

Social Consciousness in the Novels of R.K.Narayan with Special Reference to the Novels The Guide and The Dark Room

Author 1st:- **Jehangir Rashid**

M. Phil. Research Scholar, Department of English,

Rabindranath Tagore University,

Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

Author 2nd:- **Dr. Shabina Khan**

Professor of Department of English,

Rabindranath Tagore University,

Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

Abstract

Art grows with civilization, and only exists for human beings on this planet. We humans are social animals, and we have developed the ability to conceptualize and to symbolize the reality that opens up the domain called art. This research paper is made to highlights works of Narayan, social consciousness, place of women in society, and cultural traits of east and west in the series of Narayan's novels. Literature mirrors the ills of society with a view to making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. R.K. Narayan renowned and most high profile writer in English in the 20th century, reforms social values, and traditions. Which have been? Still running to play vital role in moulding the lives of Hindu people. The conventional Hindu family as the core of social structure has energetically protected its old standards, mores and qualities. Its sacredness is sacred and its infringement is out and out heresy. R.K. Narayan depicted these points masterly and lucid expressive style.

Keywords: Narayan, Art, Social consciousness, Place of women, East and West Culture, Conventional Hindu family, Sacredness

Introduction

R.K. Narayan renowned and most high profile writer in English in the 20th century, reforms social values, and traditions. Which have been? Still running to play vital role in moulding the lives of Hindu people. The conventional Hindu family as the core of social structure has energetically protected its old standards, mores and qualities. Its sacredness is sacred and its infringement is out and out heresy. R.K. Narayan depicted these points masterly and lucid expressive style.

R.K. Narayan has added might and majesty, greatness and grandeur and breadth and depth to the Indian English novels. He wrote novels, short stories, non-fiction and retellings of mythologies. His works have been translated into both regional and foreign tongues. He is also popular among Western countries especially in England. That is why V.S. Sankara Rao Chinnam says, “He [R.K. Narayan] has won admires in England and the United States of America” (515).

R.K. Narayan was born as Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami on October 10, 1906 at Purasawlkam, Madras (now in Chennai). Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami was shortened by his literary friend, and British Writer Graham Greene. N. Seshachalam, until he was a teenager. He rarely went to his parent’s house, and enjoys a summer with his siblings. Narayan grew up speaking Tamil and learned English at school. In his autobiography My Days, Narayan writes of visiting his parents in Mysore and being unable to understand the shopkeepers, who spoke Kannada, a language he later learned.

He completed his elementary education on borne home. R.K. Narayan moved to live with his family when his father was transferred to the Maharajah’s College High School. The well- stocked library at the school. As well as his father’s own. After completing high school, Narayan failed in the university entrance examination, and spent a year at home reading and writing;

According to N. Ram, friend of R.K. Narayan says that 1930 was significant year in the literary growth of RKN, for it was in this year that Malgudi, the imaginary locale which serves as the setting of almost all of his work was born.

In 1933, Narayan met Rajam and fell in love with her. Despite many astrological and financial hindrances, Narayan managed to permission from the girl’s father and married her. In 1934 Narayan married Rajam. In

1936, the couple was blessed with a daughter, Hema. The death of his wife in 1939 was a great shock for a young Narayan.

Narayan is counted amongst the towering novelist in Indian writing, and though he wrote in English, but his characters were sons of the soil. He remarkably depicted the Indian tradition in his novels; he blended tragic-comic elements, humour, and spontaneity. We find these features to all his works. His views on politics were zilch, but he was close to Gandhian philosophy and wrote Gandhian thought in his fiction.

R.K. Narayan was a 20th century novelist, and he remains top through his life. He has a great command to portray Indian characters and social milieu in his works like the Malgudi Days in a very savoury and arresting way. Narayan's most eminent literary creations were based on imaginative town Malgudi. He framed this marvellous locale with illustrious and great effort, that it captivated everybody. This locale is situated at a small railway station and it is considered replica of Indian society.

Narayan's stories were produced by most notable and worthy film-maker Shankar nags on television, titled Malgudi Days. It proved historic and catches abundant fame. When we talk about Narayan, we remember the Malgudi Days on Doordarshan. This serial was popular among the children's; they watched this serial eagerly and showed great interest. This serial was filmed at Agunbe in Shimoga district, Karnataka. Its music was given by famous violinist L. Vaidyanath, and caricature of this serial was given by Narayan's younger brother R.K. Laxman.

R.K. Narayan, Indian's leading English novelist got Sahitya Academy award in 1958 for the film The Guide. Most of Narayan's works has been nominated for the world's prestige's award Noble Prize, but he never received. He received Padma Bhushan in (1964) and then Padma Vibhushan in (2000), for the contribution in literature. R.K. Narayan was a member of the Royal Society of Literature and an honorary associate of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Narayan was also given the A. C. Basson Award in 1980 by the Royal Society of Literature. He was nominated the Rajya Sabha member.

R.K.Narayan spent his complete life in Mysore and Chennai in South India. This renowned writer embraced everlasting sleep on 13 may, 2001 at the of 94.

Despite the fact that Narayan's composing has been very mainstream among the majority, the upper, artistic classes never truly got used to him. It has been said that his composing was walker, with his basic language and accounts of town life. One of his most candid pundits has been Shashi Tharoor, "R.K.N. had very little

books in his room. The dividers of his room were uncovered but one schedule given by a Japanese companion. He stayed away from guests. He didn't answer to letters he got.

Malgudi is an imaginary town in India made by R.K.Narayan in his works. Beginning with his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, everything except one of his fifteen books and the majority of his short stories happen here. Narayan has effectively depicted Malgudi as a microcosm of India. *"All things considered Malgudi is an unassuming community, everybody is inside yelling distance"* (47).

The tone of his novels is melancholy and calm and light humour with comic elements that can make readers laugh to some extent. Narayan was the writer of normal peoples and middle class masses. He never uses heroic plots and high ranked persons, but common people and makes them infuse with boldness and he showed the endeavour of life in an adversary. He does not produce remarkable characters and his heroes were average capabilities. If we take the life of a school boy like Swami, we find nothing extraordinary or strange in his life. Similarly Mr.Sampath, Chandran, Raju, Savitri, Ramani and others live, love and suffer in maze of incidents which are just commonplace.

Women is always been point of discussion, and today women is debatable question. Women are hot dog question in the recent times. It seems us as novel is revolving round the protagonist, similar like that life revolves round the women. In the present scenario women is considered hot and critical topic.

In the near past, women were considered inferior to men. They were debarred from taking part in social life. Their sphere of activities was limited to domestic work. Up to 19th century it was believed that women were the servants of homes of their husbands. In those days women were not allowed to take part in political, social life and administration. Women were not taking part in public life and in outdoor professions. If any women take active part in social life it was considered bad notion and omen. The notion was that women are biologically different from men. She has to be a mother. Women are not suitable for every job. They are too delicate to perform hard duties of life. The real greatness of women lies in her role as mother. The mother who can bring up the right sort of children is a great benefactor of society. According to Napoleon, "Give me great mothers I will bring you great nation". And in Islam it is said, "Paradise is under the feet of mother". Islam gives most high respect to women. In Hinduism, mother is the one person who is the most glorified and

considered worthy of respect and service. No doubt, she is created with qualities such as love, sacrifice, forbearance, and selfless service to her children.

First idea of God, some super personality underpinning creation in ancient India. As per archaeological evidence is God is Female. The ancient Hindu think look at these female, they can give birth to another human being, and this is magic. God must be like a female. In Hinduism there are male prophets no doubt, but there is a unique thing in Hinduism there are female prophets as well. This is a unique dynamic quality in the religion of Hindus. This is an indication of tremendous respect for women in Hinduism and women in ancient time played equal role in every field.

Quite recently, women have come to take more and more prominent part in many spheres of life. In some respect they have excelled men. In sports, intellectual and artistic pursuits. In office and industry, they set a new record of honesty and efficiency. They have succeeded marvellously as teachers and nurses. There is practically no field where women are not competing with men. In professions, outdoor life and law, they claim equality with men. In business, trade, industry, in the learned professions, in politics, administration, scientific research, literary and activities, Eve is making herself felt everywhere. They are police and military officers. They are working as sale girls, as air hostesses and as clerks. They were turning out men from the posts of personal secretaries.

The Dark Room presents a view of country middle class women. It portrays the life of Savitri, wife of Ramani and a mother of three children. Ramani was working in an Engladia Insurance Company. He was there in a high position. In this novel the picture of women and society has been highlighted masterly. The social life of Savitri her customs, traditions, and social opinions has been penned with great experience. The Dark Room was third novel of Narayan in which women is depicted as an invalid piece of flesh and man with his constant tyrannical outlook. In my Days Narayan writes:

“I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of women as opposed to man, her constant oppressor. This must have an early testament of the “Women’s Lib” movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept there with such subtlety and cunning that she began to lose all notions of her independence, individuality, stature and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel dealt with this philosophy broadly in the background” (Narayan 1).

When we browse the pages of the novel *The Dark Room*, we find that there is no fixed place for women in society. Women are considered strong builders of nation, they make founding stone to a nation, as their role of mother. They are nectar of nurturing a child.

But there is totally immense contrast by reading this novel. Savitri is a simple, ordinary middle class but not highly educated women. Ramani lives in the fashionable South Extension in Malgudi with his wife and three children. Ramani is very short tempered person and bad taste of eating, and wants run his house in his own sweet will. When Babu's health was down and he has a sort of fever. Savitri told the Babu take rest today and don't slink off the school. But hearing this Ramani remark was:

"You are too ready with your medical certificate" (Narayan 1).

The gloom and celebration, calm and shouting of the house depend clearly on the Ramani's hands. As he is always annoyed, the climate of the house is particularly tense and peril, Savitri, children and servants always remain in a state of threat. Savitri is purely a symbol of traditional Indian womanhood. She is sweet pretty and devoted wife and loyal to his husband. In spite of her faithfulness her husband does not warmly respond to her feelings and emotions. She was meek enough to never interrupt the running commentary with an explanation to her husband. As in the words of Ramani,

"Savings up energy by being silent" (Narayan 3).

In the era of Narayan, woman thought that they could do nothing but what was expected from them; they were dominated from men. Marriages' were arranged, mostly within the same social class. Even middle class parents wanted their daughters well settled. Love was not important when choosing a husband. Women did not have much choice; unmarried, older twenty, women were considered to be a burden to their families and many women got married, so that society would not look down on them. Once married they lost control over both their possessions and their fate and became their husband's property.

The culture mainly depends on how people live in India and their way of language. India was said to be the oldest country. But as we see the present situation they crossed us in every aspect. The only aspect we crossed among all the major countries is in terms of population. India stands in 2nd place in population. India's civilization was also considered to be the oldest civilisation in the world. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are the two cities that paved the path for the Indus valley civilization. It is also said that India has defined the culture

to various countries as we observe the well planned drainage system and other sophisticated facilities like Great bath, Granaries, weight measures Street Planning and also their Social life in ancient Indian civilization.

"Don't contact me ...you are filthy, you are sullied. Regardless of whether I consume my skin I can't rinse myself of the polluting influence of your touch".

So also Sampath (The Printer of Malgudi) gets the hardest kick from life when he gets candidly included with Shanti, the film performing artist. When he attempts to seek after her, she leaves him a note of caution:

"On the off chance that I discover you seeking after me, I will shave off my head and indulgence away my adornments and wear a white sari. You and individuals like you will flee at seeing me. I am, all things considered, a dowager".

Margaya (The Financial Expert) can't tolerate seeing his agile girl in-law Brinda in tears because of his child's depravity. Indeed, even Marco who his insensitive and merciless, abandons his significant other, Rosie when he comes to know about her disloyalty.

"In any case, you are not my better half; you are a lady who will go to bed with anybody that compliments your shenanigans".

The Guide is the most popular novel of R.K. Narayan. It was published in 1958, and won the Sahitya Academy Award for 1960. It has also been filmed and the film has always drawn packed houses. It recounts the adventures of a railway guide, popularly known as 'Railway Raju'. As a tourist guide he is widely popular. It is this profession which brings him in contact with Marco and his beautiful wife, Rosie. While the husband is busy with his archaeological studies, Raju seduces his wife and has a good time with her. Ultimately Marco comes to know of her affair with Raju and goes away to Madras leaving Rosie behind. Rosie comes and stays with Raju in his one-room house. His mother tolerates her for some time, but when things become Unbearable, she calls her brother and goes away with him, leaving Raju to look after Rosie and the house. Rosie is a born dancer, she practices regularly and soon Raju finds an opening for her. In her very first appearance, she is a grand success. Soon she is very much in demand and their earnings increase enormously. Raju lives lavishly, entertains a large number of friends with whom he drinks and gambles. All goes well till Raju forges Rosie's signatures to obtain valuable jewellery lying with her husband. The act lands him in jail. Rosie leaves Malgudi and goes away to Madras, her hometown. She goes on with her dancing and does well without the help and management of Raju, of which he was so proud. On release from jail, Raju takes shelter in a deserted temple

on the banks of the river Sarayu, a few miles away from Malgudi, and close to the village called Mangla. The simple villagers take him to be a Mahatma, begin to worship him, and bring him a lot of eatables as presents. Raju is quite comfortable and performs the role of a saint to perfection. However, soon there is a severe famine drought, and the villagers expect Raju to perform some miracle to bring them rain. So he has to undertake a fast. The fast attracts much attention and people come to have darshan of the Mahatma from far and wide. On the twelfth day of the fast, Raju falls down exhausted just as there are signs of rain on the distant horizon. It is not certain if he is actually dead or merely fainted. Thus the novel comes to an abrupt close on a note of ambiguity. R K Narayan is one of the celebrated novelists of that era. The main objective of this chapter is discuss about the mixing of Indian and western culture. Indian is a country where logic and belief sit side by side. The novel maybe inspired by an incident in Mysore. Here acute drought completely dried up Krishna Raja Sagar. Some religious chanting took place for rain. The novelist combined the enforced sainthood with that incident.

The novel has two layer of narrative. The third person narrative starts with Raju when he came out of jail. The first person narrative is Raju's recollection of past life to Velan. The novel *The Guide* has myth and reality blended in the plot. The life of Raju closely follows the concept of Chaturasham. Rosie who is an educated woman still carries some Indian values and Raju's mother carries traditional Indian rules. The two place village Mongal and town Malgudi shows two India in a single globe. While Malgudi is a commercial town with money sharks, Mongal is a place where ever a poor pays homage to a spiritual man with blind faith. The novelist juxtaposes both the sides into one pattern to portray real India in his novel. R.K Narayan is one of the distinguish writer in history of Indian English novel ever appear. He got the Sahitya Academy award for *The Guide* in 1958. He was also awarded by Royal Society of Literature with AC Benson Medal in 1980 and Padma Bhusan also. The novelist was invited by Rockefeller foundation from USA to visit Berkley and write a novel. In his book "My dateless diary" an American journey the novelist praises a smart witty guide in America. Part of Raju's character is conceived by the memory of that guide. In his another book *My Days* the novelist comments that he was musing about enforced sainthood. The present novel is related to this thing. The juxtaposition of Indian theme and western theme. India is a land of belief and logic. Both runs parallel. Sometime belief rules over logic. The belief represents Indian culture and logic represents sophisticated western culture. The novel maybe inspired by an incident in Mysore. Here acute drought completely dried up

Krishna Raja Sagar. Some religious chanting took place for rain. The novelist combined the enforced sainthood with that incident.

The man psychologically associates Raju with this deserted place. The novelist hints that the man Velan becomes excited by the high position of Raju 'sitting crossed legged' as if it were a throne. A.V. Krishna Rao observes that,

“The influence of temple on the democratic consciousness is so profound and efficacious that it results in the ultimate transformation of Raju. It enables the establishment of the identity of the mask and the man” (170-171).

But in other way this co-existence of traditional and modernity symbolizes Indian culture. India is a land where western ideas places side by side with traditional beliefs. Even Raju at the end of the novel accept the enforced sainthood. Raju called it, “Dangerous state of affair”.

Through this investigate, Narayan remarks on the part of the self in decolonization, since he expects the changeability of subjects despite what he sees as the certain changeability of Indian culture. Similarly as an antiquated lowered sanctuary is uncovered by the dry spell in *The Guide*, Narayan's anti colonial viewpoint recommends that another degree of involvement lies underneath.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that R.K. Narayan is tremendously valued by his peers, the multi-dimensional nature of his vision isn't yet completely secured. This is, indeed, the trial of an extraordinary craftsman. The current investigation is a new endeavour to fathom the socio-social viewpoint in his books and furthermore to evaluate Narayan's accomplishment as a social pragmatist craftsman. Socio-social extensively implies meaning the blend or cooperation of social and social components. It likewise eludes to the possibility that language, instead of existing in a seclusion that is firmly connected to the way of life and society in which it is utilized.

The investigation uncovers that practically all the books of Narayan investigate different traditions, conventions that shape the life of the general public. His books illuminate the Indian culture and custom. Narayan's solidarity lies in his portrayal of fundamental human topics, basically with regards to the social circumstances. He plans to introduce not the common labourers but rather focuses on the working class

individuals in the contemporary Indian culture. His characters who are normal individuals of working class society arrive at flawlessness through the light of their internal being and here falsehoods Narayan's significance as an author picking the common material and making it a bit of flawlessness. William Walsh favours him with a thoughtful assessment, "An essayist of character and maturity"(2).

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