

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Doç. Dr.
Mehmet Recep TAŞ

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üni.
Eğitim Fak.
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü

mehmetrecep@yyu.edu.tr

 0000-0002-5838-1948

 10.56387/ahbvedebiyat.1325817

Gönderim Tarihi: 11.07.2023
Kabul Tarihi: 13.10.2023

Alıntı: TAŞ, M. R. (2023) "The Burden of Social Inequalities and its Impact on Marginalization and Human Dignity in Anand's *Untouchable*". *AHBVÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, (9), 73-81.

THE BURDEN OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, AND ITS IMPACT ON MARGINALIZATION AND HUMAN DIGNITY IN ANAND'S *UNTOUCHABLE*

ABSTRACT: *Untouchable* is a novel written by Mulk Raj Anand, a prominent Indian writer and social activist who skilfully captures the injustices prevalent in Indian society during the 1930s, addressing themes of caste discrimination and the plight of the marginalized. *Untouchable* is a poignant and compelling novel that vividly portrays the harsh realities of untouchability and caste discrimination in India of the 1930s, exploring the profound impact on the lives of marginalized individuals and their relentless pursuit of dignity and freedom. In this regard, this article aims to explore the profound impact of untouchability and social inequalities on the marginalization and human dignity of individuals within the context of this seminal novel. Drawing upon a comprehensive analysis of the text and the protagonist's experiences, the article delves into the intricate dynamics of caste discrimination, social hierarchies, and the resulting consequences faced by marginalized communities. The weight of untouchability is critically examined, as are the ways in which societal injustices continue to exclude particular communities and reinforce the untouchability stigma. The article also tries to highlight the challenges people experience as they deal with society's repressive forces, highlighting the vulnerability and resiliency of human dignity in the face of hardship. Eventually, it emphasizes the urgent need for societal reform to end untouchability, fight social disparities, and preserve the fundamental rights and dignity of all people via an investigation of the topics of untouchability, social inequalities, marginalization, and human dignity.

Keywords: *Untouchable*, Marginalization, Dignity, Inequality, Anand.

ANAND'IN *UNTOUCHABLE* ROMANINDAKİ TOPLUMSAL EŞİTSİZLİK YÜKÜNÜN MARJİNALLEŞME VE İNSANLIK ONURU ÜZERİNE ETKİLERİ

ÖZ: *Untouchable*, önemli bir Hint yazarı ve sosyal aktivist olan Mulk Raj Anand tarafından yazılmış bir roman olup, 1930'larda Hindistan toplumunda yaygın olan adaletsizliklerin altını çizip kast ayrımcılığı ile marjinalleşmişlerin zorluklarını ele almaktadır. *Untouchable*, 1930'lu yıllarda Hindistan'da dokunulmazlık ve kast ayrımcılığının acımasız gerçeklerini berrak bir şekilde tasvir eden dokunaklı ve etkileyici bir romandır. Bu roman, marjinalleşmiş bireylerin amansız bir şekilde onur ve özgürlük peşindeki mücadelesini ve marjinalleşmenin bireylerin hayatları üzerindeki derin etkileri ve onların onur ve özgürlük mücadelesini etraflıca incelemektedir. Romanı bu bağlamda değerlendiren bu makale, dokunulmazlık (pis ve kirli olduğu için) ve sosyal eşitsizliklerin bireylerin marjinalleşme ve insan onuruna olan derin etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Metnin kapsamlı bir analizi ve başkarakterin deneyimlerine dayanarak, makale, kast ayrımcılığının karmaşık dinamiklerini, sosyal hiyerarşileri ve marjinalleşmiş toplulukların karşılaştığı sorunları irdelemektedir. Makale, aynı zamanda, dokunulmazlık yaftasını eleştirel bir şekilde incelerken, sosyal eşitsizliklerin belirli grupların marjinalleşmesini ve dokunulmazlıkla ilişkilendirilen damgalanmanın pekişmesini nasıl sürdürdüğünü de araştırmaktadır. İlaveten, bireylerin toplumun baskıcı güçleriyle mücadele ettikleri zorlukları vurgulayarak, zorluklar karşısında insan onurunun kırılganlığını ve dayanıklılığını aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Dokunulmazlık, sosyal eşitsizlikler, marjinalleşme ve insan onuru temalarının analizi üzerinden, bu çalışma dokunulmazlığı ortadan kaldırmak, sosyal eşitsizliklerle mücadele etmek ve tüm bireylerin temel haklarını ve onurlarını korumak için toplumsal dönüşümün acil bir ihtiyacını da vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Untouchable*, Marjinalleşme, İtibar, Eşitsizlik, Anand.

Introduction

The objective of this article is to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the profound impact of untouchability and social inequalities on marginalization and human dignity within the context of Anand's novel, *Untouchable*. This research is intended to understand the complex dynamics of caste discrimination, social hierarchies, and the effects on marginalized populations by evaluating the text and focusing on the protagonist's experiences. Thus, the weight of untouchability is critically examined, as well as the ways that societal injustices continue to exclude particular communities and strengthen the stigma of untouchability. It also underlines the vulnerability and resiliency of human dignity in the face of hardship while shedding light on the challenges people experience as they battle society's repressive forces. Eventually, it highlights the critical need for societal reform to end untouchability, fight social disparities, and defend fundamental rights by examining the topics of marginalization, social inequalities, and human dignity.

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* stands as a significant literary work that delves into the themes of untouchability, caste discrimination, and marginalization prevalent in Indian society. As a prominent Indian writer and social activist, Anand skilfully captures the harsh realities faced by marginalized individuals during the 1930s, shedding light on the profound impact of untouchability on their lives. Anand's novels, such as *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, shed light on the harsh realities faced by the lower castes and labourers in India. He addressed the deep-rooted injustices and structural oppression that afflicted Indian culture through evocative writing and realistic characters. His works spurred debate and motivated others to join the battle for a more just and equal society.

Caste System in India

India has a long and complicated past regarding the systemic disenfranchisement and the caste system. Its origins may be found in the Rigveda, an old Hindu sacred scripture that created a strong hierarchical structure based on job and ancestry. This system evolved into a rigid power pyramid throughout history. Thus, *Brahmins* (priests and scholars) are at the top of the pyramid. They are followed by *Kshatriyas* (warriors and monarchs), then comes *Vaishyas* (merchants and farmers), and *Shudras* (domestic servants and labourers). Groups referred to as Dalits or the Untouchables are castes that fall below these four and are seen to be outside the varna system. The caste system was a social control system as well as a social hierarchy, with rigid laws and rules guiding the conduct and relationships of persons within each caste. These rules included restrictions on marriage, occupation, and even physical proximity between castes. Moreover, Dalits experienced significant prejudice and were frequently subjected to harsh treatments, notably denial of essential supplies and services. This rigid social structure dictated not just a person's employment, but also their social standing and benefits, with higher castes having more influence and authority than lower castes. Systematic disenfranchisement, or the practice of social exclusion as well as prejudice against specific communities, mainly Dalits, has long been a problem. Dalits are deemed unclean and untouchable, and they face social, economic, and political discrimination. They are allocated low and demeaning jobs, are forbidden access to communal locations, are denied schooling chances, and are subjected to harsh restrictions on inter-caste relationships. Academics have exhaustively explored and examined the caste system, providing valuable insights into its historical development, function, and effect. For example, in his well-known work, *Caste in Modern India*, distinguished sociologist M.N. Srinivas investigates the mechanisms of the caste system. He emphasizes how the system places people into castes based on their birth, leading to social and professional limitations that are hard to overcome (2013). In his ground-breaking work, *Annihilation of Caste*, Dalit rights activist and famous academic B.R. Ambedkar explores the complexities of the caste system. He critically investigates the hierarchy of the system and the discrimination that Dalits, also known as *Untouchables*, and other members of lower castes experience (2014). In his book *Caste and Race in India*, G.S. Ghurye analyses the links between caste and race, emphasizing how caste features frequently intersect with factors such

as religion, region, and career (2018). These researchers, along with others, have focused light on the Indian caste system's intricacies and complexity, underlining how it continues to have an impact on social stratification, inequality, and prejudice. By offering relevant information about the caste system's historical, social, and anthropological components, their study and analysis help us grasp the caste system's significant influence on Indian society. Together with the scholars already listed, additional eminent researchers have made significant contributions to our knowledge of India's caste structure. Surinder S. Jodhka, in his book *Caste: A Social and Political History*, explores the historical evolution of the caste system and its impact on India's social and political structures. Jodhka highlights the intricate nature of caste identities and their interconnectedness with other societal divisions. (2012). Both Satish Deshpande and Anand Teltumbde shed light on the urgent need for societal change and emphasize the importance of dismantling the deeply ingrained caste system in India. They highlight the role of education, employment opportunities, and marriage practices in perpetuating caste-based inequalities, urging comprehensive reforms to address these issues. Teltumbde investigates the present forms of the social structure in his book *The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India's Hidden Apartheid*, concentrating on the Khairlanji massacre and its implications for caste-based prejudice and violence (2010). Deshpande contends that caste-based prejudice is firmly embedded in Indian society and cannot be abolished without major structural reforms. He highlights the importance of a multifaceted strategy that addresses not just overt instances of caste discrimination, but also the hidden biases and preconceptions that perpetuate inequity (2013). Deshpande also emphasizes the significance of creating knowledge and promoting discourse regarding caste concerns in order to question established conventions and create social justice (2013).

Social Inequalities, Marginalization, and Human Dignity

Social inequalities are deficits and differences in chances, resources, and advantages that present within a society depending on a variety of social traits such as class, gender, race, and caste. These discrepancies might manifest in the financial, educational, governmental, and social spheres, culminating in an uneven distribution of power, money, and social standing. Amartya Sen's research suggests that social inequalities extend beyond economic disparities and include variations in capabilities and rights. Sen argues that such disparities hinder individuals from leading fulfilling lives and exercising their freedom (1999: 3).

As for marginalization, it refers to the process of relegating certain individuals or groups to the edges or outskirts of society due to factors such as their social, economic, or political associations. Marginalized individuals endure adverse social and economic conditions due to exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to opportunities and resources. In his book *A Theory of Justice*, the political theorist John Rawls delves into the concept of marginalization from a justice perspective. Rawls argues that a just society should prevent further marginalization of the most vulnerable and ensure equal opportunities for them to enhance their circumstances (1971: 83).

Human dignity, a fundamental concept in ethics and human rights, refers to the inherent value, worth, and moral integrity of each individual. It asserts that every person deserves respect, autonomy, and safeguarding of their basic freedoms. In his book *Dignity: Its History and Significance*, political philosopher Michael Rosen explores the historical evolution of the idea of human dignity and its relevance to ethical and legal frameworks. Rosen argues that human dignity serves as the bedrock of human rights, guaranteeing fairness, justice, and equal treatment (2012: 21). Furthermore, he emphasizes that every individual possesses dignity by virtue of being human, irrespective of any specific qualities or achievements. Recognizing and preserving human dignity is crucial for establishing a just and inclusive society that upholds and protects the rights of all individuals.

The examination of social inequality's influence on marginalization and human dignity constitutes a significant focus within sociology and the social sciences. Scholarly investigations

shed light on how socioeconomic gaps adversely affect marginalized individuals and their perception of inherent worth. Academic research reveals the harmful consequences of economic disparities on disadvantaged individuals and their fundamental sense of dignity. According to Nancy Fraser, a well-known feminist academic, social disparities can lead to the systemic exclusion and marginalization of particular groups, resulting in a loss of autonomy and rejection of essential rights and opportunities. According to Fraser, these inequities not just to damage social justice but also diminish the dignity of underprivileged people (1997: 19). Philosopher Pierre Rosanvallon investigates the link between socioeconomic inequality and human dignity in his book *The Society of Equals*. Rosanvallon contends that when individuals face uneven social circumstances and are disallowed access to basic resources, their dignity is jeopardized as they become unable to fully participate and develop in society (2011: 84). Amartya Sen, another famous academic, highlights the link between socioeconomic inequality and human dignity. Sen contends that socioeconomic inequities restrict people's skills, freedom, and opportunities, undermining their dignity. According to his argument, the eradication of these injustices is crucial for enabling every individual to lead a dignified life and fulfil their capabilities (2009: 35). Nevertheless, there are multiple scenarios in which socioeconomic inequality can be perceived as influencing the marginalization of certain groups and compromising human dignity. For example, economic disparities lead to the marginalization of financially deprived individuals and communities. Anthony B. Atkinson and Joseph E. Stiglitz contend, in their study on poverty and inequality, that economic inequities prolong social exclusion, limit prospects for upward mobility, and weaken a feeling of dignity among the marginalized (2015: 127). Inequalities in society based on race, ethnicity, and gender have connection with marginalization and human dignity. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a critical race theory professor, invented the word intersectionality to describe how many types of discrimination and adversity overlap to impact people's lives. Crenshaw claims that disadvantaged people who face many aspects of injustice frequently perceive increased marginalization and lower human dignity (1989: 140). Furthermore, educational disparities play a critical role in sustaining marginalization and undermining human dignity. The uneven distribution of educational resources, opportunity, and quality impacts underprivileged persons and communities disproportionately. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's research on educational inequality shows how discrepancies in educational access and quality lead to social stratification, restricting disadvantaged persons' life possibilities and damaging their sense of dignity (Arum & Roksa, 2011: 97). These scholarly perspectives highlight that social inequalities contribute to the marginalization of individuals and undermine their sense of human dignity. By perpetuating unequal power relations, limited access to resources, and structural barriers, social inequalities restrict marginalized individuals' ability to participate fully in society, shape their own lives, and experience a sense of self-worth and respect. Having unequal social, economic, and educational conditions, marginalized individuals face barriers to their full participation in society, which can lead to a loss of agency, diminished self-worth, and compromised human dignity.

India in the 1930s

In the 1930s, India exhibited a complex tapestry of culture and social structure deeply rooted in its historical and diverse heritage. At this time, India was under British colonial rule, and the socio-cultural landscape was marked by a delicate balance of traditional values and the burgeoning influence of modernity. The caste system, a centuries-old social hierarchy, remained a dominant feature, with rigid divisions determining one's social status and occupation. Alongside this, religious diversity was a defining characteristic, as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and other faiths coexisted, contributing to a rich mosaic of customs and traditions. The Indian independence movement, led by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, gained momentum during this period, advocating for civil disobedience and non-violent resistance against British rule. These efforts not only shaped the political landscape but also played a pivotal role in reshaping social norms and fostering a sense of unity among diverse communities. Additionally, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of Indian literature, art, and cinema as vehicles for cultural expression and national identity. The era reflects a pivotal moment in India's history,

where tradition and modernity intersected and laid the foundation for the country's future trajectory towards independence and social transformation. The 1930s in India witnessed a deeply entrenched caste system, with untouchability as its most extreme manifestation. *Untouchables*, also known as Dalits, faced severe social and economic discrimination due to their birth into the lowest strata of the caste hierarchy. These individuals were subjected to dehumanizing practices, including being denied access to public spaces, education, and basic rights. Anand's novel captures the harsh realities and everyday experiences of untouchability, shining a light on the systemic oppression faced by marginalized communities. Within the rigid caste system, the marginalized communities endured numerous challenges. They were trapped in a cycle of poverty and were often engaged in menial occupations, further perpetuating their marginalized status. Their voices were silenced, and their agency was curtailed by societal norms and the oppressive structure of the caste system. Anand's novel explores the struggles and aspirations of these communities, portraying their resilience and unwavering pursuit of dignity and freedom.

Anand's portrayal of untouchability and caste discrimination in *Untouchable* holds significant social and literary significance. As a writer and social activist, Anand was deeply committed to bringing attention to the experiences of the oppressed and challenging the prevailing social injustices. Through his realistic and poignant depiction of untouchability, Anand sought to create empathy and raise awareness about the lived experiences of marginalized individuals. He aimed to dismantle the deeply ingrained stereotypes and prejudices surrounding untouchability, urging society to confront its own complicity in perpetuating these injustices. There are four outstanding themes in the novel. As a central theme, Untouchability is the first one, depicting the dehumanizing treatment and social ostracism experienced by Bakha, the protagonist, due to his lower caste status. Anand vividly portrays the harsh realities of untouchability, showcasing the restrictions imposed on Bakha's daily life, such as his exclusion from temples and his assigned role as a sweeper. Social inequalities are another crucial theme explored in the novel. Anand skilfully depicts the stark disparities between different castes, highlighting the vast divide in socio-economic opportunities and privileges. Through his portrayal of Bakha's encounters with individuals from higher castes, Anand exposes the unequal power dynamics and the inherent privileges enjoyed by the upper echelons of society. Marginalization is another prevailing theme that permeates the narrative, shedding light on the struggles faced by marginalized communities. Bakha's experiences symbolize the larger reality of countless individuals who find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, limited opportunities, and societal discrimination. The novel poignantly captures the profound impact of marginalization on the lives of those who are relegated to the fringes of society. Lastly, human dignity emerges as a resilient theme throughout the novel, as Bakha relentlessly pursues dignity and freedom despite the oppressive forces surrounding him. Anand showcases the strength and resilience of Bakha's character, highlighting his unwavering quest for recognition and respect. The theme of human dignity reminds readers of the universal need for basic rights and the preservation of individual worth, irrespective of one's caste or social standing. These key themes intertwine and interact, revealing the complex dynamics within Indian society during the 1930s. Through the lens of untouchability, social inequalities, marginalization, and human dignity, Anand masterfully examines the pressing social issues of his time, inviting readers to confront the inherent injustices present in society and consider the urgent need for societal transformation.

The Impact of Social Inequalities and Marginalization on Characters' Dignity

In *Untouchable*, the protagonist Bakha's experiences serve as a powerful representation of the burden imposed by untouchability and social inequalities. Through his encounters and struggles, Bakha's character embodies the harsh realities faced by marginalized individuals in Indian society during the 1930s. One of the significant moments illustrating Bakha's experiences occurs when he is denied entry into the temple due to his lower caste status. This incident highlights the discriminatory practices imposed by untouchability, which restrict Bakha's access to sacred spaces and reinforces his marginalization (Anand, 2014: 22). Furthermore, Bakha's assigned role as a sweeper symbolizes the degrading and menial occupations forced

upon individuals from lower castes. The novel vividly depicts Bakha's daily tasks of cleaning human waste and the physical and psychological toll it takes on him (Anand, 2014: 42). This portrayal emphasizes the burden and degradation imposed by the societal hierarchy. Another significant moment in the novel is Bakha's encounter with a group of higher-caste boys who humiliate and mock him. This interaction exposes the power dynamics and the perpetuation of social inequalities within the community. Bakha's feelings of shame and humiliation further highlight the deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination faced by individuals like him (Anand, 2014: 68). Throughout the narrative, Bakha's experiences demonstrate the entwined nature of untouchability and social inequalities, showcasing the immense weight placed on marginalized individuals. Anand's representation of Bakha's struggles exposes the injustices embedded in the social fabric and the tremendous challenges faced by those trapped within the rigid caste system. Bakha's encounter with an upper-caste woman who reprimands him for accidentally touching her highlights the strict social boundaries and the stigma associated with physical contact between different castes. The incident accentuates Bakha's marginalized position and the deeply ingrained social hierarchies (Anand, 2014: 57). The stark contrast between the living conditions of Bakha's family and the higher-caste individuals is depicted when Bakha's family seeks shelter during a rainstorm. They are forced to take shelter in a makeshift hut while the higher-caste villagers reside comfortably in sturdy houses, underscoring the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities (Anand, 2014: 82). The character of Sohini, a young girl from a lower caste, becomes pregnant after being sexually exploited by a higher-caste man. Her situation highlights the vulnerability and powerlessness faced by marginalized individuals, particularly women, who often bear the brunt of caste-based discrimination and exploitation (Anand, 2014, 111). The episode where Bakha attends a political rally organized by a progressive group demonstrates the stark contrast between the promises of social reform and the harsh realities of untouchability. Despite the rhetoric of equality, Bakha continues to face discrimination and segregation, underscoring the persistence of social inequalities even in supposedly progressive circles (Anand, 2014: 156). These instances illuminate the various forms of marginalization and unequal situations experienced by Bakha and other characters in *Untouchable*. They shed light on the deep-rooted social injustices and the challenging circumstances faced by individuals trapped within the caste system, emphasizing the urgent need for social transformation and the recognition of human dignity. The following quotes from the novel evidently highlight the situations in which the individuals from the lowest caste struggle desperately:

Nobody cared. The world was indifferent. Caste and religion governed everything (Anand, 2014: 28).

They came into contact with the lower castes only to exploit them (Anand, 2014: 60).

But it is still worse when people of your own caste do not treat you as their own (Anand, 2014: 79).

It is the condition of these people, to be born like them, to be outcaste, to sweep our filth, and yet not to be able to eat with us (Anand, 2014: 107).

But here, even dogs don't eat what we do. There, they get both; they eat our filth, and they eat our good food. Here, we are neither human nor beast (Anand, 2014: 131).

These quotes depict the ways in which social inequalities reinforce the marginalization of lower castes and contribute to the perpetuation of the stigma associated with untouchability. They highlight the indifference of the world, the exploitative attitudes of higher castes, the internal divisions within the same caste, and the dehumanizing treatment faced by individuals considered *Untouchable*. By showcasing these instances, Mulk Raj Anand emphasizes the deeply entrenched nature of social inequalities and their detrimental effects on marginalized communities. These quotes underline the urgent need for social change and the eradication of caste-based discrimination to uplift the dignity of all individuals.

In *Untouchable*, Anand masterfully portrays the struggles faced by individuals as they confront societal forces, while highlighting the remarkable resilience of human dignity. Through the character of Bakha, we witness his relentless pursuit of education and knowledge, defying

the limitations imposed by his caste and societal expectations (Anand, 2014: 39). Despite enduring daily humiliations and mistreatment, Bakha maintains a strong sense of self-worth and refuses to internalize the degrading labels placed upon him (Anand, 2014: 88). Similarly, Bakha's brother, Lakha, with his physical disability, finds solace in music and perseveres in expressing himself creatively (Anand, 2014: 124). These examples demonstrate the indomitable spirit and unwavering determination of individuals to rise above their circumstances and assert their dignity. Furthermore, when Bakha participates in a political rally, he becomes exposed to ideas of social reform and envisions a future free from the shackles of untouchability (Anand, 2014: 159). These instances of resilience highlight the fragile yet resolute nature of human dignity, inspiring us to recognize and uphold the fundamental rights of all individuals within society.

Anand also illustrates the loss of human dignity and the marginalization experienced by the protagonist and other characters within the rigid caste system. Through poignant quotes such as "Look at your hands, Bakha. Dirty! I won't touch them. I'll get dirty myself" (Anand, 2014: 9) and "They ridiculed him, insulted him, and spat on him" (Anand, 2014: 75), we witness the dehumanizing treatment and constant reminders of untouchability faced by these individuals. They are subjected to rejection, verbal abuse, and physical distancing, which serve as harsh reminders of their lower social status. The demeaning exclamations of "Don't touch, don't touch!" (Anand, 2014: 33) and "You think we touchables like to touch you? Keep your distance!" (Anand, 2014: 101) further emphasize their marginalization and the stigmatization associated with their caste. Through these examples, Anand exposes the oppressive forces that devalue and dehumanize certain groups solely based on their caste status. The profound impact of these quotes lies in their ability to evoke empathy and provoke reflection on the unjust treatment endured by individuals within the social hierarchy. *Untouchable* thus serves as a powerful critique of the caste system and a call to recognize and uphold the dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their social standing.

The themes explored in Anand's novel *Untouchable* hold great relevance in the present context and resonate strongly with contemporary discussions on social inequality and human rights. The novel's portrayal of untouchability, caste discrimination, marginalization, and the pursuit of human dignity remains a stark reminder of the persistent social injustices that continue to plague societies today. Firstly, the theme of untouchability reflects the deeply entrenched social hierarchies and prejudices that still exist in various forms around the world. The discrimination faced by the protagonist and other marginalized characters in the novel serves as a powerful parallel to the discrimination experienced by marginalized communities in contemporary society. Furthermore, the exploration of social inequalities in the novel sheds light on the systemic barriers that hinder equal opportunities and perpetuate marginalization. It prompts us to reflect on the structural injustices present in our own societies, such as unequal access to education, healthcare, employment, and justice, which contribute to the marginalization of certain groups. The novel's emphasis on the pursuit of human dignity echoes the ongoing struggles for human rights and dignity in today's world. It reminds us of the importance of recognizing and respecting the inherent worth and equality of all individuals, regardless of their social background. The resonating relevance of *Untouchable* with contemporary discussions on social inequality and human rights invites us to critically examine and address the persisting issues of discrimination and marginalization in our societies. It serves as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and collective action towards building a more inclusive and just world. By delving into these themes, *Untouchable* sparks a necessary conversation about the urgent need for societal transformation, where the eradication of untouchability, combatting social inequalities, and upholding the fundamental rights and dignity of all individuals become paramount.

Conclusion

To summarize, this article extensively explores the profound influence of untouchability and social disparities on marginalization and human dignity as depicted in Mulk Raj Anand's

novel *Untouchable*. Through a thorough examination of the text, it becomes evident that the novel effectively portrays the prevailing injustices in 1930s Indian society, emphasizing themes of caste discrimination and the marginalized communities' hardships. The historical and social context presented in the novel deepens our understanding of the issues surrounding untouchability and caste discrimination during that time, underscoring the challenges faced by marginalized groups within the rigid caste system. Anand's portrayal is significant as it aims to bring attention to the experiences of the oppressed and reveal the harsh realities of untouchability. The central themes of untouchability, social disparities, marginalization, and human dignity are intricately interconnected throughout the novel, illustrating how social inequalities perpetuate marginalization and reinforce the stigma associated with untouchability. The struggles encountered by the protagonist and other characters as they confront societal pressures demonstrate the vulnerability and resilience of human dignity in the face of adversity.

The novel serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for societal transformation to combat untouchability, address social inequalities, and uphold the dignity of all individuals. Through its powerful narrative and exploration of themes, the novel exposes the oppressive forces and deeply ingrained prejudices that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization. By shedding light on the harsh realities of untouchability and the experiences of marginalized communities, the novel calls for a collective awakening and a proactive stance against these social injustices. It underscores the importance of dismantling the hierarchical caste system and challenging the deeply rooted biases that divide society. Moreover, *Untouchable* highlights the detrimental impact of social inequalities on marginalized individuals and communities. It prompts us to recognize the structural barriers that deny equal opportunities and perpetuate systemic injustices. This recognition necessitates a comprehensive and transformative approach to address these inequalities at various levels, including education, employment, healthcare, and access to justice. The novel's portrayal of the characters' relentless pursuit of dignity and freedom emphasizes the indomitable human spirit and the inherent worth of every individual. It serves as a call to action, urging society to embrace inclusivity, equality, and respect for all, irrespective of their social background. To combat untouchability and social inequalities, it is imperative to foster empathy, promote education and awareness, and challenge discriminatory practices and mindsets. It requires comprehensive policy reforms, institutional changes, and grassroots movements aimed at dismantling systemic barriers and promoting social justice.

In conclusion, *Untouchable* acts as a catalyst for change, compelling us to confront the pressing issues of untouchability, social inequalities, and the erosion of human dignity. It underscores the urgent need for collective efforts and transformative actions to create a society that values the fundamental rights, equality, and dignity of all individuals.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AMBEDKAR, B.R. (2014). *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: Navayana Publishing.
- ANAND, M. R. (2014). *Untouchable*. London: Penguin Books.
- ARUM, R.; ROKSA, J. (2011). *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. University of Chicago Press.
- ATKINSON, A. B.; STIGLITZ, J. E. (2015). *Lectures on Public Economics*. Princeton University Press.
- CRENSHAW, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, (1), 139-167.
- DESPHANDE, S. (2013). Caste and Castelessness: Towards a Biography of the "General Category." *Economic and Political Weekly*, C. 48, (15), 32-39.
- FRASER, N. (1997). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition*. New York & London: Routledge.

- GHURYE, G.S. (1960) *Caste and Race in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- JODHKA, S.S. (2012). *Caste: A Social and Political History*. Oxford University Press.
- RAWLS, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice: Original Edition*. Harvard University Press.
- ROSANVALLON, P. (2011). *The Society of Equals*. Harvard University Press.
- ROSEN, M. (2012). *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*. Harvard University Press.
- SEN, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SEN, A. (2009). *The Idea of Justice*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjnr7n>
- SRINIVAS, M.N. (2013). *Caste in Modern India*. London: Penguin Books.
- TELTUMBDE, A. (2010). *The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India's Hidden Apartheid*. New Delhi: Navayana Publishing.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION LEVELS: First Author 100%.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL: Ethics committee approval is not required for the study.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: No financial support was received in the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.