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GANDHI'S HUMANISM IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVEL 'UNTOUCHABLE'

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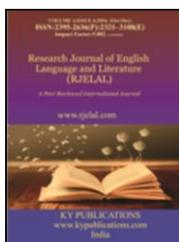
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ABSTRACT

During the Freedom struggle in India Humanism has its beginning. Mulk Raj Anand's Humanism is explicit and in client towards civility. His novel deals with the position of caste system and exploitation. He made his effort to transfer the reality into novel form Untouchable in 1933. During this time Gandhi's presence, his speech, his stay in ashram made an impact on Anand.

KEYWORDS: Indian English writer- Indian English Fiction- Gandhiji's influence-casteism-low caste-exploitations-humanism-weaker section of the society-untouchable-gandhi a character-historical events



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Introduction

The most significant event in the history of Indian English Literature in the 30s was the manifestation on the scene of the major writers Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan. The eldest of the trio, Anand will stay on one of the most prolific and multitalented of Indian English writer. He was a celebrated Indian English writer with global recognition. One of the main duties of a great writer is to represent the society and its various influences in his art. That Anand did in his novels. Literature and society are the two facets of the same coin they are interwoven both internally and externally. In all his novels he appears as a social critic.

Gandhi's influence on Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand belongs to Gandhian era and his novels reveal significantly the deep influence of Gandhi. Gandhi's magnanimity and humanism won the hearts of the people all over the world. He scores the great place amongst the most famous personalities of the 20th century. He influences

majority of Indian writers during that period not only in India, but also world over.

In 1930, Anand's novels are greatly influenced by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Even though Gandhiji has influenced Indian literature, he has left an added impact on the Indian English Fiction in the choice of themes and characters. Many novelists have changed their themes from the urban areas to the rural areas, India from the earlier Indian novelist to the latest Indian novelist, there is "a conscious shift of emphasis from the city to the village, or there is implied a contrast between the two urban luxury and sophistication on the one hand and rural modes and manners on the other."¹

Other writers influence on Anand

A number of world famous writers influenced Mulk Raj Anand and shaped him into a novelist of remarkable accomplishments and fame. Some famous and well known personalities among them are Goethe, Tolstoy, Gorki, Mazzini, Proudhon, Marx, Kant, Hegel, Hardy, Ruskin, Morris and Ralf Waldo Trine. Amongst the Indian saints and thinkers who influenced Anand are Lord Buddha, Guru



Nanak, Maharshi Dayanand, Rabindranath Tagore, M.K.Gandhi, RadhaKrishnan and Jawaharlal Nehru. The famous world classical which influenced Anand were *Mahabharata* and *The Gita*. Some of the famous world class books which he liked are – Ralf Waldo Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite*, Ruskin's *Unto this last*, *Uncle Tom's cabin*, *The Mother*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Marx's *Das Capital*, Radha Krishnan's *My Search for Truth*, Gandhi's *Young India* and *Harijan*.

Gandhiji was against the exploitation of man by war. He believed in equality in all irrespective of caste, creed and status. He was a champion of the have-nots, the under dogs, the under-feds, the suppressed and the exploited. He was a real and unquestionable humanitarian with unimpeachable honesty and immense and unfathomable reserves of love, pity, sympathy and magnanimity for the weaker section of the society. He never shows discrimination between the rich and the poor, the high caste and the low caste. He was a real socialist and his definition of socialism was based on equality. He treats all are equal.

Gandhiji's favourite persons were those who fight against injustice, exploitation and real fanaticism with the weapon of non-violence. His favourites were the weak and the downtrodden. He keeps an eye on Gandhi's philosophy and vision of harmonious integrity and emphasized more and more on social problem of the oppressed, the poor, the downtrodden dalits and the low caste of the Hindu society. His aim was to eliminate poverty, superstitions, caste system and untouchability which were the predominant evils in the Indian society. Anand reveals various aspects of Gandhi in this novel *Untouchable*. Anand reflects the image of Gandhi by using the theme of the Quit India Movement, Gandhi, the leader and Gandhi, the Mahatma, through the mouthpiece of Bakha in the masterpiece *Untouchable*. Gandhiji appears as a character in this novel. Gandhi was more successful as a social reformer. In his famous work *Untouchable*, Anand reflects the deep rooted casteism in Indian society. The impact of Gandhi on the author is clearly shown on the innocent victim, Bakha, who listens to every word of Gandhi with the hope that his misery and humiliation would come to

an end. Gandhi says he considers untouchability to be the most shameful stain on Hinduism

Anand's most of the novels were in 1930s, the beginning time of modern independent India. The particular decade was with the many historical events of Gandhian Salt Satyagraha movements of 1930, and the Three Round Table Conferences, the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, the Gandhian movements for Harijan upliftment and giving Basic Education to all. This struggle for freedom in India was powerful. Gandhiji's tradition influenced the politics and the novelists of that age. According to K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, "Gandhiji's style of writing influenced the novelists of that era of his political aims for an independent India"²

Anand's novels are highly influenced by the ideals of Gandhi who fought for the uplift of the down trodden. His life got a 'U' turn after he contacted Gandhi and he was inspired by his ideals. Through his essay, "One day I read an article in **Young India** by Gandhiji, describing how he met Uka, a sweeper boy, and found him with torn clothes and hungry and took him to his ashram. This narrative was simple, austere and seemed to me more truthful than my artificially fictitious novel **Untouchable**. I decided to go and see the old man. I wrote to the Mahatma asking for an appointment. He wrote back and said he would give me an interview if I came to India. I raised the fare and went to Ahmadabad in the spring of 1932"³

Anand was greatly influenced by Gandhi while he was in Sabarmathi Ashram with him for three months. During the same period he revised the manuscript of his famous novel there. "I read the new novel to the old man, who more or less approved.....I worked hard to achieve sincerity"⁴

Gandhiji believed in the motto- 'Simple living and high thinking' and one of the salient features of Gandhian literature is the simplicity and clarity of languages. In theme, the novelist preferred the village to the city, the poor to the rich, the cultural heritage of village to the urban luxury and sophistication. Bakha is a dedicated worker. He avoids all sorts of idleness and goes about with strength and vitality. He is very dutiful like the followers of Gandhi. His reverence for work makes him a Gandhi's disciple without knowing it. But it is

an irony that society pays no credit to his devotion to duty.

Anand introduces Gandhi who emerges as a Messiah to uproot untouchability and caste discrimination. Bakha feels delighted when Gandhi gives the term 'Harijan', sons of God to the 'Bhangis and Chamars' Bakha attends a public meeting where Gandhi speaks "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism"⁵ Gandhi's visit to the Goal Maidan near Bulasah leads the novel to a climax. After the departure of Gandhi, a group of people stays on there, discussing the Mahatma's views. The discussion is on *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Maya and Nirvana, Machine versus Man, etc. have no significance for simple natured Bakha, he is too much under the spell of Mahatma. The mention of a 'machine which clears the dung' enables a sweeper to change his profession and there is no thought of untouchable which is a revolutionary thinking unlike non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi.

Conclusion

This presentation of Anand's *Untouchable* is a good effort to show the Gandhi's powerful impact on the socio-political scene of the 1930s in indo-Anglian Literature. The portrayal of Bakha made him a historical writer. Gandhi came into literature through the writings of the writers during Gandhi's period.

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