A Portrayal of Women Characters in
R.K. Narayan’s Novels: A Critical Study

A
THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH
2015

Under the supervision of
Dr. S.P. SARSWAT
Prof. & Head, Dept. of English
Govt. College, Akoda (Bhind)

Submitted by
MANOJ KUMAR TEMBHRE

RESEARCH CENTRE
M.L.B. GOVT. COLLEGE OF EXCELLENCE GWALIOR (M.P.)
JIWAJI UNIVERSITY, GWALIOR-474011
A Portrayal of Women Characters in R.K. Narayan’s Novels: A Critical Study

SUMMARY

R.K. Narayan is one of the India’s great novelists of pre and post independence era. He is one of the most popular literary figures along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. These three Indian novelists has the credit of bringing Indian English Literature into world’s notice. These three were colossal figures of their generations who put Indian Literature in English on the world map. He has produced more than a dozan novels and short stories. Art of characterization is one of the most significant aspect of his writings. He has established himself as a master of characterization by depicting middle class families in his novels. His novels deal with the life of average middle class men and women of south Indian society. However, the element that perhaps operates most effectively behind Narayan’s wide appeal is his rootedness in Indian myth and lores.

The study in the preceding chapters has explored the nucleus of “A Portrayal of Women Characters in R.K. Narayan’s Novels: A Critical Study”. The journey of studies starts from Swami and Friends and ends
on The Grandsmothers Tale. In his writings Narayan has covered the whole gamut of human seasons from boyhood to the old age. He has portrayed an amusing variety of characters, viewing the landscapes of human existence from a rich diversity and perspectives. His characterization ranges from adolescent fantasy to renunciatory contemplation. He has tried to show the real picture of south Indian middle class society with their agony and sufferings specially in the case of women. According to Warren French: “Narayan describes the soul’s steady progress from fanaticism towards serenity.”¹

R.K. Narayan’s fictional canon comprises fifteen novels and numerous short stories. His writings rests on certain characteristic assumptions, which are basic to his world view and to his artistic practice. In his writings we find the concept of a stable universe underlying all human actions and evolutions. Indian English fiction is written in a language which is not the mother tongue of many Indian writers. It is also a fact that the novels are not in their mother-tongue about whom they are written. The description of various aspects of Indian life through a language which is not of Indian origin, is quite difficult. Narayan has attracted a large number of readers, writers and reviewers. As a writer of

social novels, he has a light approach of life. He is generally realistic and photographic. His perception of the conflict between the present and the past is more detached and impersonal. He has received excellent response from E.M. Forster, Graham Green and William Walsh. In this connection M.K. Naik comment is worth quoting: “Narayan’s is the art of quiet surfacing and self-landing, not of headlong diving or vertiginous take off. His characters are entrapped in, and discomfited by a variety of illusions, self-deception; and miscalculations and mischance. They are made to have strange assignations with a circumstantial world which is full of ambiguities and ironies.”

R.K. Narayan has started his career as a novelist with school and college life as the theme of his novels. The early period as a novelist shows a little immaturity. He has created a fictional town Malgudi. Malgudi; “is the domain of Narayan’s imagination. There is no such town in any dictionary, almanac or atlas of the subcontinent.” Narayan’s famous Malgudi Day’s describes a fictional, semi-urban town in southern India. He created in September 1930, On Vijayadashami, an auspicious day to start new works and this was chosen for him by his grandmother.

---

2 Naik M.K. Prospective of Indian Fiction In English: (Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1997), p.34.

R.K. Narayan is a novelist of common people and common situation. His plots are built of material and incidents that are neither extraordinary nor heroic. The tone of his novels is quiet and subdued. He selects day-to-day incidents that happen to almost every one of us one time or another. His heroes are average human beings and they do not possess extraordinary capacities, but through some incidents attain greatness very soon to return to their original state. 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.

R.K. Narayan’s plots do not follow any standardized formula, because he starts with an idea of character and situation and the plot progresses on the lines he conceives to be the logical development of the idea. It may mean no marriage, no happy ending and no hero of standardized stature. incidents, coincidences, and sudden reversal of fortune are used only to a very limited scale. His action mainly develops logically from the acts and actions of his characters. In this respect, Narayan is as much a ‘materialist’ as Henry James, H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett.
Narayan’s craftsmanship in plot construction does not reveal a consistent quality. He began it a tentative and episodic manner in Swami and Friends but developed an architectonic sense in his second novel, The Bachelor of Arts, and his third, The Dark Room, reveals definite signs of technical maturity. His predilection for the fantastic, suggested in The Bachelor of Arts, becomes quite prominent with The English Teacher. Generally, his plots split into two parts- the realistic and the fantastic.

Narayan is not only the most popular and prolific novelist but a short story writer too. He approaches to the Indian scene with no serious angle of study. Unlike Anand and Raja Rao, he is neither a committed writer nor a spiritualist. Like other major short story writers, Narayan also comes under the influence of our ancient classic lore as well as Western masters. He shows a strong affinity to typically Indian tradition of story telling.

Narayan as a writer of social novels has a light approach to life and he stirs no deep human emotions. In every one of Narayan’s novels, the usual order of life, i.e. the normally is disturbed by the arrival of an outsider into the sheltered world of Malgudi or by some plight or uprooting, but in the end there is always a return, a renewal and a
restorations of normally. The normal order is disturbed only temporarily and by the end we see the usual order established once again and life going on as usual for all practical purpose. Narayan perceives an elaborate system of cheats and balances operating in the Abused on the Ecentric that is enthroned but it is the moral order which in restored and established.

An objective analysis of Narayan's characters reveals a definite journey of the self from innocence to experience and finally to wisdom. His moral instance makes his characters discard their jaundiced visions and realize the reality of things. Through frequent rise and fall, they move until their experiences culminate in wisdom. After many adventures and misadventures in life the characters return to the all pervasive reality of Malgudi. And during this journey, Narayan observes the vast spectrum of life. Swami And Friends offers us a pure escape into irresponsible boyhood. The novel holds out promise of Narayan's skill as a great character delineator. Every character drawn in the novel is convincing and realistic.

Experience and expression are two very significant phenomena in the life of a creative artist. One is incomplete without the other. A work of art or literature is an expression of writer’s understanding of life.
Dispositions of a writer are best reflected in the characters created. They become spokesman of the author’s view of life and embody his vision of life. In fact, the criticism of life and writer’s approach are co-related to each other. The writer has a certain mission or object of his writings. He is simply concerned about the basic problems of life and the universe. Then he starts formulating his own principles or system of thought which may be called the vision of life. R.K. Narayan is no exception. He too embodies his own outlook through his protagonists in his works. He too has his own approach and attitude to life.

In all the works of literature, we find that author makes an attempt to fight against the process of dehumanization and he attempts to assert humanness. It is, in fact, unending search for identity which is going on from time immemorial and still continues. Like everyone else, a writer is interlinked with his world and he ought to have meaningful relationship with the world his writings belong to.

R.K. Narayan successfully deals with women characters as he does with male protagonists. They are fully drawn and developing characters. The author has tried to probe into the mind of his characters. He has portrayed in them what he has felt about. He presents their feelings and emotions and thought and ideas. He is more interested in the inner
conflicts of their life. It is in relationship with the male protagonists that female one can be better understood and this is what we find in his novels throughout.

In a nutshell, R.K. Narayan’s portrayal is realistic and authentic. The unfounded beliefs and irrational attitudes have come down to us from generation, and there is nothing uncommon about views and philosophy of life, the Hindus follow in their life. What is surprising is that they never question the validity of the Sashtras and puranas. The Hindu philosophy upheld therein along with myths and legends are accepted as they are. Moreover, if at all any one comes forward to denounce them, his attempts beat in vain on Indian’s eternal passivity. He simply fails to withstand the collective force of the society. His total submission is looked upon as something traditionally good, serene and transcendental. His outlook is considered as matured when he accepts the traditional good of the society. This is what we find in most of the novels as suggestive of Narayan’s bent of mind however detached he appears to be to the readers.

Although Narayan is not a teacher or preacher yet the central problem in his novels is the problem of living a meaningful life. The novelist presents the problems realistically in the background of a
traditional patriarchal system of society. Like other writers R.K. Narayan also has written on issues like love and marriage. As for love, it is the very basis of life that sweetens the relationship between the two sexes and makes life happy and meaningful. It is a natural human passion that acts as bond between man and woman. In the novels of R.K. Narayan we find marriage without love or love without marriage. There can be no love without personal emotions. Love always aspires for higher ideals which is different to obtain and more difficult to maintain. Love is different from sex. It is not necessary for survival but gives a distinct meaning to life.

There are certain usual feminine tendencies in his women. He has recorded usual feminine vices and virtues we find, the qualities of love, sacrifice and faithfulness, and courage. In the world of R.K. Narayan, there is a supremacy of man over women, they don’t rise above man leaving a few and ultimately they accept defeat under pressure despite they struggle to the end with their stamina. They love living through struggle and suffering but in the end admit defeat. They endure all the sufferings coming in their ways. They face life by accepting it and not by denying it. R.K. Narayan’s philosophy is based on acceptance of life and not on denial of life. He signifies positive and affirmative strength. He is
not pessimistic in his vision. He hopes for a brighter future though, he does not necessarily provide solution to the problems.

The novelist is presented with consummate knowledge of human nature. His protagonists have a wide and varied experience of life both tragic and comic. They are ordinary real human being with their weaknesses and strength. They embody the author’s vision of life as this is a struggle and in this struggle defeat or victory does not matter. What matters most is the struggle that is faced. Life is neither a tragedy nor a comedy. It is a blend of tragic-comedy. It is this realistic perception of life that gets manifested in his novels through his characters.

No doubt, R.K. Narayan’s world is a male dominated world. He may not be as great as Shakespeare in his delineation of characters. In the world of male dominance women were assigned secondary role sometimes not even secondary role to play. The pity is that women have been lying in obscurity. The novelist deals with women characters with equal ease and comfort. They are full drawn and developing portraits and depict the patterns of life.

The basic theme of his novels is the place of man and his predicament in this universe. Narayan himself has remarked in an article that “The mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere,
the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of Psychological factors, are the necessary ingredients in fiction.”⁴ He wants to suggest that life is illogical' and man is always trying to translate his fantasies into reality. So, through the reversal of fortune, Narayan completes the story of man's rise and fall and thus presents a complete view of life, Narayan is realistic, but his realism is different from the surface realism of the French Naturalists. He does not see the ugly side of reality. Extreme crudities, names sex descriptions and cruelties are ignored by him. He portrays the seamy side of reality. His situations and characters are realistic, and so is his language and style. The life which he describes is put before us with a wealth of detail and accuracy.

Although concerned about the place of man in this universe and his predicament, Narayan is a comic writer. He is a comedian of the sublime and the ridiculous. He is an observer of life and records life as it appears to him. He is neither purely tragic nor comic .His art is the mixture of the two. Raju has his best days, he becomes a successful tourist guide ,he enjoys the best of another’s wife, he becomes a very successful impression ,and above all, is

worshipped like a true Sadhu or saint and dies like a martyr. But at the same time he has his moments of agony, guilt and sin. His way of presenting the tragic and the comic view of life does not check him from presenting his vision of life successfully. He employs not only ironies of character, situation and condition but also presents a total ironic view of life. The whole existence from birth to death is a ridiculous phenomenon. The best and the worst, the sublime and the grotesque are so mixed up that is difficult to choose one at the cost of the other.

We see the author working through a number of concerns which, as a young man, he had very much in his mind. His novels present problems and conflict of day-today-life of contemporary society. It is not the struggle in the experience of protagonist life. It is day-to-day experience of all suffering humanity. We feel too close to men and women facing life and challenges in his novels that it creates a feeling of identification the modern world. It is this quality that lends universality to his theme. He is a much beloved novelist and although volume of his novels were all written more than half a century ago, they are the freshest, and the most sparkling of gems. The struggle of the protagonist against social
restrictions, The struggle to be something other than that which social destiny appears to be forcing them to be, are struggles with which we can all identify to a greater or lesser extent. In his novels many people waste part of their lives trying to be something else what they are not.

Narayan weaves his themes around Hindu myths and legends and vivifies Indian social reality. He has an extraordinary power of presenting the multiple facets of life. Though not a critic of society, he is certainly a keen observer of life and manners. The novelist creates comedy by employing all the effective devices of the humorist both traditional and innovative. He has made his language highly comprehensible with the touch of Indianness. In the simplicity of the dialogues and first person narration, he sets an adequate mirror of reality. It can be said that in his use of language Narayan is simple, readable and without any purple patches. He has a kind of humour, strange in English writing.

R.K. Narayan is one of those great writers, few in numbers, who have achieved recognition and acceptance. He believes in ‘art for art’s sake’, but it does not mean that he is a writer without any vision of life. It simply means that there is no intrusive message,
philosophy or morality in his novels. His novels are entirely free from all didacticism. He is a penetrating analyst of human passion and human motives. He is a great regional novelist and his novels are tragi-comedies of mischance and misdirection. He is the creator of a picture-gallery of the immortals of literature. A number of life-like memorable figures move in and out of his novels, and once we have been acquainted with them, we can never forget them. He writes about the middle class, his own class, the member of which are neither too well off not to be worried about money and position, nor dehumanized by absolute need. His hero is usually modest, sensitive, and ardent character.

An objective analysis of Narayan's characters reveals a definite journey of the self from innocence to experience and finally to wisdom. His moral instance makes his characters discard their jaundiced visions and realize the reality of things. Through frequent rise and fall, they move until their experiences culminate in wisdom. After many adventures and misadventures in life the characters return to the all pervasive reality of Malgudi. And during this journey, Narayan observes the vast spectrum of life. Swami And Friends offers us a pure escape into irresponsible boyhood. The novel holds out promise of Narayan's skill as a great
character delineator. Every character drawn in the novel is convincing and realistic.

The popular theme of the clash between tradition and modernity is suggested in the clash of views between Chandran and his mother. Chandran's romantic love for Malathi dashes against his mother's cherished conventions, superstitions and fatalism. The long controversy are the matching of horoscopes, the question of dowry and gifts etc. all live a picture of convention ridden society of Malgudi. Chandran, the representative of modernity and change, retort. Disappointed and frustrated he becomes a sanyasi. The villagers think that he is under a vow of silence for ten years or ten months or ten days. The villagers are impressed. They request him to stay there. Chandran feels that he is fit f decides to return to Malgudi. He comes in contact with Mohan who explains that love and friendship are the variest illusions. He tells Chandran that people marry because their sexual appetite has to be satisfied and there must be somebody to manage the house. "There was nothing deeper than that in any man and woman relationship. Chandran matures and learns wisdom in the school of experience. Gradually Chandran gets tuned to the ways of the world and learns to shoulder the responsibilities of life. He obtains the agency of The
Daily Messenger and marries Susila, a beautiful girl of his parents’ liking. The novel ends with Chandran in love with life: "his mind full of Susila, the fragrance of jasmine and sandal paste." Chandran, who gets pleasure in his familiar Malgudi and, accepts the reality of life. The first two novels discussed above show that family is the centre of action. In most of the novels the protagonist of the cross section of the society engage in struggle of life. Narayan. William Walsh rightly comments: “It is against the presence of the town, finely and freshly evoked, and amid a net of family relationships, each thread of which is finely and clearly elaborated, that Narayan's heroes engage in their characteristic struggles. The conditions of the struggle vary from novel to novel, the stress is highly particularised, and the protagonist may be a student, a teacher, a financial expert, a fighter for emancipation.” The primary aim of all these characters is to achieve. Mohan is the conflicting character in the Bachelor of Art. Kailash and Malthi are the preceding and minor characters of the novel. They represent the significant behaviour and nature.

The Dark Room presents a study of an urban upper middle class woman. It depicts the life of Savitri, wife of a well-to-do company

5 R.K. Narayan, The Bachelor of Arts, (Indian thought publication Mysore, 1979), p.70
executive Ramani, and a mother of three. In the context of Narayan's depiction of a society, there is combined weight of tradition, custom and social opinion. These three components usually compel individuals to play their expected role of life. The novel explores the fruitless effort of a traditional middle class Hindu housewife to get rid of the role she is expected to play. The Dark Room is a very interesting novel. Its characters belong to middle class family with their ambition and expectation.

Narayan's Savitri is certainly no tragic figure. The opening of the novel clearly indicates the kind of servile role she is condemned to play in the house. In her first confrontation with her husband over the question whether their young son who says he is ill, should attend school or not, she is totally humiliated, having had to meekly put up with rejoinders like, "Mind your own business, do you hear go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown-up boy to me. It is none of a woman's business". She appears to be only a weak, whispering, timid and spineless creature. She, no doubt, has her good points. She is a capable housewife, who knows how to deal with sudden guests. After a number of such incidents, Savitri poignantly realizes by

---

way of self-evaluation. “We are responsible for our position. We accept food, shelter and comforts that you give, and are what we are. I don't possess anything in this world.”

Krishna is the central character in the novel The English Teacher. He is now fully mature to meet the challenges of worldly life. He is a lecturer in English in Albert Mission College, feels rejuvenated with joy of life when his wife Susila and his child Leela come to stay with him.

“The story of their wedded life is a prose lyric on which Narayan has lavished his best gifts as a writer.”

Its action is confined to the domestic scene or more properly to the husband-wife relationship. Krishna's life becomes all misery and loneliness when his wife Susila passes away after a brief illness. He behaves like a contemplative philosopher brooding over the futility of human relationship and the evanescence of life: Wife, child, brothers, parents, and friends. We come together only to go apart again. It is one continuous movement. They move away from us as we move away from them. The law of life can't be avoided. An affectionate father Krishna is anxious to be mother and father both to Leela, his loving daughter. A loving and devoted husband, Krishna develops spiritual contact with Susila. He has resigned his post as

---

8 Ibid, pp112-113
lecturer in the college and accepts teachership in a school. When he returns home after his farewell party from the Albert Mission College, he finds Susila by his side.

Thus, Swami, Chandran and Krishnan are the three successive phases of an individual's life childhood, adolescence and adulthood respectively. Further, there is a significant movement from the atmosphere of humour and fun towards a sense of pathos and redemption achieved through experiences that are apparently ridiculous and incongruous. It is a pattern that characterises Narayan's fictional world in his novels.

Mr. Sampath The Financial Expert, The Guide, The Man Eater of Malgudi and The Vendor of Sweets—presents a new pattern in Narayan's characterisation. In these novels we enter an exotic world of half headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, stars, Sannaysis, several of them not Malgudi products at all but straying or imparted from 'outside'. Less and less can dear old Malgudi maintain its former sheltered existence. Innocence has given place to experience. The nuances of humanity are lost in the rattle of civilization. The imperatives of tradition are exceeded by the impact of change, and stability and certainty are no more.
Minor characters too are well portrayed. Srinivas's landlord, an old widower with several sons and daughters, is a comic character. He has a regular and sizeable income by way of rent from half a dozen families living in a cleverly partitioned house. He himself lives in a small room in Anderson Lane. He deliberately covers his transparent stinginess under a mask of ascetic simplicity. Ravi the famous actor who has played the part of Shiva in over a hundred dramas and twenty films for the last twenty years, demands five thousand rupees extra for the extra rehearsals but when refused, descends from Kailas defiantly.

Waiting for the Mahatma is a political novel based on Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for independence, the Quite India Movement of 1942 and ending with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi in the Birla house garden at the prayer meeting. This novel has a special significance of it’s own. “Waiting for the Mahatma is a Gandhian novel. Technically Sriram the hero of the novel and the plot revolves round him; but the dominant figure, even though he is seldom on the stage is Gandhi and the theme is Gandhism.”

Sriram and Bharti are leading and central character in the novel. Bharti is a young heroine, a Malgudi Portia, rich only in her natural

---

endowments, whereas Sriram can easily qualify for a Malgudi Bassanio. She exercises a great influence on Srimam and transforms him to a great extent. She is raised to the great heights. It is Bharti who makes a patriot and a man of Sriram, and in marriage he is certain to find in her the saviour strength that is woman's strength or Shakti. This novel bears the stamp of Narayan's art in its delineation of life and its comic undertones.

The common people Kamni, the shop-keeper with his scrupulous account-keeping; the smooth tongued fund office manager; unscrupulous Jagdish who exploits Sriram but helps him trace Bharti, Chairman Natesh with their gossipy tongue and malice tinted views and their basically good hearts attract our attention. They are given an animate and eloquent identity by Narayan's art.

In The Man Eater of Malgudi, Sampath-Margayya-Raju achieves a further reincarnation as H.Vasu, M.A. Taxidermist, and Sampath's old printing press has as it were a new owner, Natraj, as unlike Vasu as the unlike the panther. Vasu, the protagonist, is the embodiment of evil. The novelist has portrayed his character with great insight and ironic perception. Narayan has dealt with the conflict between good and evil in many of his novels- The Guide, The Financial Expert, The Vendor of Sweets etc., but in The Man Eater of Malgudi evil is described as an
ominous force which symbolises anti-life. In the words of Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar: “In the Guide, evil takes the form of frivolity and sensuality, in The Man Eater, evil is as it were anti-life, anti-nature, anti-Faith in the Sweet Vendor, evil takes passion of Mali and uses him as a Vehicle for fouling the sanctities of home and marriage and even the sovereignty of creative imagination.”

Jagan is the main character in The Vendor of Sweets. He has been portrayed with a great concentration. It is interesting study in paradox and antithesis. He is such a contradictory bundle of simplicity and shrewdness, of candidness and business that he can be other-worldly and this-worldly at once. Jagan, the biggest sweet seller of the town, asks people to conquer taste in order to conquer the self. Jagan is a prosperous widower, a sweet vendor who contrives handsome profits with high-minded Gandhian principles. The apple of his eye is his on Mali, for whom he feels a deep but absurdly embarrassed affection, which appears to go unrequited. When Mali coolly announces that he is abandoning studies to go to America to become a writer, Jagan’s fatherly feelings are thrown into still greater confusion. When a year or two later, Mali returns with a half-American wife and a grand scheme for marketing a novel

---

writing machine, Jagan is utterly confused. He is confronted by the new world shockingly personified, where his cherished notions of marriage seem to dwindle. Jagan’s final escape from the galling chains of paternal love comes as unexpectedly as every other twist in this delicious story. The charm in Jagan's character springs from Narayan's delicate comic treatment of these paradoxes. Jagan is a significant character thematically too. He concentrates his entire love on his only son, Mali who deliberately disappoints him.

The Painter of Signs embodies the spirit of change and urbanization that blows over Malgudi. Daisy, who dominates over her male counterpart, Raman, manifests the spirit of liberation. She is the only female character in all the Malgudi novels of Narayan, whose dynamism controls all the events in the novel. She is strikingly modern in her spirit of independence. Women like Savitri and Rosie are of the traditional type, who depend on the men folk and cannot conceive of an independent existence, but Daisy is the new woman who does her best to establish woman's equality with man. She is anti-family in her attitude. Daisy, a family planning zealot, is alienated from the institution of family in one way or the other. Born in a joint family, she feels suffocated. She
discards the institution of marriage and consequently has a sort of unmitigated antagonism to conception.

Talkative Man is one of the interesting novels of R.K. Narayan. Talkative man on TM as he called by him friends in the centred character of the novel. He narrator his own story in first person. In the novel, we meet Dr. Rann who is a man working on a UN Project of writing a book. Sarasa is his wife who is a commandant, and is on hunt for her lost husband. These are there main characters in the novel. There are some others characters also in the story of Malugdi inhabitant. Printer Natraj, town photographer, stationmaster and his porter, some neighbours and usual Malgudi people, these all leads named, content and happy lives.

The World of Nagaraj is quiet and comfortable. Living in his family’s spacious house with only his wife, Sita, and his widowed mother for company, he fills his day writing letters, drinking coffee, doing some leisurely book-keeping for his friend Coomar’s Boeing Sari Company, and sitting on his verandah watching the world and planning the book he intends to write about the life of the great sage Narada.

The Grand Mother’s Tale is R.K. Narayan’s last book. It is a short length novel. It is a personal story of author's great grandmother, who travelled widely to bring back her husband. Her husband had once run
away from the home leaving his responsibilities. When he ran away from home he was only 10 years old. The story was narrated by novelist grandmother. It is about Narayan's great grandmother Bala (Balambal) a young girl who struggles to find her husband and brings him back to family. This book, more than any others, exhibits Narayan’s experimental tendencies.

In a nutshell, R.K. Narayan’s portrayal is realistic and authentic. The unfounded beliefs and irrational attitudes have come down to us from generation, and there is nothing uncommon about views and philosophies of life, the Hindus follow in their life. What is surprising is that they never question the validity of the Sashtras and puranas. The Hindu philosophy upheld therein along with myths and legends are accepted as they are. Moreover, if at all any one comes forward to denounce them, his attempts beat in vain on Indian’s eternal passivity. He simply fails to withstand the collective force of the society. His total submission is looked upon as something traditionally good, serene and transcendental. His outlook is considered as matured when he accepts the traditional good of the society. This is what we find in most of the novels as suggestive of Narayan’s bent of mind however detached he appears to be to the readers.
In the novels of R.K. Narayan characters make certain attempts to go against the prevailing social customs and traditions but they cannot shake them off. Simply they muster courage for change. They cannot stand the collective force of the society as a whole. The result is that they accept defeat, remorse comes and they find happiness in submission. Author does not seem to approve of their attitude or any type of rebellion on their part. There is a marked attack on sentimentality in almost all his novels. Chandran is able to lead his life properly and seriously when he overcomes sentimentality that causes frustration in his life. Sastri returns to her husband and children when she understands the actual situation and realises the fatality after her escape from home. Ravi and Raju are also not able to cope with and rise above cheap sentimentalism. Margayya survives the shocks of life possibly because he has sufficient fund of common sense and practical wisdom.

Narayan has revealed a comic vision of life through irony and paradox in his novels. Though novelist has written tragedies yet the tone of his novels is comic. Raju’s story of his love for Rosie the dancer, and his rise and fall as guide, lover and promoter are half comedy. Novelist does not end his novels on a pessimistic or disappointing note. The Guide ends neither at the time of Raju’s landing in jail for moral degradation,
nor when Raju’s love affair with Rosie comes to an end at the discovery of the book published by Rosie’s husband. Here novelist presents a comic situation when Raju is on fast and about to die a whole crowd of men, women and children gathers on the bank of the river and there is eating, drinking and merry-making. The reporter takes interview of a dying saint: Tell me, how do you like it here? How long have you been without food now? Do you feel weak? When will you break your fast? To Narayan life is neither purely a story of sins, nor purely of virtues, it is a blend of the saintly and the sinful. The individual and social reality go together to constitute the comic pattern. He presents fact and fiction together against each other to present a whole picture of life. The novelist describes his world through the eyes of children. We can feel the comic element in father's attempts to teach Swami arithmetic lesson. The novelist is not satisfied with the present day education system. He is statistic in his humour while describing the teachers. He satirises teachers by describing the head master sleeping in his office with his spectacles on Narayan is not a reformer but an observer. He also exposes the eccentricities and follies of people. He exposes and ridicules religious attitude and superstitions each other to present a whole picture of life. The fanaticism is seen in the scripture master Ebenezer. He condemns Hindu idea of idol
worship he shows Lord Krishna as lower, comparing him to Jesus. Swami objects to the criticism of Hindu God by his teacher.

Narayan in his Novel The Dark Room very clearly and straightforward explain his vision of life. He voices the emancipation of women in the Indian orthodox Hindu society, where men hold a superior position and women are confined to the home and hearth with all sorts of taboos and traditions clamped on them. But it would be wrong to consider Narayan a feminist in terms of Western feminism, his attitude is shaped with a strong Indian sensibility of any of foreign cultural aggression in the movement that that he launches to bring about a change in the status of Indian women. The inheritability of Western notion of liberated women but he does not forget to depict the perils of western waves of movement for women's freedom in India.

A woman holds a very strange place in Indian society. She has been revered for being sati and at the same time she has been hated and loathed for being a widow or for not bringing dowry. stories of women literary texts. However, with the progress of time the women of Indian society changed. Now she started making herself noticed by fathoming all areas which were until now they are no of men. In literature too, the role of woman was given a certain distinction, In this league R.K. Narayan
writes about characters like Savitri and Shanta Bai in the Dark Room and shows the various perspectives of the Indian woman.

Narayan has a lot to speak on issues like love and marriage but he suggests that the relationships based on good values, truth, honesty, sincerity, mutual love and faithfulness would live long. Relationship based only on selfish consideration would not live long. In this connection, education is seen as a powerful means to attain dignity and self-reliance. Savitri wonders, "If I had gone to college and studied I might have become a teacher of something". She further adds, "Sumati and Vimla must study up to B.A. and not depend for their salivation on marriage."\(^{12}\)

The Waiting for Mahatma, displays the political sense of the author. It is not a political novel, Mahatma's character is quite frequently narrated. The writing of this novel clears the insight and vision of the author in the sense that he wants the readers to improve their ways, through the examples his characters presented. It is a love story of Sriram and Bharti against the background of the political life of India during the independence movement in India. Through the Bharti's character Narayan has depicted the feeling for un-touch-ability and independence deeply.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p.120
Bharti is the true follower of Gandhiji and Sriram joins her. In this novel, the author experiments in role reversal in terms of male and female hierarchy. Bharti emerges as the final emancipator of Sriram. Both Bharti and Sriram are orphan, yet their worlds are fundamentally opposed.

R.K. Narayan's next novel The Man Eater of Malgudi, presents the chief protagonist, Natraj as a cowardly, submissive and good for nothing fellow. Novelist has taken the story from mythology as he told an audience at Columbia University in 1972, "At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago suddenly I came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title the man eater of Malgudi. I based this story on a well known mythological episode the story of Mohini and Bhasmasur."13 Through this novel Narayan has expressed his view that a man is responsible for his miserable condition.

The portrayal of the emergence of new woman in the post-independence era is greatly discussed and elaborated in Narayan's The

Painter of Sign. This novel brings out the relationship between Raman, a young rationalist sign-painter with his old aunt in Malgudi and Daisy, the heroine of the novel. Daisy is a family planning officer who does her work with a visionary zeal. She is an educated woman who does not believe in the western culture and as a pure Indian woman she performs her duty honestly. Though her name suggests a westernized tradition, but there is a tradition abiding spirit in her.

The Painter of Signs embodies the spirit of change and urbanization that blows over Malgudi. Daisy, who dominates over her male counterpart, Raman, manifests the spirit of liberation. She is the only female character in all the Malgudi novels of Narayan, whose dynamism controls all the events in the novel. She is strikingly modern in her spirit of independence. Women like Savitri and Rosie are of the traditional type, who depend on the men folk and can not conceive of an independent existence. Daisy is the new woman who does her best to establish women’s equality with men. She is anti-family in her attitude. Daisy, a family planning activist is alienated from the institution of family in one way or the other. Born in a joint family, she feels suffocated. She discards the institution of marriage and consequently has
a sort of unmitigated antagonism to conception. She realises and admits honestly: “married life is not for me. I can’t live except alone.”

The World of Nagaraj is set in the typical background of familiar Malgudi. It describes the unwelcome complications in the quiet and comfortable life of the protagonist, Nagaraj. The conflict between tradition and modernity has been revealed through Tim’s character. Tim is fascinated by the degenerating influence of modernity. He leaves his uncle’s house along with his wife Charu, but in the end, like all rebellious characters in Narayan’s novels, realises his folly and returns to the fold of tradition and family life. In the novel all male and female characters are struggling sometimes for their liberty and sometimes for their identity. Like other Malgudi novels this novel also presents common human follies and reconciliation at last.

Narayan’s characters adhere to or violate the ethical and moral system which is the major component of Indian philosophy and thought. His philosophical characters subscribe to the moral and ethical dictates and codes laid down in Manu-Smriti; Srinivas and Natraj are moralists who adhere to the values of the Indian society. The characters who violate the peace and harmony of the Malgudian world are immoral,

unethical and they are eventually punished. Mr. Sampath ends up a forlorn person while Vasu precipitates his end in a mysterious manner. The critiques of philosophy simultaneously pursue their own ethics.

Narayan has very artistically interwoven various thoughts of The Bhagwad Gita in his novels. He has presented the theory of renunciation, and liberation or Moksha in his two novels, The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi. Raju, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic charvaka philosophy guides and governs his life. He commits the crime of forging the signature of Rosie and is accordingly punished and sent to the prison. He has to pay for his foul deeds. He receives his ill fate accordingly his evil Karma. But landed into the prison life, he finds time for his moral and social transgression. The prison accrues to him an ideal opportunity to journey into the innermost regions of his soul and shakes off his material and social illusions. Thereafter, evolution in the character of Raju is a ceaseless and ongoing process. If the Guide is the spiritual odyssey of a man, A Tiger for Malgudi on the contrary presents an insight into the animal world. Narayan has experimented here with the popular theme of transformation in a beast. The novelist's choice for the most powerful animal form the
animal kingdom as the chief protagonist in the novel is full of inferences and hidden meaning.

R.K. Narayan is a writer voicing the emancipation of women in the Indian orthodox Hindu Society. In Indian society men hold a superior position and women are confined to the home and hearth. Indian woman is clamped in with all sorts of taboos, traditions and so called customs. It would be wrong to consider Narayan as a feminist. In terms of Western feminism Narayan’s attitude is shaped with a strong Indian sensibility. His feminism stands to resist the possibility of any foreign cultural aggression in the movement that he launches to bring about a change in the status of Indian Women. It is true that Narayan admits the inevitability of Western notion of liberated women, but he does not forget to depict the perils of following western waves of movement for women's freedom in India.

The above analysis shows Narayan as a traditional storyteller. He does not think to shape or create story, that comes naturally to him. His narrator is often a detached and amused observer of events. There is very little emotional involvement of narrator in his novels. His first and third person narrators show little variation among themselves and carry an unmistakable imprint of their creator. People react and respond to the
actions and situations of others lives. The characters of R.K. Narayan’s novels are clearly more important than the situations. His delineation of women characters has been one of the unfailing considerations. His all women characters are from Malgudi but, they are much different from each-other. All these female characters are different individuals with merits and demerits of character. Thus, Narayan has successfully presented the whole milieu of the Indian middle class society.

Signature of the Supervisor
(Dr. S. P. Sarswat)
Prof. and Head, Dept. of English,
Govt. College Akoda (Bhind)

Signature of the candidate
(Manoj Kumar Tembhre)

Forwarded

Signature of the Principal