



An Ethnological Analysis of Select Short Stories of R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand

Dr. Parag. C. Athavale

Assistant Professor, Department of English
B.P.H.E Society's Ahmednagar College,
Ahmednagar - 414001, Maharashtra
paragathavale1@gmail.com

This paper unfolds and tackles the unique results pointed out in the research work entitled 'An Ethnological Analysis of Select Short Stories of R.K. Narayan And, 'Mulk Raj Anand which deals with cultural implications rendered in the Indian English Short Stories in general and in the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan in particular. An attempt is being to define and examine the term 'Culture' encompassing its significant features and elements, observing its co-relation with literature.

Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan Are the pioneers of Indian English fiction. Mulk Raj Anand (born on December 12, 1905 in Peshawar) is among the first writers to incorporate Punjabi and Hindustani idioms into English. His stories depicted a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor in India.

A study of Anand's literary works is an observation of India in all its richness of poverty, strength, and weakness. In his works one hears the echo of his people's voice, of their folk consciousness. His 'several protagonists' as he himself pointed out, 'have their origin in folk and the old classics'. In his work he concentrates on the corrupt atmosphere, abounding in sham, hypocrisy, ignorance and illiteracy. His stories seek to realise an ideology by which man gain a fuller understanding of himself to become the whole man.

R.K. Narayan (born on October 10, 1906 in Madras) is one of the most famous and widely read Indian novelists. His stories were grounded in a compassionate humanism and celebrated the humour and energy of ordinary life. His stories give us sustained pleasure presenting an illusion of authentic social reality, and a variety of people. His stories belong to the native Indian soil and are connected to its culture. His stories mainly depict the South Indian life and clearly express his view of the world. R .K. Narayan has depicted familiar situations and explored ways of life with which he was intimate. The people represented in his stories, represent humanity at large and his stories have universal appeal.

Rationale and Significance of the Study Cultural study has developed at the broader scale in the present Global scenario having its global importance. It's an umbrella term consisting the human world and its relation with the outer materialistic world, even exposing the internal (psychological) of individual to the society and vice versa. It is the cultural aspect which makes us to understand the world better in various dimensions. Besides the term, an attempt also made to examine and interpret the genre Short Story, its development, elements and features in general. Both the select Indian short story writers are pioneer in rendering the Indian culture.

Mulk Raj Anand was encouraged and fascinated by the western experiments, but he has innovated his own creative skill for writing short stories. Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have been appreciated for their novels and also for their stories due to their use of varied themes as well as adopted narrative technique. Cultural study has developed at the broader scale in the present Global scenario having its global importance. It's an umbrella term consisting the human world and its relation with the outer materialistic world, even exposing the internal (psychological) of individual to the society and vice versa. It is the



cultural aspect which makes us to understand the world better in various dimensions. Besides the term, an attempt also made to examine and interpret the genre Short Story, its development, elements and features in general. Both the select Indian short story writers are pioneer in rendering the Indian culture.

Mulk Raj Anand was encouraged and fascinated by the western experiments, but he has innovated his own creative skill for writing short stories. Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have been appreciated for their novels and also for their stories due to their use of varied themes as well as adopted narrative technique.

The present paper is focused on the implication of culture in the select short stories of Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. A cultural study has much vastness due to its multiple aspects- social, religious, and regional, political, individual, spiritual, economical, traditional etc., but an effort has taken to observe, interpret and define the term 'Culture' and its rendering by both the select short story writers in Indian context.

The proposed research is limited to the selected short story collections of Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. Both the novelists deal with socio-political and cultural realistic delineation of India. The motives behind these projections are the political and social milieu of the North and South region of India. Both writers presented the realistic and sympathetic portrait of poor rural Indians in their short stories. The cultural analysis of these two writer's short stories may help to redefine the standing of Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan as the best short stories writers.

The culture of India is the certain diversified patterns of living, languages, religions, dance, music, which differs according to region to region, leading to establish their own identical culture within India having their separate cultural identities. Indian culture has multiple sides due to its vastness and diversification varying from their food to literature, region to religion, ideas to spiritualism, establishing as an intellectual and social status of culture. A large number of regional languages and dialects are used in India, which led to the growth of a great variety of literature. Even India is multi-religious country having coexistence of eight main religions from the world, having each ones philosophy, sculpture, style, holy literature, music, painting, folk songs and numerous festivals. India is popularly known to be a land of spirituality, having the history from Harappa civilization. And hence religion and region has been playing key roles to form the cultural diversified and multiple identities, which literature has been significantly delineating realistically influencing, shaping the human world, and the modest cultivated mind has been producing the literature with innovative new ideas.

The Short Story is an important genre of literature emerged from oral tradition, which deals with socio-political, cultural, economic or religious issues in a narrative prose. The genre Short Story is less complex than novels, as it delineates one incident or event having a single plot, a single setting, and a small number of characters and even tends with a short period of time. Society creates certain culture and, at the same time, culture is what makes us human.

A short story is a brief work of literature that deals with realism and fiction elaborating a single socio-political, cultural, economic or religious issue in a narrative prose. Emerging from earlier oral storytelling traditions, the short story features a small cast of named characters, and focuses on a self-contained incident with the intent of evoking a "single effect" or mood. In doing so, short stories make use of plot, resonance, and other dynamic components. The short story is less complex than novels as this genre focuses on one incident; has a single plot, a single setting, and a small number of characters and covers a short period of time.

In Indian literature, there is much rich tradition of short story writing. As far as Indian English short story is concern, it has short history but has much varied and worthful



delineation, which attracted the attention of readers at the global level. Indian Short Story stresses ancient theological scriptures in many regional languages. The collections like *Jataka Katha*, *The PanchTantra*, and *Kathasaritsagara* are known as the world's most popular books.

Indian English Short Story has late emergence but has occupied a significant place in the world literature due its rich thematic delineation and the teaching of human values. Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan are the pioneers of Indian English literature

Mulk Raj Anand (December 12, 1905, Peshawar) is among the first writers', one of the greatest and the most prolific of the Indian writers who have written many famous novels and seventy short stories in English which are compiled in the collections-

Short story Collection of Mulk Raj Anand

- The Power of Darkness and Other Stories
- . Lajwanti and Other Stories
- . Between Tears and Laughter
- . Selected Short Stories
- . The Lost Child and Other Stories
- . The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories
- . The Tractor- the Corn Goddess and Other Stories

Another select writer of the study is R.K. Narayan (October 10, 1906, Madras), one of the most famous and widely read Indian novelists in Indian writing in English, having to his credit about 150 stories and ten novels. He has elaborately delineated on academic, social and political-economic cultural themes realistically. Even he has made his footprint in his approach to regionalism, humanism, symbolism, irony, humor, Indian culture and Indianness. He blends realism and romanticism very remarkably in his novels and short stories. His writing has been translated into several European and Indian languages. An American publisher rightly remarked in Narayan's diary as, 'William Faulkner, Hemingway and Narayan are the world's three great living writers.'

Short story Collection of R. K. Narayan

- An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories,
- . Lawley Road and Other Stories,
- A Horse and Two Goats,
- . Short Stories Old and New,
- . Malgudi Days,
- . Dodu and Other Stories,
- . Cyclone and Other Stories,

Mulk Raj Anand's short stories are deliberately exposes caste and class discrimination on the social system focusing on the distress of the lower castes and classes of India. While depicting the conflicts, he led to stand the victimized for their identity and their plea for social change. Indeed he is a great novelist and writer of short stories of Indian multilayered culture.

R.K. Narayan has artistically delineated Indian socio-political culture, its tradition, traditional beliefs, superstitions, spirituality, religions, various individual and social ideologies, orthodox supernatural elements, regional deities, social classes, Indian philosophy encompassing the psyche and feelings of children, street fights, relationship conflicts, communal riots, filial relationship and the natural world in his short stories.

An attempt is being made to compare and contrast both the writers as far as their thematic delineation, narrative technique used for their artistic short stories. Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan are pioneer novelists, short story writers in Indian English Literature, having successful in making their footprints in the world of literature all over the world. Both



the writers has remarkably delineated India realistically with its socio-political, multi religious, linguistic and traditional culture to the present modern independent innovative scientific and materialistic culture through various individuals from and representing different classes and categories, prominently from the rural culture of India. Mulk Raj Anand perceived Indian culture with modernist approach and from the western outlook to some extent, while Narayan is more observer and experienced one as he visited the whole country and has criticized the western materialistic attitude.

It deals with the observation done in the previous chapters in brief, exploring the concept culture and the genre short story, its development and features. The short stories in Indian English are closely related to multidimensional Indian culture. Indian short story has rich tradition since the oral ancient form and hence ultimately seems successful reflecting the country by all means, and countries sociopolitical, religious, spiritual culture of India from ancient, mythological period to the modern post independent. Both the writers has delineated cultural India through their thematic delineation.

Mulk Raj Anand is a prolific novelist, short story writer has numerous stories on his credit, prominently deals with Indian sociopolitical realities, even economical and regional realistic culture also highlighted by him in his short stories. Besides an experienced American culture, as he lived in America for few years, he directly compares Indian social evils, beliefs, traditions, illiteracy and evils in religious practices and harshly criticizes the nature of religious people. Unlike R.K. Narayan, he intends to give natural justice, and right to each victimized section of Indian civilization and hence he is considered as humanist.

One more prominent rendering of him is that he has realistically portrayed Indian feminism, in which he elaborately depicted the subordinated, subjugated condition of Indian women due to social traditional and patriarchal domination. He strongly stands for the liberation of women for their rights and equality and hence we may call him a feminist writer.

While R.K. Narayan though portrayed Indian political, economic, realities, concerned only with the Indian rural panorama, its aloofness, minor and neglected sections of the society keeping himself aloof and unaffected writer. He seems just a reflector rather than innovator and reformist. But the canvas of R. K. Narayan is larger than Anand, as R.K. Narayan has led to experience the unknown sections, classes, categories of the Indian society through individual characters. This individual character represents certain class with its identical realities. Even R.K. Narayan has focused a various natural elements, which are correlated with human world, like snake, river, tempest, mountains, trees and suggest the close relationships of human world; and though this he has tried to show the glory of Indian spiritualism in general Indian culture in particular, which is synthesized with each other.

Mulk Raj Anand's art of telling the story extremely captures the very beginning of the story with first sentence and hence engages the reader's attention till the end of the story, and even ends the stories with convincing note with logical consequence. His skill and craftsmanship make the stories effective and lead to felt self-experience, casted in the form of fable, tales of psychological realism, lyric prose etc. Anand adopted a happy synthesis of the fable technique used by the west. Anand has his own narration method rather than imitating the traditional method of narration. Anand has used the first person narrative technique, like in 'The Barber's Trade Union' and 'The Cobbler and the Machine'.

Some other facts are that Both the novelists deal with socio-political and cultural realistic delineation of India. The motives behind these projections are the political and social milieu of the North and South region of India. Both writers presented the realistic and sympathetic portrait of poor rural Indians in their short stories. This cultural analysis of these two writer's short stories may help other researchers to redefine the standing of Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan as the best short stories writers.



Bibliography:

Primary sources:

Following anthologies of both writers are selected respectively for the present study:

1. Anand Mulk Raj, Lajwanti *and Other Stories*, Orient Paperbacks, 1999.
2. Anand Mulk Raj, *Selected Short Stories*, Penguin Books India, 2006.
3. Narayan R.K., *Under the Banyan Tree and Other short Stories*, Indian Thought Pub. 1992.
4. Narayan R.K., *Malgudi Days*, Indian Thought Publication, 1996

Secondary Sources:

- 1) Agnihotri, G. N. *Indian Life and Problems in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan*. Shalab Book House, 1984.
- 2) Badal, R. K. *R.K. Narayan: a Study*. Prakash Book Depot, 1976.
- 3) Baldwin, Elaine, et al. *Introducing Cultural Studies*. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999.
- 4) Basham, A.L, and B.B Lal. *A Cultural History of India*. Oxford University Press, 1975.
- 5) Berry, Margaret. *Mulk Raj Anand: the Man and the Novelist*. Oriental Press, 1971.
- 6) Billington, Rosamund, and Sheelagh Strawbridge. *Culture and Society: a Sociology of Culture*. Macmillan, 2000.
- 7) Biswal, Jayant K. *A Critical Study of the Novels of R.K. Narayan: the Malgudi Comedy*. Nirmal Publ. & Distributors, 1987.
- 8) Chakrabarty, Bidyut. *Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2009.
- 9) Dahiwal, S. M. *Understanding Indian Society: the Non-Brahmanic Perspective*. Rawat Publications, 2006.
- 10) Das, Bijay Kumar. *Postmodern Indian English Literature*. Atlantic, 2006.
- 11) Eliot, T. S. *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Faber and Faber, 1991.
- 12) Fisher, Marlene. *The Wisdom of the Heart: a Study of the Works of Mulk Raj Anand*. Sterling, 1985.
- 13) George, C. J. *Mulk Raj Anand: His Art and Concerns*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2000.
- 14) Giles, Judy, and Tim Middleton. *Studying Culture: a Practical Introduction*. Blackwell Publishers, 2010.
- 15) Kohli, Suresh. *Modern Indian Short Stories*. ImprintOne, 2008.
- 16) Matthew, Arnold. *Culture and Anarchy*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990.
- 17) Mehta, Kamal. *The Twentieth Century Indian Short Story in English*. Creative Books, 2004.
- 18) Mukerji, Dhurjati Prasad. *Indian Culture: a Sociological Study*. Rupa & Co., 2002.
- 19) Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: the Novel and Society in India*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- 20) Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademy, 1982.
- 21) Naik, M. K., and Shyamala A. Narayan. *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: a Critical Survey*. Pencraft International, 2007.
- 22) Putatunda, Sarbani. *R.K. Narayan: Critical Essays*. PHI Learning Private Limited, 2012.
- 23) R., Srinivasa Iyengar K, and Prema Nandakumar. *Introduction to the Study of English Literature by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and Prema Nandakumar*. Asia Publishing House, 1967.
- 24) R., Srinivasa Iyengar K. *The Indian Contribution to English Literature*. Karnatak Pub. House, 1945.
- 25) R., Srinivasa Iyengar Kodaganallur. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publ, 2006.



- 26) Raizada, Harish. *R.K. Narayan: a Critical Study of His Works*. Young Asia Publications, 1969.
- 27) Saksena, Manmohan. *Indian Short Stories*. Oxf. Univ. Pr., 1953.
- 28) Venugopal, C. V. *The Indian Short Story in English: (a Survey)*. 1976.
- 29) Verma, K. D. *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- 30) Walsh, William. *R.K. Narayan: a Critical Appreciation*. Allied Publishers, 1992.
- 31) Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*. Vintage, 2017.
- 32) "Cultural Transmission." *Cultural Transmission | Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA)*, carta.anthropogeny.org/moca/topics/cultural-transmission.