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Indian Ethos in the Selected Works of R. K. Narayana and Munshi Premchand: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to compare the Indian ethos as shown in the works of R.K. Narayana and Munshi Premchand. They write in two distinct languages, namely English and Gujarati. The depiction of Indian ethos depicts Indian culture accurately. The bulk of people still reside in villages, where they continue to retain some of Indian customs. Both of these authors of distinct languages attempted to reflect Indian life in their fictional works. The Indian villages have long been regarded as a starting point for comprehending traditional Indian culture. Thus, the purpose of this suggested study is to shed light on India's different cultural and traditional values. When cities subsume the rural way of life in the name of a monolithic city culture, so imposing a uniform city ethos on villages, the relevance of this research increases.

Key Words: Indian, Ethos, Comparison, Values, Culture



Introduction:

India exemplifies the concept of unity in diversity. It is differentiated by distinct languages and dialects, but related by devotion, patriotism, festivity, and other factors. Different cultures and traditions are represented here. Diversity is a source of strength and success in every element of Indian society. The first time English language entered to India by merchants and gradually, the commercial organization expanded into dominating authority. In India, the English language was introduced during British rule. Numerous authors made contributions to Indian Writing in English. Since independence, the English-language writing of India has thrived more than it ever has before. It is now chosen to be Indo-English, which unites individuals from many nations in quest of improved education, services, commerce, material success, and so on. As a consequence, cross-cultural contact and knowledge of multinational populations have expanded.

In a multi-cultural nation like India, comparative research may be crucial for understanding the diverse historical background and culture of India's many regions. To comprehend Hindi literature, it is equally vital to learn other literature as well since there are certain shared literary viewpoints. It also helps to sustain the nation's unity despite its diversity. The Indian comparativists must examine the features of the indigenous literary heritage in light of foreign influence and in the context of reciprocal effects among the different national literatures.



Indian Ethos in the Works of R.K. Narayana:

In his short-stories, R.K. Narayan provides views of small-town life in South India. Long before the subcontinent's writers were liberated from the ideals of the Independence Movement, he began writing about village life and ordinary people. He invented the town of Malgudi and inhabited it with an assortment of people. His accurate depiction of India attracted the attention of several western commentators. Thanappa, the postmaster in 'Missing Mail,' is respected for his sincerity among the people. He would constantly converse with passers-by while delivering mail. The depiction of the postman's emotions is excellent:

He went straight to Ramanujam's house, knocked on the door and shouted, 'Postman, sir, postman.' When Ramanujam opened it, he said, 'Give me a handful of sugar before I give you this card. Happy father! After all these years of prayers! Don't complain that it is a daughter. Daughters are God's gift, you know.... Kamakshi - lovely name!' (Narayana 15)

One may imagine how the postman would know every detail about the family from the exchange described above. Additionally, he requests sweets since he was aware that the news of Ramanujam's daughter's engagement was favourable. To avoid anything impeding the girl's marriage, Thanappa also took the risk of concealing a letter that conveyed the news of the relative's death at the risk of losing his job. Here, one learns about all the positive traits that the local postman had. You can only do this in a community.



A Horse and Two Goats, another tale, takes place in the hamlet of Kritam. Kritam is a little community with less than three hundred homes. The majority of the villagers are uneducated and underprivileged. They make money through farming and keeping domestic animals for grazing. The main character, Muni, let his two goats roam outside of the settlement. Because he was so impoverished, he sometimes went without eating. Muni would sometimes shake down some drumsticks from the tree and express his desire for a different flavor, but he would never get his wish since there was never enough food to create a meal. In his whole life, he never even seen a hundred rupee note. As a result, it is evident that hunger and poverty were widespread in communities. In contrast to the cultural diversity of city life, there is a cultural consistency in country life. The locals place more emphasis on rituals and religion. They adhere to the idea of Karma. The villagers see everything that occurs in their lives as a gift from God. In addition, any suffering they do endure is the product of their bad conduct. The folks are significant because they protected the traditional Indian way of life.

One may see the intricate culture of the hamlet of Kritam in *A Horse and Two Goats*. Despite being a little community, the name has a profound significance. Kritam means "crown" in Tamil. This village's residents take great care to maintain their traditions. Narayan compares Muni's way of life to the materialistic way of the foreigner. Muni has a very rich cultural heritage despite his poverty. For Muni's village, the horse statue has enormous cultural and religious significance, but to a stranger, it is only a decorative object for home parties.

'Old Man of the Temple' is about tradition and faith. The Talkative Man narrates this story of a time when he and his driver, Daas, were driving at night. They pass by a temple



which is completely in ruins. The description of the ruined temple is given in the following manner:

There was an old temple on the roadside. It was utterly in ruins; most portions of it were mere mounds of old brick; the walls were awry; the doors were shut to the main doorway, and brambles and thickets grew over and covered them. It was difficult to guess with the aid of the torch alone what temple it was and to what period it belonged. (Narayana 51)

Here, the spirit of an elderly man inhabits Daas's body. The elderly man has spent 500 years in the temple. He has devoted his whole life to praying and worshipping God, however he is perplexed as to why others do not visit the temple. The temple is in ruins, and the elderly guy may not be seen to others. When the Talkative Man tells him about his wife, the old man, who had been trapped in limbo for so long, departs from earthly existence. His love for her liberates him from the shackles of the spirit world.

Indian Ethos in the Works of Munshi Premchand:

For Premchand, marriage is synonymous with relational trust. In a marriage, there should be love and camaraderie, and the couples should be equal in their own realms. In the Indian social-familial environment, when the husband or the husband's older female relatives are seen as superior, this equality becomes fleeting. In addition, there appeared to be many instances of trust betrayal, evidently on the part of the husband, but the replies were not always harsh, with the wife either attempting to win him back or suffering till the end.



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The willingness to give up and forgive was one of a wife's best qualities. In the novella *Premсутra*, Prabha's husband has two instances of attraction to other women, but he always returns to her when he is in a bad situation and has no one to take care of him. Every time, she offers him forgiveness. In several of Premchand's tales, the woman acts as a strong support for the husband. The woman is supposed to provide her husband wise counsel in all of her uprightness and intellect. Her education must also satisfy the demands of solid housekeeping and healthy friendship. Marriage should be for a healthy society based on love and care, with women serving as agents of well-being in the house, not for physically or sex.

Other authors of the time took the issue of physicality and sex in marriage seriously, speaking mostly on the boundaries of marital sex and the need of finding satisfaction in a partnership via continence rather than sensual pleasure. He also extends the lofty ideal of celibacy and chastity to be maintained by males in his tales *Nabi Ka Niti Nibak* and *Smrity Ka Pujari*. In these tales, the men choose not to remarry after their wives pass away, and they are praised for it. He was obviously seeking a partner who was both pure in mind and body. Similar to this, Premchand takes a puritanical stance and rejects the physical components of beauty in favor of higher emotions like love and sacrifice.

He forces the main character of *Do Sakhiyan* to leave the wife since she was preoccupied with her own attractiveness and didn't care about their marriage. After insisting that both the husband and the wife retain their identity after marriage, the protagonist is finally repelled by the woman's excessive indulgence and fixation with beauty. His wife's growing interest in another man has also hurt him. Women's independence and uniqueness may have



been promoted in order for them to place their confidence, love, and comfort in a romantic partnership. The idea of individuality and independence, which Premchand generally views as a valuable right, is portrayed in this situation as a concession to the wife, which, if abused, may be harmful to families and relationships.

The new nationalist patriarchy's primary tenet is conjugality in marriage, and Premchand continually promotes marriage for reasons other than selfish and materialistic goals. This had been his central issue in *Shadi Ki Vajah* and *Swarg Ki Devi*, in which he notably mocks the custom of looking for a bride to help with home duties or for other purposes—procreation being one among them.

Premchand also discussed the establishment of widow remarriage and the prohibition of child marriage in his writings from that era. Many of his short tales deal with the issues that women confront in the home and the oppression that results from these customs. Premchand's passion for change was particularly evident in his treatment of young widows and children. It's interesting to note that Premchand does not promote widows' independent living, participation in social or community work, or any other activity outside of household duties that may give them a feeling of higher purpose in his novels about young widows. In several of the tales, he wishes the widows had the means to manage the home, raise the family's children, or participate in some other activity that would keep them occupied and prevent them from falling prey to evil. A point stressed in the reform discourse for remarriage from previous times, it is clear that widowhood and a predisposition to get drawn to prostitution are related easily in this context.



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In the short novella *Prema*, he criticizes the practice of expecting widows to continue visiting temples in order to keep them occupied and diverted from other aspirations. Here, the child widow Prema ends up having a sexual connection with the temple priest out of boredom and idleness. Therefore, despite his seeming importance to him, such an arrangement does not guarantee the virginity and purity of women. Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhary, two closest friends, are the subject of the tale "Panch Parmeshwar." They both have complete faith in one another. When Jumman's aunt seeks justice from the local panchayat against her nephew, who forcefully seized all of her property and is now mistreating her, their relationship, however, undergoes a turning point. Algu Chaudhary, who serves as a village assembly representative, is in a predicament where he must uphold the law, which can jeopardize his relationship with Jumman. Later, when Jumman ascends to the position of Sarpanch, he realizes that Algu's actions were honorable and that justice should always win out. The moral of the tale is that everyone sees the world differently and that everyone has their own unique viewpoint on events.



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Conclusion:

Through their works, Indian authors have shown how the new economy, culture, and politics have affected Indian villages and the people who live there. Literature is a means of perceiving and organizing the world since it is a representational art form. Literature alerts us to the ideological bent and conception of reality of its authors. The prevalent superstitions, rituals, and way of life of the villagers are clear topics in their tales. During the early part of the 20th century, R.K. Narayan and Munshi Premchand both authored. Pre-independence period or colonial phase is the name given to this time period in Indian literature. Living together as a family has benefited both authors. They gained life lessons from their first-hand observations of Indian culture. These encounters served as the basis for their writing.



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