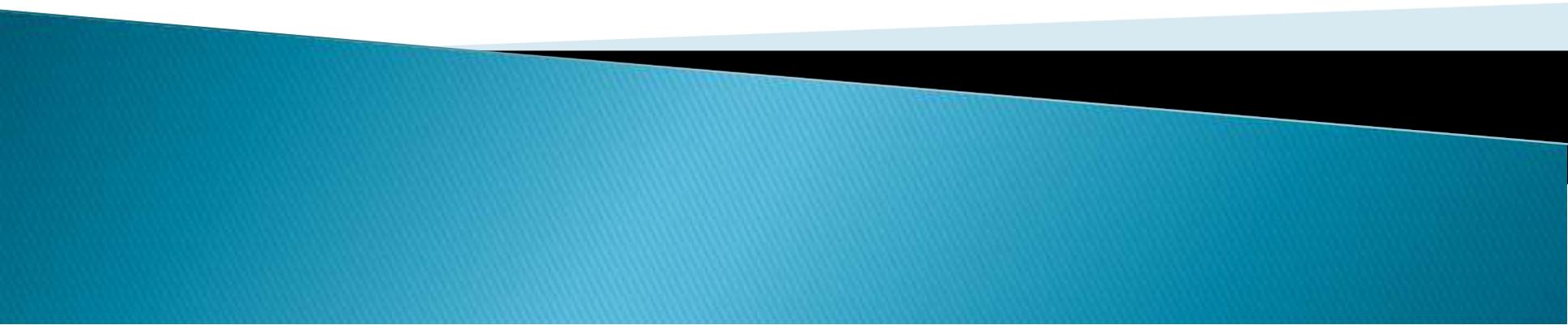


# VAISHALI MAHILA MAHAVIDYALAYA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
Takes you to-



# UNTOUCHABLE

## Mulk Raj Anand

<b>Born</b>	12 December 1950, Peshawar, Pakistan
<b>Died</b>	28 september 2004, Jahangir Hospital, Pune, Maharashtra, India
<b>Occupation</b>	
<b>Language</b>	Indo English
<b>Nationality</b>	Indian



Alma mater

University of Cambridge  
1929, University  
College London, Khalsa  
College

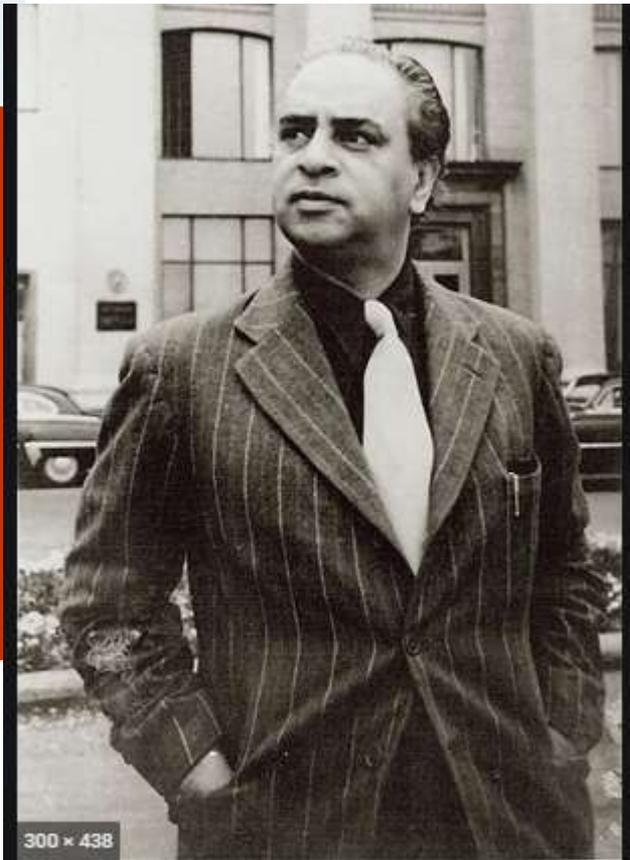
Period

Literary movement

Progressive Writers'  
Movement

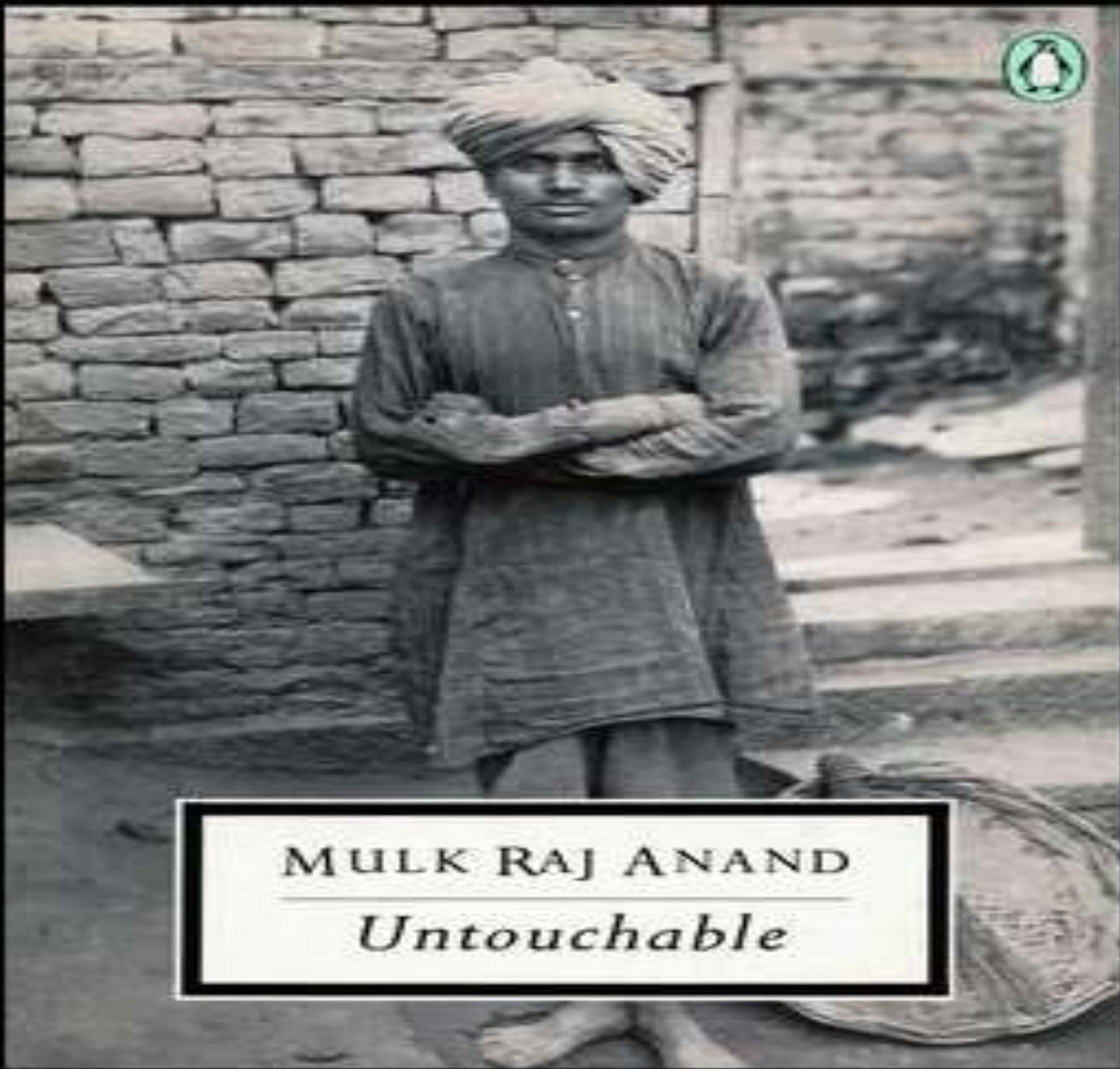
Notable works

The Private Life of an Indian  
Prince (1953)  
Sickle (1942),  
*The Village* (1939),  
*Across the Black  
Waters* (1939),  
Coolie (1936),  
Untouchable (1935)



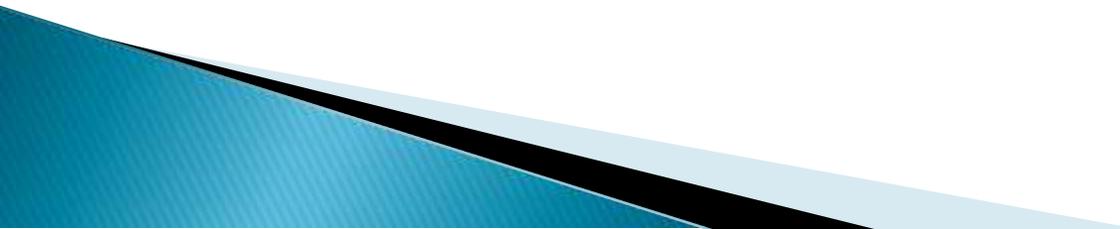
# Publication

The book was first published in 1935. Later editions carried a foreword written by E. M. Forster.[2] In 2004, a commemorative edition including this book was launched by Indian then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

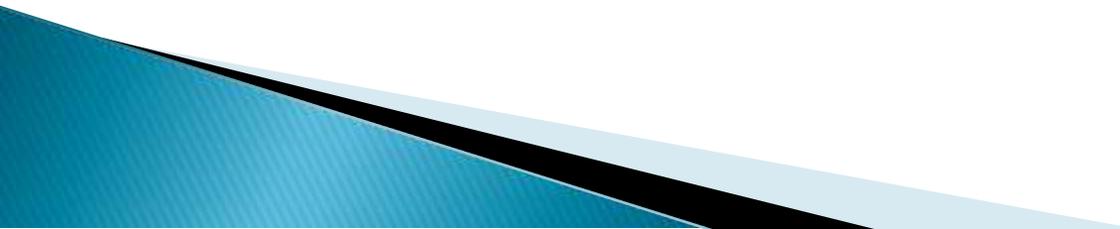


MULK RAJ ANAND  
*Untouchable*

# Untouchable Characters

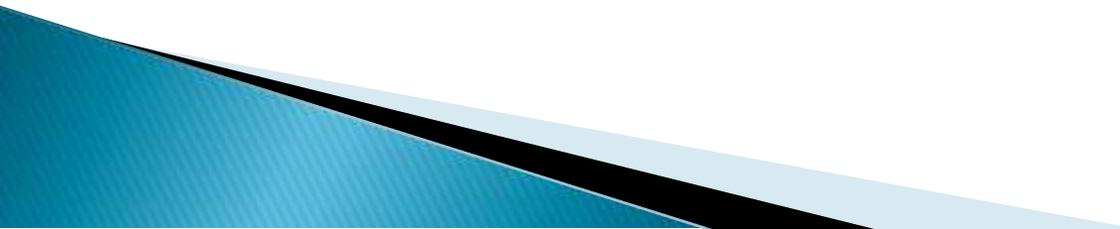
- Bhaka
  - Chota
  - Ramcharan
  - Lakha, jemdar of sweepers
  - Rakha
  - Sohini
  - Havildar Charat Singh
  - Ali
- 

# Summary

- ▶ Untouchable is a novel written by Muk Raj Anand. Published in 1935, it charts the path of one day in the life of a young man named Bakha. Bakha is a member of the Untouchables, a designation for people so far below even the lowest caste in Indian society that they are considered outside of the system. His job is to sweep streets and latrines for the upper class, who are forbidden from cleaning or touching human waste. Because he was born as an Untouchable, this will be Bakha's job for his entire life, unless there are reforms in India. The entire novel takes place on one day of Bakha's life, a day in which his tolerance for the mistreatment endured by the lower castes begins to erode.
- 

## Plot 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.

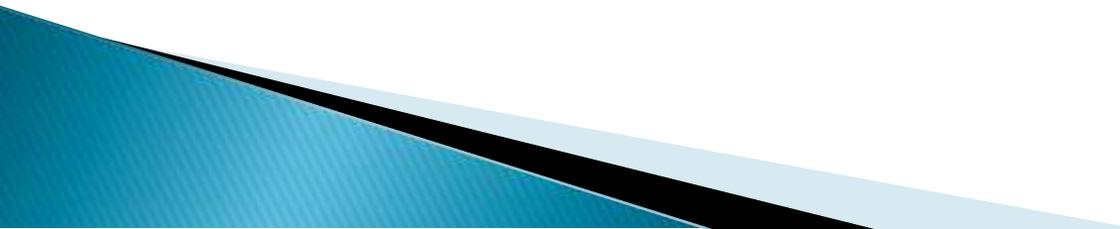
Bakha attends the wedding of the sister of one of his friends. After he tells two of his friends the story of the man hitting him, one of them proposes that they take revenge on the man. Bakha considers it, but he understands that he will only get himself and his family in trouble if he retaliates. The 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.

The author's experience as an Indian, and the fact that *Untouchable* was written while the caste system was firmly in place, give the novel an authenticity and accuracy that make it easy to empathize with Bakha and his family. *Untouchable* is a unique opportunity for readers to experience the plight of the victims of the caste system. At the same time, the story identifies the complexities of Indian identity after the Great War as India emerges from postcolonialism to globalism.



HOPE YOU  
UNDERSTOOD AND  
ENJOYED

THANK YOU