



# Cultural Portraits and Social Critiques: Examining the Works of R.K Narayan and Mulkraj Anand

*Vasundhara Kanwar Shekhawat, Dr. Garima Chauhan*

*Research Scholar, Assistant Professor*

**Department of Development Studies**

**Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur**

## **Abstract:**

R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand are famous Indian writers and novelists who work on Indian Culture and Social Issues. They have shown the picture of ordinary people and realistic depiction of Indian society in their work. R.K. Narayan focuses on characters, narratives, customs, traditions and contemporary issues while Mulkraj Anand focuses on social injustice, poverty and caste discrimination. They both describe the complexities of human relationships like themes of love, friendship, family dynamics and societal expectations. Narayan's work was based on fictional town of Malgudi while Anand's work was based on rural villages where they captured the nature of Indian life and culture. They both talked about how modernization impact traditional Indian values and life, problems and conflicts, and how new challenges faced by people. By comparing their works, we gain a comprehensive view of Indian culture and the diverse social challenges it encompasses. The research will use the appropriate methods; both primary and secondary data will be utilized along with the analysis for the purpose.

**Keywords:** Indian Culture, Human Relationships, Societal Issues, Poverty and Caste Discrimination

## **Introduction:**

R.K. Narayan was famous Indian writer and novelist born in 1906, Chennai. He was known for his simple and engaging storytelling style which captures the nature of Indian life. His work beautifully captures the everyday life of ordinary people in India which was showing the culture, tradition and societal norms, and new challenges faced by people in their daily life. Narayan's stories are known for their humor, wit, irony and deep insights into human relationships and societal issues. He was famous for his fictional writing style of south Indian town of Malgudi. His narratives often navigate the tension between modernization and age-old customs. He picturize Indian life artistically in his work and shows daily life struggle, circumstances, challenges faced my middle class person in his life. His characters and stories are based on reality.

Mulkraj Anand was also a famous Indian writer and novelist for his literary work in English born in 1905, Peshawar, Pakistan. He was one of the first Indian author to write in English and gained recognition for his unique storytelling focusing on social issues. He was highlighting social issues and lives of poorer caste in traditional Indian society in his writing. He mainly focused on poverty, suffering, caste discrimination, hunger and exploitation and the place of women in society in India in his work. Anand's work showed the harsh reality of time and sparked conversation about social reform and equality in his novels, short stories and essays.

Anand's works not only entertained readers but also served as a powerful tool for social commentary and reflection on the human condition.

#### **Aims and Objectives of the studies:**

1. To examine how Narayan and Anand depict facets of Indian society upon caste system and its impact on individuals and communities.
2. To examine how Narayan and Anand depicts upon poverty and socio-economic disparities.
3. To examine gender roles and women's status in society.
4. To study the cultural traditions, customs and rituals.
5. To investigate the influence of historical, political, cultural context on thematic choices and narrative structures of Narayan and Anand's work.
6. To study the interconnection of Indian Culture and Social Issues (R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand's work).
7. To compare Indian Culture and Social Issues.
8. To find out the pattern of selection of themes of genres of literature and their connection with Indian culture and society.

#### **Methodology used in the present studies:**

The present study is based on comparative study by using analytical and descriptive method. There is a great influence of society and Indian culture on any kind of Indian Literature/ Literature. R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand were influenced by society and culture and vice versa. Literature and both objects (Indian Culture and Social Issues) are interconnected with each other. Primary and Secondary source of information is used in this research. The MLA methodology will be strictly followed.

**Data Collection Method-** The data required for the proposed research work will be collection from various related books, research articles and web sources.

**Data Analysis Method-** The researcher will use qualitative method of data analyses.

#### **Indian Culture:**

R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand both offer unique perspectives on Indian culture through their works. Narayan's portrayal of Indian culture is detailed and rich, showing different aspects and layers of it. He captures the rituals, traditions, and social hierarchies of Indian life with a blend of affection and critique. His skill in blending folklore, superstitions, and daily customs into his stories enriches his portrayal of Indian cultural identity. His narratives capture the essence of Indian traditions, customs, and values through the lens of relatable characters and familiar landscape while Anand's work on Indian culture focuses on portraying the lives of different people in Indian society. He delves into the traditions, customs, and social issues that shape the cultural landscape of India. Through his stories, Anand sheds light on the diversity, challenges, and richness of Indian culture, showcasing the complexities and nuances of societal norms and values. Anand's narratives serve as a commentary on the cultural, social, and political landscape of India, offering a deeper exploration of the cultural fabric and its impact on people's lives. Narayan's focus is more on the personal and intimate aspects of Indian culture within communities while on the other hand, Anand's work provides a broader and more critical examination of the societal issues embedded in the cultural tapestry of India.

#### **Human Relationships:**

R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand both explore human relationships in their works, but in different ways. Narayan focuses on personal relationships within communities, portraying the everyday interactions of individual in small town settings. His protagonists, like Swami in "Swami and Friends", often navigate the tensions between familial expectations and personal aspirations, providing insights into the generational and cultural dynamics prevalent in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century India. Anand delves into broader social issues affecting relationships, addressing themes like caste discrimination and poverty that impact how people relate to each other. Narayan's stories are more about personal connections between characters, while Anand's work sheds light on the societal structures influencing these relationships.

#### **Societal Issues:**

R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand focused on societal issues in their work. Narayan's writing style is known for being simple, humor and subtly ironic. He typically sets his stories in the fictional town of Malgudi, which acts as a miniature representation of Indian society. He focuses on ordinary people facing everyday problems, using their experiences to reflect broader societal issues. He often delves into themes such as the clash between tradition and modernity, the complexities of caste and class distinctions, and

the challenges women encounter when dealing with traditional gender roles and expectations. In his novel “The Guide”, he examines the consequences of personal ambition and societal expectations through the protagonist Raju’s journey from a tourist guide to a spiritual guide. On the other hand, if we talk about Anand’s writing style, it is more direct and sometimes challenging. His works carry a strong sense of social realism and urgency. He focuses on the lives of those who are oppressed and marginalized, like lower caste individuals, peasants and laborers. He addresses significant societal issues such as caste discrimination in “Untouchable” and exploitation of laborers in “Coolie”.

#### **Poverty and Caste Discrimination:**

Narayan writes about poor characters that face their challenges with strength and humor. He shows how poverty impacts their daily lives in small and sometimes funny ways. When it comes to caste discrimination, Narayan talks about it indirectly. He includes the social hierarchy and its unfairness in his stories, but it’s not always the main point. Narayan uses light humor to point out the silliness and injustice of the caste system in his works. On the other hand, Anand writes about poverty in strong and direct way. His characters, like in “Coolie”, go through a lot of suffering due to exploitation and tough living conditions. His aim is to make readers understand the seriousness and harshness of poverty. When it comes to caste discrimination, Anand doesn’t hold back. In “Untouchable”, he vividly describes how Dalits (the lower caste) are mistreated. His intention is to reveal the harsh reality of the caste system and push for change.

#### **Conclusion:**

R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand’s work on Indian Culture and Social Issues shows the everyday life’s struggle of normal Indian people, their tradition, culture, social dynamics and inequality. They talked about the harsh reality of society where people face caste discrimination, injustice, poverty, labour work, etc. They both focused on themes, style, narrative techniques in their work. Both writers’ writings show the value of Indian society which preserve India’s rich cultural heritage. R.K. Narayan delves into the personal struggles of individuals in a changing Indian society, emphasizing the clash between tradition and modernity. In contrast, Mulkraj Anand portrays social realism by vividly depicting poverty, caste discrimination and exploitation of marginalized group, with protagonist symbolizing resistance to social injustice. Narayan employs humor, irony and gentle satire to critique societal norms. On the other hand, Anand uses stark realism, vivid description, and emotive language to evoke empathy and raise social consciousness. Narayan’s stories often highlight the quirks and idiosyncrasies of characters within the societal norms of the time. Anand’s work often critiques caste hierarchies, systemic injustices, and social inequalities prevalent in Indian society. Their short stories and novels picturised the new challenges, modernization and experience faced by people. Overall, this holds the understanding of Indian Literature, culture, universal themes and human experience.

#### **Work Cited:**

1. Indian Culture and Society in R.K. Narayan’s Literature World. IJARSCT, Volume 4, Issue 3, April 2021
2. International Journal of English Research. ISSN: 2455-2186; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.32. Volume 2; Issue 2; March 2016; Page No. 50-52
3. A Brief Comparative Thematic Study of Novels of Anand and Narayan. Volume-8, ISSUE-2, FEBRUARY-2019. PRINT ISSN NO 2277- 8160
4. Review of Social Approaches in the Novel of R.K. Narayan. Webology (ISSN: 1735-188X) Volume 18, Number 5, 2021