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ETHNIC TRIBULATIONS IN 'UNTOUCHABLE'

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Abstract:

The trio Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan has given significant contribution to the development of Indian English Literature. In the trio Mulk Raj Anand(1905-2004) acquires eminent place with his humanistic writing and presentation of the poor downtrodden and underprivileged class from Indian Society. His creative works like Untouchable (1929) and Coolie(1936) reveal his identity as writer of the masses. He tried to present the worst side of Indian Society which includes caste and class discrimination and sufferings of lower caste and class groups due to the treatment given to them by so called upper caste and high class communities. Anand commented on Indian culture and focused on the weak & dark side of the great Indian cultural heritage by presenting the lives of innocent victims of the society. He wrote with the egalitarian view and social justice inspired by Gandhi's ideals. He proposed and strongly recommended equality in Indian society abolishing every kind of hierarchy from the social structure in India. His first novel 'Untouchable' presents the same point of view by presenting a single day in the life of an untouchable scavenger, 'Bakha'. Just a day in the life of an untouchable stands for the saga of tribulations due to the caste discrimination.

INTRODUCTION:

The caste system has its roots in the ancient History of Indian civilization. The age old four fold Varna system i.e., Chaturvarnya with the basis of Hindu Dharmashatra, Puranas, Upanishad etc. gave rise to the caste system before 300 years B.C. The Karma theory and the theory of the creation of the universe i.e. the omnipresent God Brahma has created the Universe and rebirth theory from Hindu religion supported the caste system and made it legal and authentic in the society. The Four Varnas Brahmin, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras were assigned different duties to perform for the smooth running of the society and as per the nature and hierarchy in the duties they were given 'Place' in the society. The Brahmins were holy men of the god asked to perform duties related to the religion, God, education and sacred activities in the society. The Kshatriyas being warriors were the guardians and rulers of the society. The Vaishyas were merchants and traders busy with agricultural duties also. The last group the Shudras were asked to perform the duties which were the lowest in nature such as to clean the society, to remove dirt, to obey the upper caste people etc. The lower kind of manual work and eating of the flesh of dead animal made Shudras 'Untouchable' and kept them away from the main flow of the society. Untouchables were never given right to education so the ignorance, and so called concepts of purity-pollution, forced them to live in the wretched conditions. With educational and social reforms in India in the 18th century, there was transformation in the place and position of an untouchable community. The well-educated generation from this community tried to write about their sufferings and tribulations and thus used literature as a means to protest the established inhuman caste system.

Mulk Raj Anand did not belong to the lower caste group but successfully and empathetically brings about the sufferings and tribulations of an untouchable Bakha. Bakha suffers a lot for being a member of an untouchable community. We observe him as a strong and intellectual fellow busy in his duties