



EXPLORATION OF NATURE IN THE WORKS OF THE FAMOUS 'TRIO' OF INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

Dr. Bindu Karanwal

Professor

Shambhu Dayal P. G. College,
Ghaziabad, U.P.

Ms. Archana

Research Scholar

Ch. Charan Singh University,
Meerut, U.P.

Abstract

The present paper is an exploration of nature in some of the works of the "Trio" of Indian English fiction. The trio includes R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand. It gives a brief introduction of the themes used by these writers in their works and the adoration of nature in different forms from East to West, and from North to South in India. Next, it introduces the authors with their writings and achievements one by one along with the description of nature in their famous works. The paper gradually describes how the writers have presented the relation between nature and human. It explores the dual nature of 'nature'; in its serene mood as well as when it shows its wrath. They have used different natural elements like rivers, mountains, animals, birds, child, and trees in their works as the symbol of nature. Somewhere the river is the symbol of purity as the Sarayu River in Malgudi town by R.K. Narayan, while in Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand it is the symbol of pollution by anthropogenic activities. Thus, the dual role of nature as a mesmerist and a frightener is highlighted in the paper.

Keywords: *Marginalized, anthropogenic activities, ecosystem, exploitation, commercialization, downtrodden*

Introduction

Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan collectively known as the 'Trio' in Indian English fiction were at the forefront of Indian writing in English in the 20th century. According to William Walsh,

"If Anand is the novelist as reformer,
Raja Rao is the novelist as metaphysical poet,
Narayan is the novelist as moral analyst."

When it came to introducing innovative topics into their works, every one of these authors was exceptional. Their creations captured the issues and circumstances that were prevalent in society during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Anand offered voice to those without it by concentrating on the suffering of society's marginalised groups, especially the lower caste. He highlighted the lower castes' fight for equality and the societal injustice they endure. A microcosm of society, Malgudi was a fictional semi-urban town created by R.K.



Narayan. Town life and the conflict between traditional and modern ideals were among the topics he examined.

Raja Rao examined the philosophical and spiritual themes while presenting the struggle between the individual and society. The three authors are considered pioneers of Indian English fiction, addressing every facet of modern life. The literary landscapes of contemporary Indian English writers are shaped by their works. For the next generation of writers, they carried the torch.

Representation of Nature

India has a wide variety of ecosystem expanding from Himalayas in the North to the plateaus of South and Sundarbans in the East to the Thar desert and Run of Kutch in the West. India is a country where the rivers and mountains are considered as God and Goddesses respectively, Stones, rocks, and trees are worshipped. People used to worship Indra Dev, Vayu Dev, Agni Dev, and Varun Dev for getting rain, pure air, fire, and water. The rishis used to live in the lap of nature even the regal princes also have to go to the ashrams situated in the jungles for their education. Thus, the importance and reverence of nature was prominent in ancient time.

Due to the population explosion, modernization and industrialization the nature is suffering. The material desires of human are continuously destroying this ecosystem. The natural resources are depleting at an alarming rate due to the anthropogenic activities. Due to afforestation, natural habitats of the birds and animals are decreasing thereby, extinction of many species increasing accordingly. Cases of Forest fires have become common globally that leads to environment pollution and is an example of a large massacre of flora and fauna, recently witnessed in America.

Literature always has adored the nature in its representation but now it also has changed its course. Now, in most of the writings we see the focus on the exploitation and destruction of nature rather than its reverence. Indian writers such as R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, Ruskin Bond, Kamla Markandaya, Amitav Ghosh and some others have presented the exploitation of nature at the social and regional level. Anita Desai has well-presented the destruction of nature by forest fire in her *Fire on the Mountain*. In his *The Living Mountain*, Amitav Ghosh warns of the collapse of ecosystem due to the exploitation of natural resources. Similarly, in *The Hungry Tide*, and *Gun Island*, Amitav Ghosh warns against the wrath of nature against inhuman activities of human and explores the consequences of climate change on ecosystem. Ruskin Bond through his writings such as *Death of the Trees*, *The Tiger in the Tunnel*, and *Dust on the Mountain* highlights economic gains through the loss of ecosystem. They tried to explore entire social, regional, and psychological atmosphere of their contemporary society in relation to the ecosystem.



R.K. Narayan

Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayanaswamy (10 October 1906- 13 May 2001) also known as R.K. Narayan is one of the famous trios along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. Narayan focused on the everyday life of his characters in his invented fictional town Malgudi. English author Graham Greene played an important role in the publication of Narayan's first four books including his trilogy (*Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, and *The English Teacher*). He created a window for the world to peep into the Indian culture and traditions. He was awarded with various awards in his lifetime including the prestigious Padma Vibhushan, Sahitya Academy, and A.C. Benson Medal.

In the majority of his novels, he has utilised "nature" as the backdrop. In his writings, Narayan discussed the relationship between humans and nature. In "Swami and Friends," he created the town of Malgudi, where bullock carts and cars travel side by side. In this piece, Malgudi is a town that is semi-agricultural. The sacred Sarayu River flows here, and Nallappa Grove encircles it. People, flora, and animals all coexist peacefully in Malgudi. The sounds of birds and animals, the cow's munching of green plantain leaves, the sounds of bullock carts, the mango groves, the paddy fields, and street vendors can all be enjoyed. Both sides of nature have been presented by Narayan; in its soothing mood and when it becomes horrifying;

In his imagination, he saw "an immense monster crouched, with its immense black legs wide apart, and its shadowy arms joined over its head." (Narayan, 158).

Later, it comes out to be a big trunk of a tree and its top branches.

Born and raised in the midst of nature, Raju is the main character in "The Guide." Raju has a special connection to the tamarind tree at the train station. Numerous monkeys and birds found refuge there. As a child, Raju too enjoyed playing in the tree's deep shade. He enjoys the scent of newly turned soil. He likes to sit on the steps along the river and take in the breeze.

"Below us the jungle stretched away down to the valley, and on a clear day you might see also the Sarayu sparkling in the sun and pursuing its own course far away" (Narayan, 65) Malgudi, the mythical town created by Narayan, is situated on the Sarayu River's shore. The river is mentioned many times in his different works. When Raju was waiting for Velan, Narayan describes the surroundings as:

"The sun was setting; its tint touched the wall with pink. The tops of coconut trees were a flame. The bird cries went up in a crescendo before dying down for the night. Darkness fell." (Narayan, 29).

At the age of eighteen, Velan, the protagonist of his short story "The Axe," left his home after receiving a public smack from his father for an error. He found employment as an elderly gardener's assistant after arriving in Malgudi town. With perseverance, Velan transforms a weeded area into a level field. Together, they create a sizable garden by planting different types of trees there. The Margosa sapling had grown a few yards when



the construction of a house began in one corner of the property. In parallel with the house's development, Velan was tending to his garden, with the trees growing more slowly than the house's walls.

Narayan has illustrated in this tale how resilient nature can be when it is well-maintained. The more we take care of it, the more joy and happiness we receive in the form of fruits, flowers, and greenery, just like Velan does. It is demonstrated by the fact that, although the home building fades and becomes unoccupied after a few decades, Velan's garden, which he tends to with love and care, never loses its brilliance.

“Hundreds of parrots and mynas and unnamed birds lived in the branches of the Margosa tree, and under its shade, the master’s great- grandchildren and the (younger) grandchildren played and quarreled” (Narayan, 139).

Narayan concentrated on the ways that human activity is upsetting the balance between nature and humanity. The lovely and magical garden of Velan was cut by the axe of development and commercialization. Disappointed, Velan sobbed and cried as they began chopping the trunks of the Margosa tree he had grown with blood and sweat;

“This is my child. I planted it. I saw it grow. I loved it. Don’t cut it down (Narayan, 143).

Thus, Narayan focused on the alienation of man from nature in the guise of development and commercialization.

Raja Rao:

Raja Rao (8 November 1908- 8 July 2006), born in the village of Hassana in Mysore, wrote several novels and short stories. He is another prominent figure of the ‘trio’. His works include *The Cow of Barricades* (1947), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and the Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978). His “Serpent and the Rope” won him the Sahitya Academy Award in 1963. For his wide range of works in different genres, he received Neustadt International Prize for Literature. He also got the prestigious Padma Bhushan in 1969, and Padma Vibhushan Award in 2007.

He depicts a town in south India and the interaction between nature and humans. In Kanthapura, his novel, he emphasised the significance of rivers and mountains. The mountain is known as Kanthapura's Goddess Kenchamma, and she is in charge of the residents' struggles and prosperity. When a natural disaster strikes or they need rain, they pray to Goddess Kenchamma, who they believe also aids them. As a token of appreciation, the people of Kanthapura give her a share of their crops and dance, sing, and celebrate.

“Kenchamma is our Goddess, incredible and bounteous is she.... Never has she bombed us in melancholy. In the events that downpours come not, you fall at her feet and state, ‘Kenchamma you are most certainly not kind to us. Our field is loaded with younglings.’” (Rao, 1-2).



Angles serve as Kanthapura's protector and guardian; the river is the goddess' daughter, the point close to the settlement is a "abode of Shiva," and the eagle is Kenchamma's vehicle. It is said to be a boon for crop production and other agricultural endeavours when an eagle appears in the sky before to field ploughing.

. Achakka depicts the village as:

“Our village- I don't think you have ever heard about it- Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the ghats is it, high on the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it..... many a center of cardamom and coffee, rice, and sugarcane.” (Rao, 1).

Thus, In Kanthapura, nature is a source of never-ending wonder and beauty. The writer wants to convey that nature is the creation of God and so, to worship nature is to worship God.

Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand (12 December 1905- 28 September 2004) completes the 'trinity' or the 'trio' of Indian English Fiction. He was born in Peshawar, British India. He is known for his works- *Untouchables* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1939) etc. He received the Sahitya Academy Award for his '*The Morning Face*'. He also wrote a number of short- stories and the children fiction. He is a recipient of various awards including the prestigious *Padma Bhushan* in 1968 and the *International Peace Prize* in 1953. He is known for his portrayal of oppressed and lower caste's plight in traditional Indian society through his works.

Anand employs detailed descriptions of nature to create a sensory experience in "The Lost Child." To evoke the reader's sense of innocence and immerse him in a child's world, he employed the "blue sky" and the "golden glow of the sun." He said the infant was like a "little bird" looking for its home. Additionally, the "dark forest" stands for doubt and terror. While travelling to the fair, the child was captivated by the butterflies, tiny insects, and mustard fields that were in bloom. It proves he was a nature lover.

“It was flowering mustard- field, pale like melting gold as it swept across miles and miles of even land. A group of dragonflies were bustling about on their gaudy purple wings, intercepting the flight of a lone black bee or butterfly in search of sweetness from the flowers.” (Anand).

Untouchable is the very first novel by Anand written in 1935. In this novel he portrays the life of sweepers, the humility faced by them, and brings into notice to the world the social evil of untouchability. Anand talks about the conditions of downtrodden people who clean the dust and dirt of the high caste people. He shows how the so-called upper caste people

“purify themselves and also have to rearrange their plans for the day,” (Anand, p. 7) when anybody from the outcaste inadvertently touch them or even come in front of them.



In this novel, Anand tries to depict the degradation of environment in guise of social evils.

“The outcast people live in the outskirts of the town. The outcast colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows.....their lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the watermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters, and other outcasts from Hindu society.” (Anand, p. 9).

The pathetic conditions of living having no proper drainage system, no flush system, and all the garbage, and cow-dung lying on the ground leads to water and land pollution. They have to clean the latrines by their hand only and throws all the dirt on the ground that ultimately mixes in the soil and water.

“The Streets were filthy with the refuse of the bazar, and the gutters ran with slime and excreta.” (Anand, 18)

This is a factor that increase the land, water, and air pollution ultimately leads to the poor health conditions. The river mentioned in the novel is also a symbol of environmental degradation. It was used by them for cleaning the clothes and the utensils which make the river water contaminated. Also, in the absence of the proper drainage system all the remains of the bazaar mixes in the river water.

“The river was black with the refuse of the bazar and the filth of the village.” (Anand).

The protagonist Bakha and others like him have to wander for food; they only get the stale or the polluted food. They work in polluted area. This shows the interconnectedness between the social injustice faced by them and the exploitation of the natural environment due to the harsh living conditions.

In his novel Coolie, Anand highlights the increasing pollution due to commercialization and industrialization. Munoo, the protagonist of this novel, is compelled to work in a textile mill which is a factory of pollution. It is not only doing physical harm to the workers and the residents in the nearby area but also exploiting the environment. The fuel used in the mill is coal whose smoke is dangerous for the human as well as for the ecology.

“The mills of the city belched forth clouds of smoke, the fumes of burning coal and the noise of machinery grinding away at the heart of the city’s prosperity.” (Anand).

Conclusion

The 21st century is seeing a slow shift in the climate; human activity is causing the environment to deteriorate quickly, leading to landslides, earthquakes, acid rain, global warming, and other disasters. The time has come for everyone to consider the environment and devise measures to safeguard it while pursuing sustainable growth. Our ecology is being protected by a variety of societal groups, including social reformers, scientists, environmentalists, and employees of non-governmental organizations. Our authors are striving in this direction as well; literature is not exempt from this. In their works of various genres, Indian authors have attempted to depict the ensuing ecological



destruction. They have presented the symbolic relationship between different elements of the ecosystem like the relation of human with flora and fauna, rural and urban, and Indian and Western traditions. Through vivid descriptions of polluted areas, factories, rivers, and land areas these writers linked the environmental degradation to the exploitation of various classes of lower caste people. They have presented the alarming condition of climate change by using various symbols. The sustainable use of natural resources is mandatory to balance the ecosystem.

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Biodata of the Author

- Dr. Bindu Karanwal is Prof. in the department of English, Shambhu Dayal P.G. College, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, affiliated to C.C.S. University, Meerut. She has 28 years of teaching experience and has published about 25 articles in reputed Indian and international journals.
- Archana is a research scholar from C.C.S. University, Meerut, from the department of English, under the supervision of Dr. Bindu Karanwal.