Research Paper English Literature

R. K. Narayan's Fiction: "A Reflection of Reality in Real Rhythm"

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ABSTRACT

In the fiction of R. K. Narayan, one can find the true representation of Contemporary Indian Life, Traditions and Culture in its vivid and realistic form. The Social realism is extensively and minutely described. Narayan is a pure story teller, an artist who portrays reality in its real rare rhythm. Social customs and reality are vividly described with unbiased objectivity and complete detached observation.

KEYWORDS Social Reality, Live Landscape, Vivid Characters



INTRODUCTION:

R. K. Narayan (Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami,, 1906-2001) belongs to the age of Indian Freedom Struggle of 20th century.The three bright stars, luminaries of Indian English literature, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao started writing their fiction, largely in this period of great ferment and excitement. Some of their early works truly reflect the conditions and the problems that characterize the early decades of the twentieth Century India and her people. All of them voiced the emotion of their age in their fiction directly or indirectly. R. K. Narayan wrote Fifteen Novels, Five Volumes of Short-Stories, a number of Travelogues and Collection of Non-fiction, English Translation of Indian Epics, and the Memoirs "My Days".

LITERARY WORLD OF R. K. NARAYAN:

The Major Novels:

01.	Swami and Friends	(1935)
02.	The Bachelor of Arts	(1936)
03.	The Dark Room	(1938)
04.	The English Teacher	(1945)
05.	Mr. Sampath	(1949)
06.	The Financial Expert	(1952)
07.	Waiting for the Mahatma	(1955)
08.	The Guide	(1958)
09.	The Man Eater of Malgudi	(1962)
10.	The Vendor of Sweets	(1967)
11.	The Painter of Sign	(1976)
12.	A Tiger for Malgudi	(1977)
13.	Talkative Man	(1986)
14.	The World of Nagaraj	(1990)
15.	Grand Mother's Tale	(1992)

REFLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALITY:

India has inherited a great legacy of her culture from ancient time. Civilization has constantly been passing through its sophisticated form. India has also kept her age old prevailing tradition in the society with some modification. India is such a country where Festival, cultural events, protocols of civilization, Religious occasions, National Day Celebration Programme and Traditional Rituals always take place. They are the inseparable parts of our society. They basically aimed to unite people with the feeling of togetherness, to make people enjoy life very closely with harmonious mutual understanding. But in course of time deformities, ugliness and evils of society have spoiled them.

In the fiction of R. K. Narayan, one can undoubtedly find the representation of cultural incidence, patterns of civilization and traditional values but the uniqueness of Narayan is the faithful, real depiction of contemporary society, without any criticism, satire or comments. So in his literature we can visualize the contemporary society as it was with virtues and vices. Social customs and reality are vividly described with unbiased objectivity and complete detached observation.

R. K. Narayan is a man of moral consciousness. He points out that commercial instinct ruins the morals of man. But On the whole, Narayan remains a pure artist. He is for the social integration and order. As an artist he has dissected the social motives successfully with the help of realistic characterization. So he does it with help of his characters. Narayan's novels are the expression of various problems of middle class society in which he has been all involved. The balance between his characters and society is well maintained.

MALGUDI- THE LOCALE:

Malgudi is a fictional town imaged in the mind of R. K. Narayan, where his literary works take origin. It's like a landscape as alive and active as a personified character. The fictitious region is woven in such a smooth thread that it creates a fine fabric of inseparable part of Narayan's realistic art. It is as remarkable a place in literature as 'Border Countries' of Sir Walter Scott, 'Lake District' of Wordsworth, 'The Wessex' of Thomas Hardy or 'The Five Towns' of Arnold Bennet. It was a town created from Narayan's own experiences, his childhood, and his upbringing. The people in it were people he met every day. He thus created a place which every Indian could relate to. A place, where, you could go "into those loved and shabby streets and see with excitement and a certainty of pleasure, a stranger approaching past the bank, the cinema, the haircutting saloon, a stranger who will greet us, we know, with some unexpected and revealing phrase that will open the door to yet another human existence."(Green Graham)

Malgudi is an intense, emotional curiosity of R. K. Narayan. It is not merely a background of his novels- but 'a leading hero' which is present in one way or other in most of his novels.

LIVE CHARACTERS:

All the characters in R. K. Narayan's novels are live creation of artistic presentation. They are not heroes or heroines or of aristocrat or noble class but they belong to common lot of middle class. Their actions are obvious but they are puppet in the hands of God or Nature. They seem to perform their duties as an active agent who are put up into limelight or highlighted to some particular predicament in order to create normalcy. My effort in this research work is to show the gradual development of all the major characters of Narayan's novels in respect to their struggle, conflict, confrontation and adjustment or reconciliation at the end.

"In fact, the success of R. K. Narayan lies in attributing universality to his common place characters. The non-heroes finally evolve into heroes. This is done with the artistic impersonality and distinct objectivity. There is no didacticism, no philosophy, no propaganda involved in their creation. They are drawn with extra-ordinary delicacy and tenderness, admirable integrity and intelligence. The novelists does not control and govern them but lets them be free. The viewpoints expressed by them are the logical outcome of their personality. What is remarkable is that Narayan's characters remain committed to the search of true meaning in life" (Azam, S.M.Rafique, from Forward, R. K. Narayan and 'The Inhabitants of Malgudi', by: Mohammad Ejaz Alam , Rajat Publications, New Delhi, p.vi)

The Major Characters of various novels mentioned below are vivid and realistic in their nature and become the subject of research as well as prime concern for any research study.

1) Swaminathan his friends Mani, Shankar, Somu, Samuel and Rajam (Swami and Friends)
2) Chandran, Malathi and Sushila (The Bachelor of Arts)
3) Ramani, Savitri and Shantabai (The Dark Room)
4) Krishna, Sushila and Leela (The English Teacher)
5) Mr. Sampath and Srinivas (Mr. Sampath)
6) Margayya, Balu, Dr. Pal (The Financial Expert)
7) Sriram and Bharti (Waiting For the Mahatma)
8) Raju, Rosie and Marco (The Guide)
9) Nataraj and Vasu (The Man Eater of Malgudi)
10)Jagan and Mali (The Vendor of the Sweet)
11)Raman and Daisy (The Painter of Signs)
12)Raju, the Tiger (A Tiger of Malgudi)
13)Dr.Rann and Talkative Man (Talkative Man)
14)Nagraj and Sita (The World of Nagraj)
15)Bala (Grandmother's Tale)

CONCLUSION:

The artistic excellence of R. K. Narayan is incomparable. His easy way of storytelling, his understanding of psychological behaviour of human beings, his realistic approach towards the art of characterization, his smooth plot making and above all, his use of stylist language make him the novelist of unique genius. Narayan does not use the medium of novels for any purpose other than giving artistic pleasure to his readers. He is an artist novelist, pure and simple. His backgrounds are absolutely realistic, almost philosophical in their realism. Narayan is noted for the objectivity and detachment of his stand. He is free from desire to preach, to advise and to convert the contemporary society. He has created a very large variety of characters that will continue to delight the heart of his readers for a long time to come.

"The Secret of R. K. Narayan's great success and high distinction, on the other hand, lies in the complete aesthetic satisfaction he provides to his readers. He interprets Indian life purely from the 'art for art's sake' points of view, maintaining complete objectivity and perfect impartiality" (Raizada H., R. K. Narayan , 'A Critical Study of His Works', Young Asia Publication, New Delhi, p.1)

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