Bakha was ill with fever.

"Babu ji, Babu ji, God will make you prosperous. Please make my message reach the ears of the Hakim ji. I have been shouting, shouting and have even asked some people to tell the Hakim Sahib that I have a prayer to make to him. My child is suffering from fever. He has been unconscious since last night and I want the Hakim ji to give him some medicine,"

"Keep away, keep away," said the babu, "don't come riding on at me. Do you want me to have another bath this morning? The Hakim Sahib has to attend to us people who go to offices first, and there are so many of us waiting. You have nothing to do all day. Come another time or wait."

### Conclusion

Untouchable is a ballad born out of the freedom. "I had tried to win for truth against the age old lies of the Hindus by which they upheld discrimination. The profound thoughts of the upper orders in an ancient India about caste were often noble. Someone in the great Mahabharata had cried, 'Caste, caste--there is no caste!' And I wanted to repeat this truth to the 'dead souls' from the compassion of my self-explanation in the various Hindu hell in the hope that I would myself come clean after I had been through the swear, as it were." The use of the stream of consciousness bares before the readers the brushed mind and soul of Bakha, his fears and anxieties, his feelings and emotions, his ideas and reactions. Anand uses the stream of consciousness successfully, to show that 'A Man is a man--- and he is born equal to all other men.

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