



DIVERGENT PATHS, SHARED THEMES: COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF NATIONALISM IN THE SHORT FICTION OF R.K. NARAYAN AND MULK RAJ ANAND

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study examines the complex ways in which two distinguished Indian writers—R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand—explore nationalism in their short stories. Under the heading "Divergent Paths, Shared Themes," the study explores the various paths these literary giants take while expressing nationalist feelings in the context of colonial India. Narayan's stories offer a distinctive perspective on the complexities of nationalism because of their nuanced and sometimes funny examination of daily life in made-up communities like Malgudi. On the other hand, Anand's paintings, which are renowned for their socio-realistic portrayal of the downtrodden and marginalised, provide a closer look at the socio-political environment. In spite of their different methods, the research reveals common themes that cut beyond the distinctive narrative approaches of Narayan and Anand. These themes reveal underlying themes of identity, resistance, and the desire for autonomy that unite their works within the larger framework of Indian nationalism. By shedding light on the various ways that authors use short fiction to navigate the difficulties of their cultural and political context, this research advances our knowledge of the multiple ways that nationalism is expressed in Indian literature.

Keywords: *Divergent Paths, Shared Themes, Nationalism, Short Fiction, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand*



1. INTRODUCTION

The writings of R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand are timeless mainstays in the field of Indian literature, perfectly encapsulating the spirit of a changing country both before and after independence. Narayan and Anand, two well-known authors of Indian English literature, have made names for themselves with their vivid narrative and thoughtful analysis of social and political concerns. The purpose of this research, "Divergent Paths, Shared Themes: Comparative Studies of Nationalism in the Short Fiction of R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand," is to examine how nationalism is woven into each author's short story on a complex level. Despite coming from comparable cultural and historical backgrounds, the authors use different storytelling techniques to examine the nuances of nationalist feelings that were common in colonial and post-colonial India. This study attempts to shed light on the complex expressions of identity, resistance, and autonomy within the larger framework of Indian nationalism by carefully examining the short fiction of Narayan and Anand. It also seeks to highlight the distinctive paths taken by each author as well as the common themes that unite their works.

R.K. Narayan offers a unique perspective for analysing the characteristics of nationalism. He is frequently praised for his humorous stories and depiction of the made-up village of Malgudi. His stories explore the commonplace yet significant experiences of people navigating a shifting socio-political landscape against the backdrop of ordinary existence. In contrast to more overt political rhetoric, Narayan's nuanced and sometimes sarcastic style encourages readers to consider the nuances of nationalist emotion.

On the other hand, Mulk Raj Anand, who is renowned for his socio-realistic portrayals of the downtrodden and marginalised, takes a bold stance against the socio-political problems of his era. Anand's stories are effective means of examining the harsh realities that different social classes must contend with. They offer an unvarnished and unadulterated picture of what it is like to be human in the midst of colonial tyranny and post-independence struggles. His creations serve as a platform for examining nationalist fervour from the perspectives of social justice and human rights.



As we set out on this comparative trip, the research seeks to reveal the distinctive ways in which Narayan and Anand contribute to the literary fabric of Indian nationalism, as well as to pinpoint the common themes that cut across their disparate narrative approaches. By doing this, we seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the many ways that these notable authors interact with and add to the national dialogue in the context of Indian short fiction. "Divergent Paths, Shared Themes" aims to further the conversation of how literature, culture, and national identity interact in the rich fabric of Indian literature through this investigation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brown and Held's (2010) The work "The Cosmopolitan Reader" is fundamental to comprehending cosmopolitanism. The topic of cosmopolitanism is explored throughout the book, with a focus on how people and communities are interrelated globally. The writers discuss concerns of political globalisation, cultural diversity, and ethical dilemmas while navigating a variety of viewpoints. The study is crucial in establishing the foundation for the analysis of cosmopolitan ideals in relation to literature and the right to free speech in general.

Sarah Clarke's (2013) conversation with First-hand information about the difficulties writers encounter is provided by Kiran Desai, especially in light of India's restrictions on free speech. The Pen Delhi Center's founding and the growing dangers to free speech in the area are topics of discussion in the interview. The review delves into the complex interplay between cosmopolitan aspirations and the socio-political realities that writers face in their quest for unrestrained expression, drawing on Desai's observations.

Siddhartha Deb's (2014) The Arundhati Roy profile gives the review a touch of literary insurrection. This study delves into the life and contributions of Arundhati Roy, who is described as a "not-so-reluctant renegade." Deb's article explores Roy's activism, her criticism of hierarchies of power, and her audacious positions on a range of sociopolitical topics. This portion of the literature study examines how authors like Roy, by defying social conventions, stretching the bounds of speech, and resisting repressive forces, exemplify cosmopolitan values.

John Ezard's (2006) This article, which describes the victory of a first-time Booker Prize winner who overcome overwhelming odds, depicts a crucial point in literary history. The assessment



delves into the accomplishment's significance, particularly considering the winner's familial ties to the literary community. It explores the nuances of literary acclaim, illuminating the relationship between individual stories, family legacies, and the larger literary canon.

Le Prix Femina's (2015) The celebration of literature adopts a distinctive feminist viewpoint. The literary prize assessment provides valuable perspectives on acknowledging and elevating female voices in writing. This literature review's section on Le Prix Femina's influence on the canon of literature emphasises how crucial it is to support and value a variety of narratives, especially those that centre on the experiences of women.

Avijit Ghosh's (2008) The article explores Arundhati Roy's contentious opinions on Kashmir's struggle for independence from India. The literature study looks at how authors participate in political discourse and how their viewpoints might spark arguments and conflicts. It investigates the relationship between literature and socio-political issues, raising concerns about where to draw the lines between an author's advocacy for political causes and their status as a literary character.

3. LITERARY LANDSCAPE OF R.K. NARAYAN

Renowned Indian English writer R.K. Narayan made a lasting impression on the literary world with his incisive comments on the intricacies of Indian culture and his rich, evocative narrative. Narayan, who was born in Madras (now Chennai) in 1906, started his writing career during the Indian independence movement in the 1930s. Many of his works were set in the imaginary Indian town of Malgudi, which served as a background for the investigation of human experiences in a fast shifting socio-political environment.

Writing in a straightforward and humorous manner, Narayan deviates from the popular tendency of his day. Narayan expertly creates a tapestry that encapsulates the spirit of Indian life via his seemingly commonplace stories, which frequently feature common people experiencing everyday issues. Some of his best-known short stories include "Malgudi Days," "An Astrologer's Day," and "The Guide," which demonstrate how he can give global subjects a uniquely Indian twist.



The conflict between tradition and modernity, the peculiarities of human behaviour, and the effects of social and cultural change are among the issues Narayan often explores in his writings. Although his stories aren't explicitly political, they offer a nuanced criticism of social mores and show the changing hopes of a country on the verge of independence.

Beyond his short stories, Narayan has written novels including "Swami and Friends," "The Bachelor of Arts," and the critically praised "The Guide." His writings have been translated into several languages, bringing him international acclaim and reinforcing his status as a universally likeable storyteller.

Examining R.K. Narayan's creative output, one must recognise his influence on the development of Indian literature. His distinct style—a mix of warmth, wit, and wisdom—resonates with readers all over the world. His literary brilliance is demonstrated by his ability to interpret Indian society's intricacies through the prism of Malgudi, cementing his place in the pantheon of great Indian writers.

3.1. Biography and Context

Reading R.K. Narayan's biography is essential to comprehending the background that influenced his creative works. Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan was born on October 10, 1906, in Madras (now Chennai). His family was a typical South Indian Brahmin family. His incisive observations of human behaviour and cultural quirks were shaped by his early schooling at the Lutheran Mission School and his subsequent studies at Maharaja's College in Mysore. Narayan attended the University of Mysore for a short time, but his real education came from his extensive reading of Russian and English literature.

Narayan's career as a writer started in journalism, where he covered stories for many publications. But what really pushed him into the fiction realm was his connection with the renowned British writer Graham Greene. Narayan's narrative delighted Greene, who assisted him in getting a publication deal for his debut book, "Swami and Friends" (1935), which introduced the fictitious village of Malgudi.

To grasp the background of Narayan's writings, one must grasp the historical setting in which he developed as a writer. India struggled with its colonial heritage and the fervour of the



independence movement in the early to mid-20th century. The hopes and difficulties encountered by a country on the verge of liberation are captured in Narayan's works, which discreetly reflect the socio-political upheavals of the time.

Over the course of his six-decade book writing career, Narayan wrote many critically regarded novels, including as "The Bachelor of Arts" (1937), "The Dark Room" (1938), and "The English Teacher" (1945). By establishing Malgudi as a literary hub, he was able to investigate a little version of India and offer a platform for stories that cut over geographical borders and spoke to a wide range of readers.

His interest in literature went beyond the works he wrote. As a prolific essayist and contributor to literary publications, Narayan shared his thoughts on Indian literature and his creative process. He was bestowed with several accolades and medals for his noteworthy contributions to Indian literature, such as the Padma Bhushan and the Sahitya Akademi Award.

R.K. Narayan's life story sheds light on the social and personal circumstances that shaped his creative pursuits and is masterfully woven into the cultural fabric of early to mid-20th century India. His body of work continues to serve as a tribute to the ability of narrative to convey the spirit of a country going through significant change.

3.2. Stylistic Approaches in Short Fiction

The long-lasting attraction of R.K. Narayan's short stories is largely due to his stylistic choices. Narayan's writing style is distinguished by its simplicity. Readers may easily identify with his storylines because of his unpretentious grace, clarity, and accessibility in writing. Narayan gives his stories a general character that makes them approachable to a wide readership by using simple, unadorned language.

Another characteristic of Narayan's artistic range is humour. His stories, which are full of humour and sarcasm, frequently examine the positive aspects of human existence despite hardship. Whether it's covert or overt, this humour gives Narayan's stories a unique appeal while he navigates the difficulties of daily life in Malgudi. This humorous element offers a subtle reflection on the absurdities of human nature and social conventions in addition to providing entertainment value.



Linear and episodic forms are common characteristics of Narayan's narrative structure. His short pieces, like those found in "Malgudi Days," flow naturally and depict specific instances in the life of common people. Without the necessity for complex narrative developments, this episodic format enables a focus on individual experiences, giving readers an understanding of the cultural and social dynamics of Malgudi.

Narayan uses metaphor and symbolism a lot in his short stories. The made-up town of Malgudi turns into a potent emblem that captures the essence of India and the variety of experiences that its residents have to offer. Readers are encouraged to go beyond the surface story and discover deeper levels of significance by the metaphorical weight that characters and situations frequently bear.

Narayan's stories get authenticity by his use of regional flavour and cultural characteristics. Although his themes are universal, the story tapestry is made richer by the addition of South Indian cultures, traditions, and colloquialisms. In addition to giving the stories a striking backdrop, this regional authenticity advances the larger objective of conserving and honouring the diversity of Indian culture.

In his short stories, R.K. Narayan employs stylistic methods that are distinguished by a great sense of regional authenticity, simplicity, humour, episodic structure, and symbolism. All of these components work together to give his writings a timeless and multicultural appeal, allowing readers of all backgrounds to connect with the stories and relate to the universal topics that are tackled in the made-up world of Malgudi.

3.3. Themes of Nationalism Explored

The subtle examination of nationalism in R.K. Narayan's short stories is woven into the fabric of Malgudi's daily existence. His writings provide incisive insights on the socio-political milieu of colonial and post-colonial India, even if they are not overtly political. A recurrent motif is the conflict between modernity and tradition, which captures the larger strain that an independent nation faces. Characters like Swami from "Swami and Friends," who stand in for the struggle between traditional beliefs and British education, help Narayan traverse this issue.



One other major nationalist topic in Narayan's works is the search for identity. Characters frequently struggle with issues of identity in the face of cultural shifts. Narayan's stories illustrate how people struggle to maintain their cultural identity and feeling of belonging in the face of outside pressures. In a nation on the verge of independence, this investigation of identity speaks to the larger search for a national identity.

Narayan's novels delicately weave in resistance to colonial control and the effects of political upheaval on regular people. Although his stories are not overtly political, they nevertheless convey the underlying resistance and the common Indian person's tenacity in the face of colonial hardships. Stories like "The English Teacher," in which the protagonist struggles with personal loss against the backdrop of a shifting political environment, highlight this issue in particular.

Narayan delves deeper into nationalism by examining how society norms are portrayed and how women's roles are changing. His female characters, such as Rosie in "The Guide," frequently defy expectations and represent how women's status is evolving in a world where women are expected to have more autonomy. This subject fits nicely with the larger story of a country redefining its social systems and pursuing self-determination.

In addition, Narayan explores the ideas of independence and self-government in his stories. The characters in the made-up town of Malgudi represent the hopes and hardships of a people vying for independence, and the town itself comes to represent a microcosm of India. Characters like Raju in "The Guide," whose path depicts the individual's goal of personal freedom matching the nation's fight for independence, exemplify the longing for autonomy.

In his subtle yet deep short stories, R.K. Narayan explores nationalism via themes of identity, resistance, societal change, and the pursuit of autonomy. Narayan adds to the rich tapestry of Indian literature that embodies the spirit of a nation in transition by offering readers a distinctive viewpoint on the challenges of nationalism via the prism of daily life in Malgudi.

4. MULK RAJ ANAND: SOCIO-REALISM AND NATIONALISM

Mulk Raj Anand is a well-known author of Indian English literature, and his socio-realist style blends well with his examination of nationalism in his writing. Anand's viewpoint on literature



was shaped by his observations of the socioeconomic inequalities and injustices that were common in colonial India when he was born in Peshawar in 1905. His early awareness of the hardships faced by the poor served as inspiration for his dedication to social realism in narrative.

Anand's portrayal of persons from the lowest classes of society is distinctly socio-realist; he frequently emphasises their hardships, goals, and the effects of structural injustices. This emphasis fits in with the larger socio-political backdrop of early to mid-20th-century India, when caste inequality, poverty, and the exploitation of the weaker classes were major topics of discussion in the country. Pieces like "Untouchable" and "Coolie" demonstrate Anand's dedication to depicting the terrible reality that the marginalised people must endure.

Anand tackles issues of national identity and social justice in his socio-realist stories, and nationalism is a recurring theme. The portrayal of the exploitation of the lower classes is not a standalone problem; rather, it is closely linked to the larger fight for independence. Anand highlights the dehumanising consequences of caste prejudice through the eyes of individuals like Bakha in "Untouchable," underscoring the necessity of social transformation as a crucial component of the nationalist programme.

Anand explores nationalism in literature, but his critique of it goes beyond only denouncing socioeconomic injustice to include colonial control in general. In "Two Leaves and a Bud," Anand explores the cruel methods used on tea plantations, emphasising how repressive British colonialism was by highlighting the suffering of the working class. Thus, his stories serve as a means of demonstrating how social and political concerns are intertwined within the larger context of the nationalist movement.

Moreover, Anand's admiration for Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence and civil disobedience is evident in his characters' efforts to peacefully oppose repressive institutions. Anand illustrates the significance of the individual in supporting a broader, communal struggle for national liberation via the eyes of characters like Sohini in "The Village," who defies restrictive standards.

In summary, nationalism and socio-realism are deeply entwined in Mulk Raj Anand's work. His dedication to portraying the reality of a class-based society is consistent with his social



justice philosophy, which is in line with the larger nationalist thrust of colonial India. The symbiotic link between literature, societal critique, and the pursuit of a just and independent nation is demonstrated by Anand's works.

4.1. Life and Times of Mulk Raj Anand

Raj Mulk the turbulent socio-political climate of 20th-century India is reflected in Anand's life and times, and his personal journey significantly influenced the literary works he produced. Anand was born in Peshawar, Pakistan, on December 12, 1905, and raised in a period of intense political turmoil as India struggled under British colonial rule. His early life, marked by the death of his mother when he was a small child, exposed him to the harsh reality of economic and social inequality, which affected his later commitment to social realism in literature.

Anand travelled to the United Kingdom for his academic studies, graduating from the University of Cambridge with a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics. This exposure to Western intellectual traditions, along with his direct views of colonial exploitation, influenced his worldview and contributed to the construction of his literary sensibility. After coming back to India, Anand actively participated in a number of socio-political movements, identifying with the principles of equality and social justice.

Anand's life reached a turning point in the 1930s, when the Indian independence movement was gaining momentum. He got acquainted with significant literary and political luminaries of the time, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. During this period of his life, Anand's profound engagement with the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and his dedication to using literature to address social issues became apparent.

When Anand's first book, "Untouchable," was published in 1935, his literary career officially got underway. His literary exploration of social realism began with this work, which centred on the plight of the Dalit community. Subsequent works like "Coolie" (1936) and "Two Leaves and a Bud" (1937) continued to dive into the harsh reality faced by the disadvantaged and exploited sectors of society, fitting with his dedication to confronting social injustices.

Anand maintained a multifarious image throughout his life, making contributions to academia, journalism, cinema, and literature in addition to literature. His affiliation with the Progressive



Writers' Movement, a literary collective focusing on social concerns, further highlighted his determination to utilising writing as a weapon for societal change. Anand's foreign experience and friendships with literary luminaries like as George Orwell and E.M. Forster greatly broadened his literary viewpoint.

Mulk Raj Anand's life and times were marked by a convergence of personal experiences and historical events. His trip from Peshawar to Cambridge and back to India, along with his active engagement in the Indian independence struggle, acted as the crucible for his socially charged creative works. Anand's legacy survives as an important voice in Indian literature, representing the ethos of his period and his unrelenting dedication to tackling social concerns via the written word.

4.2. Narrative Techniques and Literary Style

Raj Mulk Especially in the field of Indian English literature, Anand's unique narrative approaches and literary style add to the impact of his works. Anand's storytelling is distinguished by a captivating fusion of humanism, social realism, and an acute awareness of the nuances of the human condition. His storytelling approaches frequently feature an honest and unapologetic depiction of social injustices, bringing the harsh truths that befall the marginalised to readers' attention on both an intellectual and an emotional level.

Anand uses vivid and emotive imagery to give his stories a sense of immediacy, which is one of his most prominent narrative approaches. Anand uses vivid language to transport the reader to the sights, sounds, and smells of the locations he depicts, whether he is portraying the filth of slums, the flurry of activity in marketplaces, or the harsh circumstances of labour. This level of sensory detail highlights the author's genuine social realism and deepens the reader's connection with the story.

Anand's dedication to empathetic and nuanced portrayals of the human experience is evident in his writing approach. He frequently creates complicated characters that capture the variety of personalities and life experiences seen in the various strata he examines. His writings gain depth from this subtle characterization, which enables readers to relate to and comprehend the motivations of even the most marginalised people.



In Anand's writing, dialogues are essential because they provide a platform for expressing a range of viewpoints and societal commentary. His dialogues imitate the rhythm of everyday conversation, which makes character interactions seem more genuine. Anand addresses social and political topics via dialogue, giving characters a forum to express their challenges, goals, and criticisms of the current socioeconomic system.

Anand's narrative toolset also includes his use of symbols. Whether they take the shape of things, deeds, or personalities, symbolic representations imply deeper meanings that go beyond the main storyline. In "Coolie," for instance, the journey of the main character serves as a symbolic examination of the more general difficulties experienced by labourers in a colonial setting. Anand's stories become more complicated as a result of this usage of symbolism, which encourages readers to think critically.

Additionally, Anand frequently incorporates mythology, folklore, and cultural customs into his narrative tactics. His compositions have a rich texture added by this interweaving of cultural allusions, which also root them in the larger framework of Indian tradition while addressing current socio-political challenges.

Mulch A strong blend of social realism, vivid imagery, complex characterisation, dialogue-driven storytelling, symbolism, and a close understanding of cultural surroundings define Raj Anand's narrative approaches and literary style. These components combine together to provide Anand's writings an enduring influence that elevates them beyond other Indian literary works and makes them effective platforms for social criticism and humanistic inquiry.

4.3. Nationalist Themes in Anand's Short Stories

The nationalist themes that permeate Mulk Raj Anand's short stories reflect his active participation in the Indian independence struggle and his dedication to social justice. Anand contributes to the larger conversation on nationalism by addressing the complex issues that a heterogeneous and hierarchical society under colonial authority had to deal with through his stories.

Anand's criticism of caste systems and societal inequalities is a recurring nationalist subject in his short tales. Anand, a passionate supporter of social justice, exposes the inequalities and



dehumanising features of caste prejudice via his personal narratives. In pieces such as "The Big Heart," Anand shows individuals emancipating themselves from conventional bonds, highlighting the necessity of a fairer society as a crucial part of the nationalist programme.

Significant themes in Anand's short stories include labour exploitation and the suffering of the working class, which are consistent with the larger socio-political milieu of colonial India. For example, in "The Barber's Trade Union," Anand draws attention to the difficulties faced by workers and the necessity of organising in order to oppose unjust working circumstances. This topic speaks to the nationalist fervour of the era, when the fight for political independence became entwined with the struggle against economic exploitation.

Another significant element in Anand's short tales is his examination of gender issues within the nationalist framework. Lachmi, a character in "The Village," defies gender norms and embodies the spirit of women actively engaged in the nationalist struggle. Anand's stories highlight the necessity for women to be equal collaborators in the struggle for independence and the connections between gender equality and national freedom.

A recurrent issue in Anand's works is how colonialism affected cultural identity and customs. Anand illustrates how colonial influence erodes ancient practises in "The Wayfarer," for example. This examination of cultural identity is consistent with the larger nationalist ideology that aimed to protect and restore indigenous cultures against the cultural hegemony of colonialism.

Characters that openly support nationalism are common in Anand's short stories. Anand depicts people claiming their agency in the pursuit of national dignity, whether it is through the protagonist of "Across the Black Waters," who enlists in the British Indian Army during World War I with the goal of gaining self-respect and recognition for his nation, or the characters in "The Tractor," who fight against colonial forces' imposition of modernity.

The nationalist themes woven throughout Mulk Raj Anand's short stories speak to the larger socio-political context of colonial India. By delving into topics such as gender concerns, caste discrimination, labour exploitation, cultural identity, and active involvement in the nationalist struggle, Anand creates tales that help us comprehend the difficulties a nation faces as it strives



for freedom. His tales serve as mirrors that reflect the nuances of the nationalist struggle in addition to serving as windows into the various lives of individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

"Divergent Paths, Shared Themes," a comparative analysis of nationalism in the short fiction of R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand, reveals a rich tapestry of Indian literary expressions throughout the critical junctures of colonial and post-colonial India. Anand's socio-realist portrayals of the marginalised and Narayan's nuanced, humorous examination of Malgudi daily life contrast through different narrative techniques, although both writers converge on similar themes. Across all of their works, themes of identity, resistance, and the pursuit of autonomy are present, beyond the particular narrative approaches. Anand's stories deal directly with socio-political reality, whereas Narayan's Malgudi becomes a microcosm of complex nationalist feelings. Collectively, their literary works offer a thorough and balanced perspective on the various aspects of Indian nationalism, deepening our comprehension of the challenges posed by the subcontinent's varied cultural milieu while seeking independence.

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