ABSTRACT

R.K. Narayan, the most accomplished and the most entertaining novelist in Indian writing in English, has given a realistic portrayal of contemporary women in his novels. In a seven long decades of his literary career R.K. Narayan has succeeded in reflecting the traditional, social, cultural and political aspects, which affected the womenfolk of India. A careful analysis of his women characters shows three distinct types of women who recur frequently in his novels. They are the traditional women, the transitional women and the modern women. Narayan has written fifteen novels and twelve novels are given a careful analysis in this study.

This work is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter an introduction to R.K. Narayan, his place in Indo-Anglian Literature, Status of Indian Women and their reflection in literature, R.K. Narayan's women characters and the methodology and the scope of this study are given.

The second chapter deals with the literary and social background of R.K. Narayan. The origin and development of Indo Anglian Literature, the growth and development of Indo-Anglian Novelists, the salient features of Indian tradition, the status of women in India down the ages, feminism in the West and its influence in the East are dealt with in detail. With a view to give a glimpse of the themes of R.K. Narayan's novels under study, a brief summary of each novel is also given in this chapter.
From the third chapter the analysis of R.K. Narayan’s women characters begins. This chapter is about a set of women who are downright traditional. They are bound by tradition and culture and undergo all the difficulties ungrudgingly. All the traditional women of Narayan are given a detailed analysis, in this chapter. A chronological study of R.K. Narayan’s women characters is made. The status of Indian women right from their childhood to their old age is reflected here clearly.

The fourth chapter about the transitional women focuses on the disturbed state of mind of the transitionals as revealed by Narayan in his novels. They are torn between tradition and modernity. Unable to distinguish between the good and bad aspects of tradition and modernity, they are seen constantly waging a war against tradition and modernity. R.K. Narayan’s Rosie, Savitri and Sarasa in the respective novels The Guide, The Dark Room and Talkative Man are the typical examples of transitionals.

The last category ‘Modern Women’ are analysed in the fifth chapter. The moderns of R.K. Narayan dealt in this chapter are Daisy of ‘The Painter of signs’, Bharati in ‘The Waiting For Mahatma’ and Shantabai, Gangu and Ponni in ‘The Dark Room’. The moderns need not under go the humiliation of the traditionals or the mental agony of the transitionals. Still domestic harmony is above their reach. With all their rebellious and revolutionary ideas they have to lead a lone, meaningless life.
The concluding sixth chapter provides a fitting conclusion for the study. R.K. Narayan’s place in Indo-Anglian Literature is acclaimed through select literary reviews. The plights of the three types of women discussed in the previous chapters, the various factors which affected them and the possible remedies are dealt in this chapter.