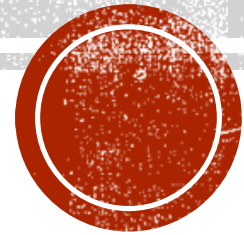


# BA ENGLISH II SEMESTER

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH-I

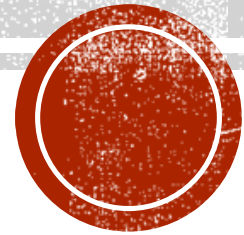
UNIT IV

SPOORTHI C S ASST PROFESSOR, JSSCACS, MYSURU-25



# UNTOUCHABLE

NOVEL BY MULK RAJ ANAND



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Born: 12 December, 1905, Peshawar
- Died : 28 September 2004, Pune
- Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society
- One of the pioneer of Indo Anglo Fiction
- His writing career begun in England, where he used to publish short reviews in T S Eliot's magazine 'Criterion'
- He won The Sahitaya Academy Award for his novel *The Morning Face* – in 1968
- He was honoured with Padma Bhusan, Indian's third last civilian award in 1967 for his vast contributions towards the field of literature and education.



- He was famous for incorporating Punjabi and Hindustani idioms into English
- He has written more than a dozen novels, about seventy short stories and number of essays and articles.
- During 1930's and 1940's he was active in politics and spoke regularly at the meetings of Indian League which was founded by Krishna Menon
- In 1950, he married Shirin Vajibdar, a classical dancer
- He was associated with communism, used to attack various elements of British rule in India.

- Mulk Raj Anand's novels

1. *Untouchable-1935*
2. *Coolie-1936*
3. *Two Leaves and a bud-1937*
4. *The Village-1939*
5. *Across the black waters-1940*
6. *The Sward and the Sickle-1942*



# CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL

1. Bakha, son of Lakha. Protagonist of the novel, who is 18 year old sweeper.
2. Chota, Bakha's best friend. He is son of a leather-worker.
3. Ram Charan, Bakha's best friend. He is son of a washer
4. Lakha, Bhaka's father. A lazy abusive man.
5. Rakha, Bakha's younger sister.
6. Sohini, Bhaka's younger sister, she is nubile and beautiful.
7. Havildar charat singh, famous hockey player. He is one of Bakha's heroes.
8. Ali, son of regimental bandsman
9. Ramanand, Bhaka's neighbour.
10. Gulabo, Ramcharan's mother, a washer women.
11. Mahatma Gandhi

## Other minor characters

1. Pundit Kali Nath
2. Waziro
3. Lachman
4. Hakim Bhagawan Das
5. Ramcharan's sister
6. Colonel Hutchinson
7. Mary Hutchinson
8. Miraben Slade
9. R.N.Bashir



# SUMMARY

- As the novel begins, Bakha is reporting for another day of latrine cleaning at the behest of his father, an ill-tempered bully named Lakha. While cleaning the latrine of a famous street hockey player named Charat Singh, the man invites Bakha to visit him later in the day. He promises to give Bakha a hockey stick as a gift.
- When Bakha comes home, his sister Sohini leaves to get water for them. She travels to the communal well. However, the Untouchables are not able to dip their own water—the upper caste Hindus believe that the touch of an undercaste will pollute the well, which would then have to be subjected to lengthy and expensive purification rituals. A priest named Kali Nath arrives and, taken with Sohini's beauty, agrees to pour water for her. He then invites her to the temple courtyard later in the day so that she can clean it.
- Bakha moves through the streets, sweeping. He accidentally brushes up against a Brahmin Hindu, who begins to shout that he has been polluted by Bakha. The man shouts at Bakha as a mob gathers, joining in the insults. The man slaps Bakha before a Muslim cart driver breaks up the fight and disperses the mob. The Muslim man does not care about the Hindu castes, since he is also treated as an Untouchable.



- Bakha goes to the temple and looks inside, which is forbidden to him. But before he is caught, Sohini appears, crying. The priest who invited her to clean the temple is there, accusing her of polluting him with her touch. Sohini claimed that he sexually assaulted her by grabbing her breasts while she was cleaning the lavatory. It was only when she rejected him that he began shouting that she had touched him. Bakha tells her to go home and says he will take responsibility for gathering food.
- He spends the rest of the afternoon begging for food, all while being subjected to various indignities and cruelties from the upper caste Hindus. He is increasingly disgusted with the mistreatment he suffers, and when he gets home he tells his father the story about the man who hit him. His father insists that the upper Hindus are good and kind, and reminds Bakha that when he was an infant, a Hindu doctor came to their home and saved Bakha's life when he had a fever.
- Bakha attends the wedding of the sister of one of his friends. After he tells two of his friends the story of the man hitting him, one of them proposes that they take revenge on the man. Bakha considers it, but he understands that he will only get himself and his family in trouble if he retaliates. The Untouchables have no recourse for justice.



- After collecting his hockey stick from Charat Singh, Bakha joins a game of street hockey. During the game, a fight begins and the two teams throw rocks at each other. One of the rocks hits a little boy in the head. Bakha picks him up and carries him to his mother, who recognizes him as a street sweeper. Even though he is trying to help she screams that he has polluted her son.
- At home, Bakha's father is furious that Bakha has been away all afternoon. He kicks Bakha out of the house. Bakha makes his way to a train station where he hears a rumor that Mahatma Gandhi is coming there to give a speech. Bakha stays until Gandhi arrives. Gandhi's speech condemns the caste system and urges the people to follow his example of non-violent protest. Bakha is enthused by the speech, but does not know enough to determine whether Gandhi's suggestions are naïve.
- After the speech, Bakha overhears two educated men, a poet and a lawyer, debating the merits of Gandhi's speech. The lawyer believes that Gandhi's aims are childish and irrational. Longstanding traditions are rarely overturned, and he believes that the caste system will endure despite protests for reform. The poet believes that the barbarism of the caste system will be eliminated, particularly in light of the fact that the flushing toilet is rumored to be coming to their town. Once the people have flushing toilets, there will be no need for the Untouchables to dispose of the town's refuse, which would require a rethinking of their role and duty to society.





# THEMES

- Inequality
- Religion
- Class struggle and caste struggle
- Cyclical oppression
- Charity( depending on charity of higher castes)
- Rejection of Indian roots
- You are what you wear
- Alienation



# Symbols

1. Clothing – “you are what you wear”
2. Tools – the relationship between the worker, the product of his labour and tools he uses all symbolize many things in novel
3. Violent language – language symbolize stand-in-real-life tactile violence
4. Hockey stick – stick represents charity and generosity

# Motifs

1. Escapism – desire to escape from harsh realities
2. Language – used to bring comedic yet ironic effects in the novel.

