



A BRIEF COMPARATIVE THEMATIC STUDY OF NOVELS OF ANAND AND NARAYAN

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ABSTRACT

Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan are the two eminent Indian English novelists. Anand was born in the north India, while R.K.Narayan was born in the South. Anand portrayed Punjabi characters and Punjabi life with minuteness and realism. He gave convincing and credible account of the social manners, customs, ideas and beliefs which are characteristic of life in Punjab. He focused on the hard realities of the present in lieu of history and romance. He made novel an instrument of social reform. There is infinite variety in themes of his novels. His well known novels are: **Untouchable, Coolie, The Big Heart, The Private Life of an Indian Prince, Morning Face.**

R.K. Narayan is a regional novelist. A regional novel is a novel which deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language etc. of a particular locality. Parents love is one of the significant refrain in Narayan's fiction. Acceptance of reality and restoration of normalcy, blend of reality and fantasy are the major themes of his novels. He made frequent use of Indian myths and legends. His Indianness is reflected in various ways in the novels: **The Guide, the English Teacher, The Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room, The Financial Expert, Waiting For Mahatma, The Dark Room.**

KEYWORDS :

Introduction:

The Indian English fiction was deeply influenced by the epoch making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement. There was sudden flowering of the novel form. The Indian English fiction discovered some of its most compelling themes; the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problems and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the down trodden, the economically exploited and the suppressed and oppressed. The Indian English fiction in the nineteen thirties saw the appearance on the scene of its major trio; Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. They revealed in their own characteristic way the various possibilities of Indian English fiction. Raja Rao has not been a prolific novelist. His fiction lacked the social dimension of his two contemporaries. He lacked the burning humanitarian zeal of Anand and Narayan's sense of keen observation of men and manners. Anand and Narayan came from two different regions and background. They showed great stamina, consistency of purpose in their writings. They have to their credit a corpus of creative fiction of sufficient bulk and quality to merit serious study.

In Narayan, there is delicate blend of gentle irony and sympathy, a quiet realism and fantasy. His writings are about the little dramas of middle class life enacted in Malgudi. He wrote about man in relation to himself, his environment and his Gods. There is something about the Western ideas of love and the traditional social set up, traditional Hindu family relationship between husband and wife, children and parents, clash of generations, spiritualism, financial nexus, reversal of fortunes, blend of reality and fantasy, the disturbing questions about the human motives and actions, the problem of appearance and reality, the man and the mask, ends and means, ancient myths and fables, fragile human psyche, the question of efficacy of Gandhian motif in the modern world, crisis in the individual soul, death and resurrection, the glaring lacuna in the education system and hero-worship in the sports field. He had the sure grasp of the living minutiae of the daily business of living. He wrote about the people and the way of life of the group of people with whose psychology and background he was familiar with. There is resolved limitation and conscientious exploration. There is small group of characters in their oddities and angularities. Malgudi is Narayan's Casterbridge. Like Jane Austen, he confined himself with the "Little bit of Ivory". There is no vague vastness of Wessex. He explored the inner countries of mind, heart and soul. He was neither an intolerant critic of Indian ways and modes nor their fanatic defender. There is uprooting, of an order followed by a return, a renewal, a restoration of normalcy. Unlike Anand, he hardly used any swear words.

Anand's novels are purposive in character. He was acute observer and vivid delineator. There is the great richness of his total comprehension of the life and real people, he had known during his childhood and youth. He owed much to them for their inspiration in interpretation of their lives in his writing. He saw air infected with the fumes of man's inhumanity to man. His each novel came from his contact with the flesh and blood of everyday existence. He had love for the poor. In his novels it is the humanity that finally triumphs. He seemed to emphasize the universal as against the particular. The titles of his novels-Untouchable, Coolie, Village, reinforce this fact. There are no merely sentimental portraits. There is lively vitality and keen sense of actuality. He is veritable Dickens in describing the prevalent inequities and idiosyncrasies with accuracy. He had no laborious psychological or ideological preoccupation. He wrote about the boyhood, youth and early manhood. He preferred the familiar to the fanciful. He avoided the highway of romance and sophistication he explored the bylanes of the outcastes and the peasants, the sepoys and the working people. There is the atmosphere of the village life. There are landlords, Savakars and Sarkars, conventions, superstitions, mass conformity and mass hysteria, the cupidity and cruelty of some and apathy helplessness of the many, There is the atmosphere of suspicion and strife, the racial intolerance. We come across the foreign exploiters, impact of caste cruelty, tragic clash of interests and destinies. There is Dickensian piquancy, the mixture of horrible and holy, the inhuman and the humane.

NARAYAN'S MAJOR THEMES:

1) Study of Family and Family Relations:

Family relations constitute a major theme in Narayan's novels. The exhibited this with remarkable subtlety and conviction. He focused on the relationship between son and parents, brother and brother, husband and wife, father and daughter, father and son, grandmother and grandson and the relationship between the adults and the children.

There are devoted fathers showing concerns for their children, parents proud of their children's abilities and achievements. He means to say, 'a man that has no paternal love in himself is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils'. He said, 'I have no faith in education ...boys must learn things in the rough school of life'. He said father's love must need a stop if father and son are to ascend to a higher plane of fulfillment (the Vendor of Sweet).

Besides family relationship, he studied relationships centering round sex and money. These are complex and inexplicable

relationships than the family relationships. He said affluence can never bring respect and individual identity in society. He never seemed to agree with Margayya's (The Financial Expert) statement, "Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse".

2) Family Disturbance, Estrangement and Reconciliation:

The normalcy is disturbed by the arrival of some external in the sheltered world of Malgudi but in the end there is always a return, a renewal and a restoration of normalcy. The normal order is disturbed temporarily and by the end we see the usual order established once again. Life goes on as usual for all practical purposes.

The theme is well stated in Mr.Sampath. We are told that Srinivas perceived a balance of power in human relationships. He marveled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters; it was so perfect that it seemed to be unnecessary for anybody to do anything. For a moment it seemed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyze, criticize and attempt to set things right anywhere, if only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world; things neither particularly wrong or right; but balancing themselves. Just as many policemen to bring them to their senses, if possible, and just as many wrong doers again to keep the police employed, and so on and on in an infinite concentric circle.

In his first novel **Swami and Friends**, the normal life of Swami and his friends – the peace, harmony and friendship, is momentarily disturbed by Swami's failure to turn up in time to play in the crucial cricket match. The result is that his friend, his idol, his hero, Rajam is mightily offended. There is much heart burning, sorrow and suffering. However, in the end swami goes to railway station to bid farewell to Rajam. He fails to meet him because of the crowd. He cannot talk to him but the crisis in their friendship is resolved and normalcy is restored in the schoolboy world as Rajam looks at him 'responsively' from the moving train.

In the **Bachelor of Arts**, the hero fails to marry the girl he loves. He feels much disturbed and frustrated. He renounces the world and becomes a Sadhu. Finally, he returns home and finds the girl chosen by his parents really very charming. He gets married in the due course. He takes a job as a news paper correspondent. He is fully satisfied and happy.

In **English Teacher**, the hero Krishna is English teacher. We see him living happily as usual with his wife, Susila and the child, Leela. But soon the normal life is disturbed by the unexpected and untimely death of his wife, Susila. He is seen heart-broken. He loses interest in life. He even gives up lecturer's job at Albert Mission College and joins a school. He meets a stranger. The repeated communion with his wife is possible through the stranger. In this way Susila is reborn, spiritually resurrected to be with him forever. The normalcy is restored in Krishna's life. He is psychologically rejuvenated and leads a normal life.

In the novel **Dark Room**, the normalcy of life is disturbed by the arrival of Shanta Bai in the life of Ramani. His wife Savitri is unable to endure his liaison with another woman. She revolts against this. She leaves her home in bitterness and frustration. She leaves her children and goes to commit suicide. But she is saved by Mari, a bad character. She is looked after by his wife Ponni for two or three days. Savitri experiences the pangs of separation from her children. She remembers them and keeps thinking about them. She finally returns to her home. Normalcy is restored is domestic life though he continues his liaison with Shanta Bai. Narayan means to say that sufferance is the norm for an Indian housewife, and this norm is restored once again, after its momentary disturbance by Savitri's abnormal revolt.

The novel **Waiting for Mahatma** is a love story of Sriram and Bharti.

It is enacted against the background of Gandhi and the Gandhian movement. The normalcy of life is disturbed by Sriram's, a young man of twenty, joining the terrorists. He engages himself in the act of sabotage. He is sent to jail. The normalcy is restored when he is released from the jail after independence. Mahatma blesses in the Birla Bhavan. His marriage with Bharti is approved. Bharti makes a patriot of Sriram. She becomes his savior and source of strength. There is disruption of normalcy and ultimately the reunion through a chance meeting with some mysterious character.

In Mr. Sampath, normalcy is restored when Mr.Sampath walks forlornly towards the railway station with the intension of leaving Malgudi for good, and Srinivas is able to start his periodical, "The Banner", once again with the help of a Police Inspector, a stranger kind of benefactor. In **The Financial Expert** normalcy is restored when Margayya, the financial wizard loses his ill-gotten wealth, returns to his earlier position, and his good for nothing son Balu, who had been living splendidly in a separate house, much sobered by the crash of his father, returns to the modest ancestral house, with his wife and child. The child becomes the object of joy and consolation of his grandfather.

In **The Guide**, the normalcy is restored when after all the alarms and excursions, all the excitement and suspense, all the regrets and recriminations, Raju realizes that, 'neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all long'. Rosie herself sums up it masterly 'I felt all along you were not doing right things. This is karma. What can we do? There is no failure of nemesis in the Guide. Rosie return to Madras, and Raju's mother comes back to her own home. Raju himself has a new birth, after the fast, a change gradually comes upon him. He enjoys the experience of the world outside the money and love. He himself says nobody could take that experience away from him. He is not dead to his old self. People made a new man of him. He is redeemed. The sainthood is thrust upon him.

In the **Man Eater of Malgudi** normalcy is disturbed by the arrival of H.Vasu, the man-eater. It is restored when, he accidentally kills himself and Nataraj runs on his printing press as usual.

In the last novel **The Vendor of Sweets**, normalcy of Jagan's life is disturbed by his son Mali. He sows his wild oats, goes to America, returns home with a wife, Grace. He is not really married to her. He steals his father's money to set up a factory for manufacturing short stories. Mali administers shocks after shock to his father, till he is heart-broken. But Jagan is twitched to sanity by the bearded man. This bearded man is from the 'previous millennium'. His whole life is centered in brining a deity to life out of a stone, and installing it on a vacant temple pedestal near a pond in the recesses of the Mempi forest. Goddess Gayatri is supposed to come out of the stone. This thought excites the image-maker. Jagan decides to buy the place and make it his retreat. He decides to help the old stonemason realize his dream. Jagan learns that his son, Mali has been arrested for the illegal possession of liquor. His reaction is "A dose of prison is not bad thing. It may be just that he needs now". He becomes much sober by his stay in the prison. He runs on the sweet shop instead of installing novel writing machine. There is almost an inner revolution in the Jagan, the sweet vendor. There is the end of Mali's dream to become the story writing machine manufacturer. He begins his career as vendor of sweets. Jagan starts a new life of study and contemplation in quietude of the forest.

Every novel of Narayan shows disturbance of normal social order. There are conflicts between forces of order and disorder, but in the end, there is restoration of normalcy. The crises are placed within the scope of the normal. It is largely due to chance meeting with some mystical stranger. It is not the absurd or the eccentric or the evil that is reestablished but the good and the normal. There is always a renewal of life, love, beauty and peace. Narayan's message is "despite temporary aberrations, life must go on as usual".

3) Combine of Realism and Fantasy:

There is the blend of realism and fantasy. Fantasy is a common feature in Narayan's novel. It is sometimes absurd, the eccentric, the improbable. Sometimes that is rarely possible in real life. There are not laws of rationality, logic and natural causation. There is free vent to the imagination. There is the unique use of realism and fantasy in most of the novels.

There proper balance is maintained in their use. The first half of his novels is realistically drawn setting. The action and characterization seem authentic veritable. But half way through, there is a distinct break, and fantasy takes over. Often these two factors are loosely threaded together. Most of his plots break into disparate plots. Often there is no organic compound of realism and fantasy. It is a merely mechanical amalgamation. In the later half fantasy predominates which strikes the reader as incongruous.

The two elements are placed side by side. The hero's life is affected by fantastic forces. Srinivas' life is steered by Sampath into a fantastic venture. In the context of the realism of the first part –Savitri attempts suicide in the **Dark Room**, her miraculous escape and the return to her home and children appear unrealistic. Chandran's renunciation of life in the **Bachelor of Arts**, his wanderings as sadhu, Krishna's communion with the spirit of his dead wife, are examples of such fantasy. Even in **The Financial Expert**, there is the fantastic worship, ritual and fast, to win the favor of goddess Laxmi. In **The Vendor of Sweets**, there is fantastic story writing machine. It looks certainly incongruous matched with realistic content of the novels.

Some of the other themes in Narayan's novels are: **his heroes' constant struggle to achieve maturity, self realization, renunciation, incorporation of mythical elements in the stories, unique Indian sensibility, the meek surrendering of the Indian housewives and belief in the Karma.**

MAJOR THEMES OF ANAND'S NOVELS:

Anand has been the most prolific novelist. As he himself, said that he grew up like most of his contemporaries, a very superficial, ill-educated young man without any bearings. He saw the education of his days glorified with the western culture at the expense of Indian tradition. He suffered a brief imprisonment due to his participation in the Gandhian movement. He was an indefatigable traveler endowed with apparently inexhaustible energies.

1. Compassion for the Underdogs:

Anand's fiction has been shaped by as he himself said the double burden on his shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of his Indian past. He was indignant critic of the deadwood of the hoary Indian tradition, its obscurantism and fossilization. There is great deal of intuitive understanding of the Indian peasant mind in his writings. In his numerous novels his eclectic humanism and is humanitarian compassion for the underdogs are persistent themes. He showed keen interest in the contemporary social and political problems. His strength lay in creation of wealth of living characters. There is ruthless realism and deeply felt indignation at the social wrongs. There is strong humanitarian compassion. He boldly imported words, phrases, expletives terms of expression and proverbs from his native Punjabi and Hindi. In spite of his tendency to slip into easy sentimentality and lose artistic control, his total fictional achievement has remained quite imposing..

Like Somerset Maugham, it was not the Taj Mahal, the ghats of Banaras, the temples of Madurai or the mountains of Travancore that had moved him, but it was the peasant, the untouchable, the coolie terribly emaciated with nothing to cover their nakedness but a rag around middle that was the sight that had given him the most poignant emotion in his life.

He wrote of the people, for the people and as a man of the people. He was associated with progressive Writers Movement in India. He wrote about the pariahs and the bottom dogs rather than of the

elect and sophisticated. He ventured into the territory which had been largely neglected till then by Indian writers.

2. Summary of Actual Life:

George Meredith called novel '*a summary of actual life*'. Anand wrote novels for social and political purposes. There is variety of themes and techniques based on social, political and technological and industrial environment. The language of Anand is flexible and varied which suits different fictitious characters drawn from most varied professions and strata of society. His language is Indian enough to create the impression of verisimilitude and credibility. He translated English words by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, proverbs.

His novels portray poverty, hunger and disease, widespread social evils and religious tensions. There is the exploration of hybrid culture of the dislocations and conflicts in a caste and tradition ridden society, under the impact of an incipient, half hearted industrialization. There is something about inter-racial relations; the Indian National movement and the struggle for freedom, the partition of India, death, destruction and suffering caused by it. There is depiction of hunger and poverty of Indians, the Indian rural life conflict between tradition and modernity and the splendors of the royal life. His years of reading, thinking, observation and feeling are well reflected in his novels. His feeling for the suffering masses of India is seen at every step. It made him powerful champion of the underdogs.

He was greatly influenced by the Indian struggle for independence. He had suffered at the hand of the police. He hated imperialism. He was disgusted with the cruelty and hypocrisy of Indian feudal life, with its caste, creeds dead habits and customs the restrictive religious rites and practices. He began to question everything. He felt the misery of the inert disease ridden, underfed illiterate people around him. He saw many people suffering from poverty and squalor patiently. His novels are epics of this kind of suffering intricate problems.

3. His Novels are "Epics Of Misery":

Henry Fielding, the father of English novel described novel as 'comic epic in prose'. Anand's novels are of epic length sans comic sense. He found the Indian panorama too big to concise into a nutshell. The general strike in Britain in 1926 made a powerful impact on his mind. He saw the violent repressive measures in protecting and fostering the interests of a small minority. He felt the international socialism was the only solution to the world's problem. He was greatly influenced by the Marxist thoughts. He read the Communist Manifesto and Marx's Letters on India. He saw a whole new world open to him. His thinking was conditioned by Marxian doctrines. He was greatly influenced by Tolstoy's **War and Peace**, Dostoevsky's the **Possessed**. His reading of Victor Hugo's **Ninety-Three**, short novel on French revolution convinced him that political events could be made the theme of a novel.

His novels show a perfect synthesis of the influences of James Joyce, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. They show his the revolt against the decayed aspects of the Indian tradition. He was aware of the religious hypocrisy and bigotry in Indian society. He saw the injustices thriving on anachronistic practices and economic exploitation of the have-nots by the haves. He was the militant critic of the bases elements in the traditional Indian society. The form of epic novel suited his purpose. He is at his best when we see him expressing the limitation of the decayed Indian traditions and championing the cause of modernism as a cure for the ills of the Indian society. His novels show the perfect blend of the native tradition and western ideas. They show his love for men, their weaknesses, instincts and impulses.

4. Proper Study of Mankind:

Alexander Pope said 'the proper study of mankind is man'. Anand concentrated upon the activities of men rather than upon the supernatural, mythical and mystical world. There is not much in his

novels about the supernatural and the life of the other world. He wished to see man leading a worthy and dignified life of happiness. His spirit of humanism was derived from European Hellenism better world order. He did not believe in the life hereafter. He wrote against the institutionalization of religion. He believed in perfect equality between man and man, man and woman. The right of expression is to enjoy social, economic, political, intellectual and economic freedom. He said the numerous forms of exploitation of man by man for practical gain are capitalism, colonialism, fascism, feudalism, Communalism. He saw these forces detrimental to the dignified life of the man.

5. Novelist with a Mission:

He wrote for the betterment and upliftment of the underdogs of society. He was a reformist at heart. He stressed on the need to help, to raise the life of the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies and the other suppressed and oppressed members of the society. He worked to restore human dignity and create awareness. He was crusader in the cause of humanity. He did not write for art's sake but for the sake of man, ennobling and refining his life and the well being of the mankind as a whole.

He was no spinner of fairy tales. He was neither an escapist nor merely an entertainer. He showed his compassion for the exploited, oppressed and the downtrodden. His concern for the marginalized section of society is reflected in his novels- **Coolie, Untouchable, Two Leaves and a Bud**. His novels are about the wretchedness and hypocrisy of the poor and their struggle for the contented life. He brings out the plight of the overburdened peasants, their inability to fight against the superstition and the other prevalent conventions. His keen observation and consciousness of political, social and religious events is seen in his novels. The novel **Untouchable** is about the freedom of Bakha, a sweeper boy and his experience in the course of single day in the town of Bulashah. **Coolie** tells the story of the experiences of Munno, an orphan from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab, till he dies of consumption in Simla. The insult and humiliation meted out to Bakha suggests the kind of exploitation of the untouchables. The problem of caste barrier and its wild effects are seen in the novel **The Road**. It is the story of a chamar boy, Bikhu. He was shocked to see the glaring divisions and differences between haves and have-nots. He sympathized with the have-nots. He desired to see the betterment of coolies, untouchables, plantation workers soldiers at the war front, villagers and the factory workers. He wrote about these men in their staggering variety. All these people were dear to him. They are the reflections of the real people he knew. He had seen these humans in his childhood and youth. He interpreted their lives in his novels. He portrayed the all aspects of the life, even the ugly and the seamy ones. There is the naturalism of the well known French novelists- Emily Zola and Balzac.

Anand in his "Apology For Heroism" said: 'the theme of my writings is human relationships, rather than only one single part of it'. He was inclined to stress the need for a truly humanist art commensurate with the need of the time. He strived to teach men to recognize the fundamental principles of human living and exercise vigilance with regard to the real enemies of the freedom and socialism.

He humanized the Indian novel. He had the missionary zeal for the amelioration of the lot of the have-nots. He made some questions the central concern of his fiction. His humanist conviction and his humanitarian compassion fired his imagination. There are some unforgettable scenes such as Bakha touching the caste Hindu and paying the penalty; Ananta being knocked down on the machine which he loves; Munoo's traumatic realization that he is born to be exploited; Gauri being transformed into a Sita with a difference, living a new modern Ramayana with alerted ending; Lajwanti finding herself confined to live in a situation where death would be far more welcome; the ignorant rustics enthusiastically accepting modernity.

He was not a facile propagandist. He was an expositor. His first novel deals with a sweeper, the second with a coolie, the third with an uprooted field laborer, the next three with the study of peasant lad followed by one about a machine-hand, then an autobiographical novel about his childhood and finally a novel with a prince as its central character. Prince or a pauper all his heroes are victims, some of society's making, others of their own. Social discrimination, poverty, pollution are recurring themes in his novels. He was more concerned with the eradication of social evils. He was the foremost spokesman of the underprivileged. He believed in the restoration of man's integrity and reassertion of man's dignity.

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