

Modern Trends in Themes of Indian English Fiction (Pre-Independence)**Dr. Veerendra J. Badiger***Lecturer in English, Govt PU College, Chikkoppa, Dist Belgaum, (Karnataka), India***Abstract**

The historic event in the Indian English fiction was the emergence of the great trio in the 1930's. They are Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The first novels of these well known writers were published in (1935), (1935) and (1938) respectively. Through their idiosyncracies and experiences they have written novels in Indian English. The most prolific among these great novelists was Mulk Raj Anand who was born in a coppersmith family and ill-educated because western culture was taught at the cost of Indian tradition. Though Anand was a tireless traveller he had a close nexus with many literary and cultural associations in India and abroad. Besides being a writer he was engaged in social work.

Mulk Raj Anand

Anand's fiction is a mixture of European tradition and Indian past. He derives his fervent socialist faith and vision of egalitarian society from western tradition. He has written autobiographical novels like 'Seven Summers' and 'The Private Life of an Indian Prince'. He has taken words, phrases, expletives, some expressions and proverbs from his own mother tongue i.e. Punjabi and also from Hindi.

Mulk Raj Anand the eldest of the trio was the pioneer of Indian English literature. Story telling was the gift of his mother. His intellectual development made him revolt against social evils like orthodoxy, bigotry and economic exploitation of the have nots by the haves. Through his novels he has depicted the picture of the downtrodden and the untouchable who had become the victims of exploitation. The real picture of Indian life before Independence can be understood by his novels. Though he was sophisticated and cosmopolitan in his

Outlook and philosophy of life he had sympathy for the downtrodden and the untouchable. His concern for the downtrodden and untouchables made him write about social evils of the society. He was a prolific writer because besides creative stories there are books on art, paintings and literature to his credit. He deserves for the reputation of being 'a pioneer novelist'.

We can observe a new trend of realism and social protest in his fiction. It can be seen in his early novels Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and A Bud. He has portrayed the life of the downtrodden and the oppressed in his novels. The central figures of these novels are ordinary people, class hat redness can be seen in his protagonist, sweeper in 'Untouchable', race hat redness in his protagonist in 'Coolie' and inhuman cruelty in his protagonist a peasant in 'Two Leaves and A Bud'. His characters are victims of exploitation. He deserves to be called the champion of the downtrodden and the oppressed, whereas his trilogy- The village (1939), Across the Black waters

(1941), and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) deal with a Protagonist who is a peasant.

“Sociological imagination stands as the backbone of Anand’s artistic achievement”.

“He juxtaposes the deprivation of some of their human needs with select stories of societal exploitation and explores the hypocrisy and the evil designs of the rich and the powerful who manipulate certain social system with vested interests and at the cost of the poor and the needy”.

“His fiction techniques do have flaws. His plot construction may have certain clumsiness, his subject matter may be dirty and may sound appalling to the ears of the some of the puritanical elite but intentions in the pursuit of truth through fictional rendering of the subject matter are indescribably clean.”

R.K. Narayan

If Anand’s novels have human touch, R.K. Narayan’s novels are ironic, sympathetic and deal with imagination and realism. The fictional world of R.K. Narayan appears to be a transcription of the actual world which we live in. His novels float as gently as a lily pad on the surface of Indian life and yet suggest the depths beneath. He has dealt neither in fashionable modes of fiction – writing nor in themes of eye – catching topicality. In almost all his novels, he chooses matters of ordinary everyday life. A part of the national life, his novels are universal in their appeal. They please the one and the many.

Most of R.K. Narayan’s novels rotate around an imaginary place called Malgudi.

His first novel is ‘*Swamy and Friends*’. It tells us the story of a school boy. Narayan tells us the story of an average boy in a humorous way by recapturing the freshness of boyhood days. The will and pranks and punishments of the boyhood are portrayed in a humorous way. Pathos and pains during childhood are not mentioned.

His novel ‘*The Bachelor of Arts*’ (1937) is about the story of Chandran, a sensitive youth caught in a conflict between the western ideas of love and marriage instilled into him by his education and the traditional social set up in which he lives. He becomes a sanyasi because of frustration and realizes that traditions are not an imposition so he returns and marries in a traditional way. We may smile at the adolescent gropings of Chandran but we are sympathetic towards him. At the end we realize that the novelist has not tried to probe the real implications of the conflict.

Narayan wrote great works after independence thus he became major writer after reaching maturity. There is a good humoured irony in his three novels ‘*The Financial Expert* (1952)’, ‘*The Guide* (1958)’, and ‘*The Man Eater of Malgudi*’.

His simple diction mirrors the daily rhythm of life of the middle class people of Malgudi. What happens in Malgudi is in fact what happens to the Indians in general.

His novels are an intricate alliance of the serious and the comic, tuned to a series of realistic experiences and encounters. They reflect the typical India. Myth in Narayan figures as the ultimate vision of Indian reality. Indian reality in his novels is

reflected in the perpetual clash between tradition and modernity.

What is true of Magudi is true of India. Though a fictional creation, Magudi breathes the aroma of Indian life.

Exploitation of the downtrodden and the oppressed can be observed not only in his novels but also short stories like 'The Priest and the Pigeons' 'Mahadev and Parvati' etc.

Indianness can be noticed as far as selection of theme, characterisation and art of narration in his story telling. Indian customs and conventions have been depicted in the writings of R. K. Narayan.

"Narayan with his keen observation of the various faiths and beliefs of Indians along with the customs and conventions that prevail in India has presented them all through his novels and short stories with a meticulous regard for verisimilitude the sadhus, sanyasis, the common men we have been observing in our life are found in his novels.

The theme of influence of Gandhi and freedom struggle can be seen in his novel "Waiting for Mahatma".

'Swami and Friends' presents socio-economic condition of pre-independence along with the different stages of school age which marks the life of its central figure Swaminathan.

'The Dark Room' is a sociological novel which portrays the typical Indian life where in it is believed that disobeying husband is a sin.

Raja Rao

Born in a Brahmin family Rao was not only educated in India but also in Europe, so, his

education and writings have both Indian and European influences. Rao had attachment with the Indian philosophy; it can be seen in his writings. He went to France to study about western philosophy and mysticism; he spent most of his life abroad especially in France and the United States before his death. His novel 'Kanthapura' is well known for its classic foreword which can help others to develop a variety of Indian English. Actually, it is a herculean task to write an Indian tale in an alien tongue. Here, Rao faced a problem while writing Kanthapura. i.e. whether language is 'subordinate to culture or culture is subordinate to language'. Ultimately, he resolved this dichotomy by indigenising English language thus by making language subordinate to culture. Though he adopted western novel form but the novel is in an epic tradition as the narrative technique is like that.

Raja Rao had got mastery over his skill of writing when he wrote 'Kanthapura' because he had written many works in Kannada and short stories and essays in English. So, the novel 'Kanthapura' is a magnum opus of Raja Rao.

Unlike any other Indian English writer Raja Rao makes India real not to Europeans but to Indians themselves.

Raja Rao's first novel 'Kanthapura' portrays rustic life with incredible freshness and originality. It is a singular achievement by any standards for it heralds the advent of an authentic Indian English novel as much in its texture of experience as in its preface which is appropriately called a classic and a

“counterpart of some epoch making discovery or invention in science.

In ‘Kanthapura’, Moorthy is the hero of the novel who brings gradually Gandhism to Kanthapura. In this novel people were influenced by Gandhi so it is like retelling of the story of Gandhiji which is written in his autobiography ‘My Experiments with Truth’.

‘The Serpent and The Rope’ is a Philosophical novel .He had realized the confrontation of eastern and western culture when he wrote this novel. Since it is an autobiographical novel some critics have regarded it as a spiritual autobiography.

‘The Cat and Shakespeare’ is the third novel. The novelist has subtitled it as ‘a philosophical comedy’. Raja Rao is said to

have remarked that “The Cat and Shakespeare’ is substantially based on certain events in real life and that the novel is a sequel to “The Serpent and the Rope”. Since the people of the times were anticipating freedom and Socio- Political change in the life of the people, many writers at that time wrote about freedom struggle.

To conclude we can say that Mulk Raj Anand wrote about social evils; and R.K. Narayan about common people and tried to bring social realism in his novels; where as Raja Rao’s works are philosophical and has highlighted Brahmanism in some of his novels like Kanthapura, The Serpent and The Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare. Because the central characters of these novels are Brahmins.

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