

THE THEMES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIETY STRUGGLES IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVELS -- "UNTOUCHABLE AND COOLIE"

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ABSTRACT:

All people have equal, unalienable, and eternal access to human rights. Without certain fundamental rights, people are unable to live honourably. Human rights violations involve treating a person as if they don't exist as a living, breathing person. One of the few eminent English-language authors from India who has established a reputation as a major novelist is Mulk Raj Anand. He still has the status of being an English-language Indian writer who is a mainstay in the industry. Perhaps no other writer has had as strong of an association with literary production, the arts, and the nation's cultural mainstream as Anand. Readers and admirers of his books and short stories can be found everywhere.

The disadvantaged segments of Indian society are a central theme in all of his works. The treatment of the underprivileged and marginalized segments of society is the recurring issue in his works that most impresses the reader. He is talking about man. This type of Anand's love of humanism, a belief in all-embracing humanity, his urgent and fundamental concerns as a writer, and his ardent, true sympathy for the oppressed parts is what constantly inspire and stimulate him to write continuously and prolifically. According to *Untouchable*, people who are in charge of civil society on the basis of religious doctrine and the political system are the only ones who have access to human rights. According to Hinduism, The aristocracy Hindus has the right to denigrate lesser castes. Are human rights a departure from the beginning of a process or a step towards the acceptance of equality and freedom for all people? Human rights can be seen as morally correct concepts or as a set of goals aimed at creating a better world. They primarily advance philosophical, legal, social, psychological, and political discourses. However, this essay's main focus is on the relationship between human rights and literature, particularly to one specific type of literary writing, the novel. The focus of this paper will be on Mulk Raj Anand's "*Untouchable*" and "*Coolie*" and how they elaborate on human rights.

Keywords:- Human rights, humanistic writing, Hinduism, violations of human rights, Untouchability, colonial system , upper castes, out castes, low castes, values and ethics ,caste differences

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are a serious topic for ongoing discussion among social scientists, academics, philosophers, intellectuals, and politicians in the post-globalization era. When this topic is at the forefront of literature, works about socially underprivileged, oppressed, and marginalised classes automatically gain a lot of significance. In today's world, human rights are nearly a religion. They serve as the primary moral barometer used to assess how well a government treats its citizens. In the 20th century, a broad consensus on language that defines judgement of nations against a global moral code that mandates certain advantages and treatment for all individuals merely because they are human has arisen.

Dalit literatures are more popular in India now as a result of Dalits' experiences with prejudice, violence, and poverty. All of their experiences up until this point have been muffled, frequently with the help of social and religious sanctions, and they have been labelled as non-literary and unfit for reading. All people hold human rights inalienably, universally, and permanently. Without certain fundamental principles, people cannot live in dignity. To treat someone as though they are not a human being is to violate their human rights. To support human rights is to call for the respect of everyone's human

dignity. Human rights have been an idea since the dawn of art. Being about life, art derives its nourishment from life and, as such, serves as both a manifestation of the arts and a carrier of social and human importance. This aesthetic concern initially appears in the investigation and postulation of human rights. Literature is possibly the form of art that best deals with and represents life in all of its dimensions. In this process, literature not only discusses human rights principles and their potential vicarious applications, but also opens the path for interdisciplinary readings of these two interconnected disciplines. These ostensibly dissimilar subjects interact with one another on theory, practise, and teaching levels. As literature and human rights become complementary disciplines, literary works can therefore be viewed as powerful and rich tools for relating to and studying the notions of human rights.

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

All people hold human rights inalienably, universally, and permanently. Human rights are universal; they apply to every human being on the planet equally. You have human rights because you are a member of the human family, not because you are a citizen of any particular nation. Therefore, both adults and children enjoy the same basic human rights. Human rights are unalienable; you cannot stop being a human being or lose these rights. No one has the right to take away another person's human rights because they are "less important" or "non-essential." Human rights are interconnected; taken as a whole, they create a framework that is complementary. For instance, your freedom of expression, social interaction, education, and even access to basic requirements all have an impact on your capacity to engage in local decision-making. Basic human requirements are reflected in human rights. They set forth fundamental norms without which people cannot live honourably.

Human rights violations involve treating the victim as though they weren't real people. Demanding that the human dignity of every person be maintained is what it means to support human rights. By claiming these rights, everyone also agrees to take on certain obligations, including the duty to uphold and defend the rights of others when those rights are violated or rejected. To fulfill these obligations, one must declare solidarity with all other people.

MULK RAJ ANAND

One of the few prolific Indian authors of novels of distinction in English is Mulk Raj Anand. He is the author of more than a dozen novels, nearly 70 short stories, and several essays and articles on a variety of topics. His books can be divided into two groups: social and autobiographical novels. He concentrated on the exploitation of the underprivileged class in Indian society and the agony, misery, and wretchedness of the poor. His recurring themes include religious hypocrisy, the feudal system, and the East-West encounter, the status of women in society, superstitions, poverty, hunger, and exploitation. His well-known novels include "Untouchable," "Coolie," "Two Leaves and a Bud," and "The Village," in addition to a large number of short tales.

He still enjoys the reputation of being a titan in the field of English-language writing by Indians. Perhaps no other writer has been as strongly and actively involved in the country's literary, artistic, and cultural mainstream as Anand. His books are read and respected everywhere in the world. The disadvantaged sectors of Indian society are a central theme in all of his works. His depiction of the repressed and oppressed social groups is the most recurring issue in his books that sticks out to readers. He is talking about man. This kind of Anand's love of humanism, a principle of all-embracing humanity, his immediate and ultimate concerns as a writer, and his ardent real sympathy for the disadvantaged sections that continually inspire and excite him to write continuously and prolifically.

UNTOUCHABLE

Mulk Raj Anand wrote the book UNTOUCHABLE in the 1930s, at a time when the Indian independence movement was at its height. The most important themes in Anand's art were his hate of imperialism and the hypocrisy of Indian rituals with their castes, habits, and conventions. He was aware of the severe suffering caused by poverty and degrading social and political conditions of the time. The main theme of Untouchable is exploitation; it discusses various exploitations, including social, economic, political, religious, and sexual exploitation. However, the source of all other forms of exploitation is social exploitation. Social exploitation is the term used to describe caste prejudice based on birth, which gives some castes an unwarranted advantage over other castes. Anand aims to reawaken society's

oppressed, repressed, and dehumanised classes. He believes that taking advantage of the proletariat has been a national sin that we have shared for millennia. They are pushed to a point where they will continue to descend and are unable to ascend. They feel subhuman because they have been forced into such a miserable existence. He desires to save them from the depths.

Human rights looked to only apply to those who are in charge of civil society in *Untouchable*, according to both the political system and religious interpretations. Hinduism forbids Hindus from touching sweepers or even touching something that has been touched by a sweeper. Examples include the confectioner throwing "jalebis" to Bakha in *Untouchable* and his assistant sprinkling water on the nickel coins Bakha had placed on the shoeboard. The social and religious structure of India at the time also contributes to the denial and abuse of human rights. Hindus of the high castes have the power to denigrate those of lower rank. They also lack the resources to construct a private well for themselves. They must therefore wait all day for any caste Hindus who might be so kind as to fill their pitchers with water. The sweeper is the lowest and most discriminated member of the working class, which has multiple levels. To the orthodox, the sweeper is a filthy thing who must announce his arrival in public spaces by shouting "sweepers coming." Among the low caste, washer men have the greatest caste degree, followed by leather men and sweepers.

In *Untouchable*, Gulabo believes she is superior to all outcasts "because she claimed a high place in hierarchy of the castes among low-caste," giving her the right to fill her pitcher before Sohini, Bakha's sister. Additionally, because of their social standing, Bakha and Chota dare to decline invitations to Gulabo's daughter's wedding. Instead, they observe the wedding festivities from a distance while they wait for their friend Ram Charan to bring them candy.

Additionally, due of the British colonial system, human rights are in conflict in this book. Only subjects living under colonial rule are free. Bakha rejects his own culture after making touch with the British, viewing them as "superior people," and protecting his new English clothes from "all base taint of Indianness." Any interaction with the coloniser distorts and makes the native culture obsolete. Bakha's father and uncle start spitting, which the Tommies would never do, because they feel humiliated of him.

The sufferings of Bakha's humiliation never stop. He merely wants a little bit of sympathy, but all he receives is hostility, abuse, segregation, and loneliness. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and Arnold both experience the fundamental loneliness of the contemporary man. Bakha feels abandoned rather than lonely as a modern man or a penitent sinner, similar to how Lear feels about himself as a father who has been abandoned. Similar to Hamlet, Bakha finds himself fighting a hypocritical, heartless society on his own. He struggles against his own suffering and anguish, much like Hamlet.

Social exploitation includes refusing outcasts an education. Bakha wants to be educated and wished he could attend school as a young child. The education would have caused them to rebel against injustice, which is the reason. For the exploiters, the ignorance of the exploited is a blessing. The sense of inferiority complex and meek acceptance of the rules of fate are the causes of the untouchables' obscene humility. They don't resent the high caste people or accuse them of exploiting them.

Despite having sympathy for the lower castes, Anand opposes their passive, apathetic acceptance of exploitation and does not hold it against them. He never fails to demonstrate social discrimination, especially against members of low castes. Many times, good-hearted people are unable to express their goodwill because of the inflexible system. When Lakha breaks the religious rules and touches Hakim's feet to ask him for his son's life, they do not pay attention to their conscience. The Hakim becomes enraged after being defiled by a bhangi, but when he realises how severe the situation is, he goes to Lakha's home and saves his child.

The abuse of Bakha's sister sexually is symbolic. In India's rural areas, molestation of untouchables by high caste landowners, lenders, and so-called custodians of religion is a widespread problem. They view the women from low castes as objects for their sex pleasure. Pundit Kali Nath insults Sohini for calling attention to his sexual assault and accuses her of defiling him. The people gathered there are aware of the truth, yet they allow the priest's lewd behaviour towards the untouchable girl because Brahmins are placed above them in the caste system. Even the humiliated teenage Sohini realises that the Pandit's attempt cannot be met with reprisal. Even her brother's futile rage is worthless.

They need to concede it. Anand has demonstrated that the outcasts are capable of retaliation through the temple incident, nevertheless. The throng scatters at the mere sight of Bakha moving forward with clenched fist. The identical instance also demonstrates the high caste exploiters' cowardice.

The goal of Anand's project is to strengthen human rights practises and broaden awareness of human rights. His work runs a campaign to raise public awareness. Through his fiction, he significantly advances human rights. This book features a lot of human rights themes. He further expresses the right to education through Bakha's decision to pay a boy an anna every class since he had long yearned to master reading and writing. He couldn't sit next to children of the high cast because of the cast system. Anand implies at the end of his endeavour that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment..." Bakha overhears a poet mention how the entire issue of untouchability will be solved with a functional drainage system. The poet Iqbal Sarshar suggests an alternative to the practise of untouchability for the untouchables. Iqbal Sarshar, a young poet, feels that "we must destroy caste; we must destroy the inequalities of birth and unalterable vocations." We must acknowledge that everyone has equal access to rights, advantages, and opportunities.

In this novel, Gandhiji is used to demonstrate how human rights have changed. He imparts knowledge of and empathy for those who adhere to different values or lifestyles. Gandhi is devoted to assisting the underprivileged. They are referred to as "harijans" by him, which is Arabic for "men of god". He claims that untouchability is Hinduism's biggest weakness and that it is "satanic" to presume that everyone in Hinduism is born impure. Gandhi also requests a second chance at life as an untouchable member of an outcaste. Gandhi's remarks provide comfort for Bakha. Gandhi appeals to the sensibilities of the average person to help the cause of human rights protection. He connects the liberation of the untouchables to the preservation of the cow, which the Brahmins revere.

Mulk Raj Anand tried to use literature for the admirable goal of uplifting the untouchable in the novel "Untouchable." The novel expresses sympathy for the verbally and physically impaired. He depicts the dismal lives of the oppressed, downtrodden people who are denied their rights.

Anand expresses his concern for the institutionalised evil in society that is to blame for the suffering of the marginalised underprivileged. Society's true enemy is this organised evil. It willfully denies the underprivileged class their basic human rights. The caste system destroys human dignity by unfairly favouring one class over another based only on their place of birth, which harms the homogeneity of the society. Anand seeks to reawaken the exploited, silenced, and dehumanised social classes. For a considerable amount of the narrative, Bakha puts up with his social exploitation. Anand wants to emphasise that even untouchables are people. There is a limit to human endurance, despite the fact that patience is the emblem of the lower caste. Anand is prevented from having his protagonist fight against exploitation by his awareness of the abysmally low level of humility in the blood of the untouchables. He neither rebels nor leaves.

He doesn't make any conscious efforts to alter the situation. In the Indian social environment of Pre Independent India, the protagonist's uprising against exploitation would have been implausible. Anand only wants the readers to understand the suffering of an untouchable who, through no fault of his own, is taken advantage of by the high caste. He experiences verbal and physical abuse as well as humiliation, which makes him feel bad for the low caste exploited and angry at the high caste exploiters. He wants the reader to hear the untouchable's cries. It is not a mere coincidence that Anand was studying the subject of untouchability at the same time as Gandhi was leading a massive movement against it. It demonstrates Anand's belief in Gandhi's philosophy and his own concern about untouchability.

COOLIE

In 1936, a year after the release of Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand wrote his second book, "Coolie," in just three months and managed to get it published without any trouble. The biggest disease that has afflicted the world is child labour. Poverty is the primary cause of child labour. In terms of population, India comes in second. India employs child labourers in the manufacturing, cottage, heavy, and agricultural sectors. A pure and happy childhood is stolen from a youngster who works as a child. Lack of nurturing and care prevents them from developing properly. Still, they lack education. One right is negatively impacted by the denial of another.

They continue to be uneducated. One right is adversely impacted when another is denied. It indicates that individuals are denied their human rights, including the rights to physical safety, education, life, and development. Through his fiction writing, Mulk Raj Anand brought up this subject. Munoo, the main character, is an orphaned, naive hill lad who is just fourteen years old who is forced to move from place to place against his choice in order to make a living. His mother passes away from hunger and poverty, and his father through feudal exploitation. An orphan is subjected to domestic exploitation by his uncle and aunt.

They discover that their fourteen-year-old nephew is old enough to assist his uncle, who works as a "chaparasi" in one of the town's banks, in addition to being able to maintain himself. They assign him to a small-town middle-class family to work as a servant. He is being taken advantage of here by his master's wife. She treats him like an animal, and the other family members utilise him as a source of amusement. He bites the master's daughter during one of his amusing performances while assuming the role of a monkey. The master whips Ram cruelly since he thinks it's a sexual attack on his daughter. Munoo no longer tolerates the brutality and flees.

A fantastic piece of art is "Coolie." Its main theme is the inhumane, merciless powers of capitalism and industrialization exploiting the poor and the underprivileged. Such forces consistently pose a serious threat to the rights of ordinary people. Due to his orphan status, Munoo is compelled to take anything he can to survive. He works as a nanny, a coolie, a factory worker, a rickshaw puller, and other jobs in pursuit of a living. He is subjected to abuse in each of these circumstances, including beatings that violate both his right to bodily safety and human rights. Munoo is denied his unalienable right to happiness and existence. Munoo battles for life, and his battle is a desire for survival, which is denied him most severely.

He appears to have terrible birth rights. His right to a human birth has been completely denied. All the negative things in the protagonist's life are a direct result of poverty. His mother is unable to raise her son due to poverty, and his father loses his farm. Their child becomes an orphan after the death of both of them. In other words, poverty is the primary driver of feudal exploitation. Due to poverty, even Daya Ram, Munoo's uncle, attempts to get rid of his nephew. In every aspect of his existence, Munoo struggles valiantly to remain alive. He accepts a variety of jobs in a variety of locales because he always fears being hungry and in need of food. With hopes for a promising future, he continues his waning struggle for survival. But he always still has an ugly, dull appearance.

Exploitation being the book's main theme, Anand depicts two sorts of characters: the exploiter and the exploited. The only primary character is Munoo, and other supporting individuals surround him at each stage of his life. There are two groups of characters with British ancestry in Anand's books. Owners of the capitalist apparatus, such as cotton mills, tea estates, and banks, fall into one category. There is the full British bureaucracy in the other category. The majority of the British characters in *Coolie* are the first group. They appear to be racist. They deliberately exclude the natives. They serve as shining examples of economic exploitation. The violent exploitation of the Indians by all white people has their mutual support. They do not adapt because they believe that the only way they can live is by ruthlessly and openly exploiting the locals' ignorance. Characters like Thomas, Mr. Little, and Mr. White only survive by taking advantage of the people. They stand for the apathy of capitalism. They are not only unconcerned with the concerns of the locals, but they are also reluctant to discuss them. They view Indians as filthy, disease-ridden people.

Munoo's sad human rights denial is dramatised in the book. Anand appears to be pleading for reform through tragedy. The song "Coolie" is a heartfelt protest against the wealthy and powerful's exploitation of the weak and voiceless. He supports the necessity for humanism and the restoration of all people's rights. Anand wants to raise awareness about the harsh exploitation of the underprivileged, not only paint a depressing picture of a coolie in a capitalist society. In the novel, Anand receives criticism for his negative outlook. He makes his protagonist pass away because he writes realistic novels. In his fight against the class structure, his protagonist loses.

Despite the work having Gandhian influences, there are no authentic Gandhian characters in it. Seth Prabha Dayal gives us a few hints about it. The entire novel can be referred to be a Gandhian critique

of capitalism or industrialization even though no other character is depicted as a symbol of Gandhian thought. Gandhian perspectives on industrialization are reflected in Anand. Gandhi compared the accusation of machinery to the problem of imperial economic exploitation of India. It is the cause of man's lack of concern for man. Gandhi was opposed to capitalism because of its inhumanity. The protagonist of Anand is initially mesmerized by the machine, but afterwards the factory seems to be an inferno to him. He attempts to expose communist officials through the issue involving Ratna's discharge from his job and the union leaders' appeal to start a strike.

CONCLUSION

Anand is undoubtedly a true humanist whose heart breaks for the plight of the oppressed and mistreated common people. He writes with a keen social conscience that is deeply concerned with politics and society, specifically with how power functions in a given society and how that function affects the moral, social, cultural, and even aesthetic values of the people who live in that society. The need for justice is expressed through human rights. Justice is a passionate subject in Mulk Raj Anand's books. He makes an effort to promote human rights awareness through his works. He is undoubtedly penning a letter to his own culture. He advocates for the restoration of human rights to all marginalised, oppressed, and disadvantaged groups in society. Through their support of human rights, his novels establish a connection between fiction and politics. It makes the case to the reader that the adoption and real implementation of human rights are necessary for mankind's salvation. Anand's project marked the beginning of the universal declaration of human rights.

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