



**CULTURAL AND POLITICAL REFLECTIONS IN NOVELS OF (RAJA RAO, MULKRAJ ANAND
AND R.K.NARAYAN)**

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When these people started writing the novels, it gave the pervasive idea of the independence movement in India and expressed a concept of political struggle and emotional experience of all Indians. It was marked by a new awareness of the social evils like caste discrimination, poverty, illiteracy and the suppression of women that existed in the country at that time. A number of factors contributed to this new awareness, the first and foremost was the impact of western education which enabled Indians to become conscious of the world around them. The second was the impact of the First World War. The writers now turned from romance to realism. The third was the influence of great thinkers like Marx, Freud and the humanistic principles of

Gandhi broadened the vision of the 20th century man. They wrote novels to respond the situation and aroused the spirit of Nationalism and Patriotism. Waiting for the Mahatma by R.K. Narayan, Kanthapura by Raja Rao, were some social novels that focussed on Indian social life and the changing traditions. Many writers contributed to the growth of Indo-English fiction, but the significant novelists of this period were Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. R.K Narayan novels reflect Indian social life as MK Naik observes “R. K. Narayan is a single minded practioner of the novel of local colour”(1984:105). He gives detail description of the life and activities of town and the characters realistically.



Mulk Raj Anand wrote novels of Social reformation, he was highly impressed and influenced by the messages of Gandhi and portrays in his novels. The plight of the lowest in the society that of the untouchables in 'untouchable' of the peasants in coolie and of the tea garden workers in 'Two leaves and a bud'. His novels are characterized by his humanistic approach and realism. 'Akkaya' experiences pangs of widowhood without experiencing the pleasures of married life. Widowhood, poverty and the helplessness that arise out of this situation are pictured in the story. His 'companions' mythicises the friendship of the man and the snake and how the snake forces the man to see the god, the story pictures the attitude of the people and bring out their beliefs and superstitions. The stories written in early period show his political and social concerns. Mulk Raj Anand untouchable focuses attention on number of social belief, custom, tradition and social evil of

the hindu society. These novels were written where India as a colony and untouchable was a rife in India. Untouchable probably Mulk Raj Anand's artistically satisfying novel. It is about Bakka and his sister undergoes humiliation at different times by the people and he hears Gandhiji's untouchable speech which creates greatest bolt on Hinduism that encourages Bakka. E.M.Foster writes 'untouchable could only written by an Indian.' It is socially conscious and sociological novel. It focuses attention on number of social beliefs, customs, traditions, social evil etc of the Hindu-class ridden society. Raja Rao's Kanthapura was a trend setter; it describes the impact of the Indian struggle for freedom. The traditional villagers in a remote corner in mysore who believes in old notions of community divisions, untouchability etc, gradually change their notions and get united in the struggle for freedom. Moorthy the central character of



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the novel is Gandhian endears himself to everyone by being good by overcoming the caste feeling and by the strength of his character. He tries to follow Gandhi's idea but has his weakness too. This makes his character realistic and convincing. His great novel the 'Serpent and the Rope' which came after a silence of a decade expounds Advaita Marga of Sri Sankara. Ramaswamy a South Indian Brahmin doing research in France married to Madeline, a French woman. The novel brings out the incompatibility that arises out of cultural and notional differences. Rama believes in Advaita and hence considers perception as illusion and believes like a true Advaitin that a guru can help him to see the illusion that is life and realize the 'self'. Madeline spiritual quest leads her to renounce worldly desires and becomes Buddhist.

“As you know while we ask for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation we have ourselves for centuries trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling

the slightest removes for our inquiry. For me the question of these people is moral and religious, when I underfoot to fast unto death for their sake it was in obedience to call of my conscience” (M.K.Gandhi-P 162-163). Mulk Raj Anand's coolie the other novel presents a comprehensive view of Indian society. The head foreman of the cotton mill treat the factory worker as if they are nothing but animal. Cotton mill is the symbol of western exploitation through its machinery, supervisor, technology and it obliges poor Indian under paid coolie, like Munoo and Hari to work in unhygienic condition. The workers are forced to live in the slum of Bombay as they are exposed to disease and Malpractice. A writer work is sustained by the intellectual, social, political, religious and cultural milieu to which he belongs. From 1920, almost all Indian literature showed a marked impact of Gandhian thought and reverberates the glorification of truth, Non-violence, Non-Cooperation uplift, prohibition, Sati,



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communal harmony and un-touchability. Anand wrote “In fact the Mahatma asked me to write a straight forward pamphlet about un-touchability. I would prefer to write a novel as it present a total personality as a response to the challenge. I feel that the novel goes deeper into the human personality than a didactic look.”

R.K.Narayan novels like *Waiting for Mahatma*, *Mr.Sampath*, *The prince of Malgudi*, *The Financial Expert* show Narayan as maturing novelist. These books published between 1948 and 1952, a period of great importance in 20th Century, which not only saw the emergence of independence India, but also a birth of a completely new order. *Waiting for the Mahatma* dwells upon a time that a society in transition and the effect of this has on individuals. Sriram the character bounded by the borders of malgudi encounters politically conscious girl who takes him under her wing. Gandhi walks into the book as anyone might walk through a

door. Narayan does not start with a generalisation with a theory; he lets his character demonstrate to us. His novels muses the actual incidents and teachings that gandhiji in real life encoded and portray social movement. Indian literature offered to understand india from the perspective of elites. Fiction on the other hand allows us to read Indian from below. The fictions of R.K.Narayan created good periscope for observing the living state and resistance of subaltern groups for nearly 80 years. Narayan’s *Dark Room* 1938 began to handle the issue of subaltern groups. ‘*Dark Room*’ is not only a place for the retreatment of the woman when she is abused by her husband, but also a metaphor which discloses the miserable conditions of women and the oppressions imposed upon them by men. Further R.K.Narayan was a traditionalist and undoubtedly aware of the oppressive element of Indian traditional culture, which is quite different from the findings



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of many other Indian expert who attribute all the sufferings of people to colonial rule and western culture and from his depiction we can also see that in his understanding the modernization of Indian not only means the re-examination of colonial rule and its left over but also re-examination of their own tradition. 'The Financial Expert -1952' considered to be among his greatest master-pieces. British opened the bank to trap the poor into deep debt and they can't get out of the circle, but a closer reading reminds us that it is the native financial advisors who were misleading the poor people and brought them to misery. We can see that R.K.Narayan notices the social stratification in the modern transition of India. In his writing he seems satisfied with the exposure of India's clumsy imitation of modernity.

'The Guide' 1956 was cheered by many readers for the heroine's strong resistance against the deeply-rooted patriarchal

culture of India. She has the courage to get out of unhappy marriage and married to a tourist guide, she loves deeply second when she found that her new love was just using her as a money-making machine. She left the mean guy without slightest hesitation and this broke the stereotype of women, who were imagined as cowardly dependent and fragile. After Independence we can see that the Indian women are consciously against the oppressive elements of Indian traditional culture and also actively take advantage of the western culture including their life style to resist the oppression of their husbands under the masks of defending Indian tradition. These novelists created a vibration and inspiration to the common people who reads their works. They even inspire the people by taking them to the century they lived and create an understanding of that particular century and period they lived. Thus they created cultural reflection and silently informed the people that they are



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following the culture which was far behind

and doesn't give any hope to progress.