

Portrayal Of Women In The Writings Of R.K. Narayan

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ABSTRACT

R.K. Narayana is one of the most well-known authors to write in English from India. He was a novelist and a short-story writer. The skillful development of characters is a prominent theme in his works. He established himself as a leading character artist with his insightful depictions of middle-class households in his works. The protagonists of his novels are middle-class male and female residents of southern India. His works include robust ensembles of male and female protagonists. Each of his works has an important female character. After India gained its independence, society underwent rapid changes, and a new kind of woman emerged as a powerful influence in all areas. The literary world is still dominated by issues affecting women. Narayan's books explore women's roles at home and in the wider community.

KEYWORDS R.K. Narayana, Women, Portrayal, Malgudi.

INTRODUCTION

Narayan focuses a lot of his works on challenges that affect the educated middle class and those living in semi-urban settings. His works seldom include rural women. All of Narayan's works take place in the semi-urban setting of Malgudi, and its inhabitants share the author's education, culture, and innocence. Malgudi, like other places, has evolved through time, gaining amenities including a train station, a power plant, and a university. Despite his realism as a writer, Narayan avoided writing about the dark side of life. Narayan seldom addressed societal issues such as domestic abuse, caste discrimination, untouchability, feudal dominance, the dowry system, and other forms of social inequality, in contrast to his contemporary author Mulk Raj Anand. In an essay, he said that comedic tone, an awareness of setting, and an exploration of character motivation are all essential to good fiction. As Narayan saw it, life is irrational, and man is always striving to make his dreams a reality. The women of the community have adapted to the patriarchal norms of Hindu culture, and they aren't aware of the rights and liberties they are giving up. Women have been conditioned by their families and communities to take on extra responsibilities because of their gender.

The sexual connection between a husband and wife is regulated by the institution of marriage. Independence from one's parents is guaranteed with marriage. It's true that some people in Narayan's fiction don't think marriage is great and even see it as a barrier to fulfillment. Husbands and wives in Hindu homes tend to have a one-sided relationship due to the male breadwinner's position. In reality, a wife's contributions to family cohesion and happiness are substantial. She no longer has any place or importance in a conventional Hindu family. Savitri is without a place to call home during *The Dark Room*. She has an obligation to greet Ramani's

unannounced guests. Ponni, a low-caste character in *The Dark Room*, doesn't seem to be a victim of her husband's violence or to have a pessimistic outlook on life. However, in *The English Teacher*, this partnership is presented as perfect. Narayan's Mr. Sampath similarly portrays the everyday life of a family's woman. Srinivas, one of the novel's primary characters, is a sane young guy in the beginning of the book who works as the editor of *The Banner*. He first participates in the production as a scriptwriter but is forced to return to his regular work as a journalist.

LITERATURE REVIEW

T. Jeevanandam (2021) R.K. Narayan's perspective on women's equality in Indian Orthodox society, in which men are revered and women are expected to stay at home. There were many customs and rituals practiced in the home back then. R.K. Narayan depicts this dichotomy delicately. He stresses the existing tradition's oppressive aspects' role in silencing women. This article depicts New Woman in the context of her repressive environment, where she has to fight hard to establish an identity in order to survive. R.K. Narayan established the concept of New Woman by expanding on the tension between tradition and modernity. Shantabai, an emotionally unstable woman, is a modern rebel who establishes her own identity in opposition to a male-dominated society, whereas Savitri is a typical oppressor who is subjugated by her husband Ramani, who realizes her aspirations by forging her individuality. The new woman is born, and with her, R.K. Narayan wonderfully narrates the story of feminist ideals.

Gudla Balaswamy et.al (2019) Since Bankim Chandar Chatterji published *Rajmohan's Wife* in Indian English in 1864, the field of Indian English fiction has faced increasing difficulty. R.K. Narayan is unquestionably one of the few people responsible for Indian English Novel reaching the enviable position. In the eyes of fiction readers everywhere, he now occupies a special niche. His books are required reading for courses in foreign universities. The frequency with which his works have been reissued is a testament to his importance as a writer. Much like Shakespeare, Narayan is enthusiastic in developing strong, independent female protagonists. His protagonists are aware that they live in a society that does not allow them the independence they want. Narayan's female characters range from dominant and powerful to helpless and dissatisfied to downtrodden to accepting of the system of strong male authority in Indian culture. The dissertation emphasizes the significance of the female protagonists in his writings and the difficulties they face.

Dr. Ashok Kumar, (2015) Among the top English-language authors from India, R.K. Narayan stands out as a true original. Narayan captures the purity of Indian culture and the Indian mind in his writings. He mostly creates stories about middle-class people living in Malgudi, a fictional South Indian town. The cast of male and female characters in his works is extensive. Rosie is one of the only female characters in his novels to play a significant role, and this is true of all of his works. She is emblematic of the contemporary educated and ambitious woman who, at great personal cost, attempts to create a viable economic existence for herself in accordance with her own unique set of skills and values. The book also features Raju's mom and Velan's sister as female protagonists. When we think of traditional, orthodox women, we often think of Raju's mother as a symbol. She's a kind wife and a caring mother. She acts as a moral

compass for Raju and Rosie, pointing out their own wrongs and rights. However, as her suggestions are ignored, she packs her bags and moves in with her brother. Although she is only in the book for a short time, Velan's sister plays a pivotal part in the narrative by helping to portray Raju as a saint. My modest goal in writing this thesis was to investigate that facet of R.K. Narayan's characterisation.

Gangotri Sil (2014) Using R.K. Narayan's "The Guide" as a case study, this article will analyze Rosie's development and the steps she takes to become the person she becomes at the end of the book. Her fearlessness has given the impression that she is not typical of Indian women. I hope I've managed to convince you that she's more like our multifaceted Indian culture, which can appreciate both tradition and progress, than you would think. Only an Indian lady could experience her yearnings, conflicts, and choices. Despite the impression she gives, she is very much of our time in 2014. This means that contemporary Indian women may still relate to Rosie. In reality, her path to independence foreshadows the changing status of women in Indian culture. In this respect, Rosie is the epitome of an Indian lady.

Neluka Silva (2014) R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* is widely recognized as his most acclaimed and, maybe, his finest. While appreciating the story's smooth pacing and subtle humor, this essay delves into the representations of Rosie and her mother-in-law (Raju's mom) as women within the discourses of nationalism, with Rosie representing the 'modern' hybrid woman and her mother-in-law embodying the traditional. The battle between tradition and modernity is symbolized from the very beginning by the two female characters, Rosie and Raju's mother, who are placed at opposite extremes of the spectrum. Rosie plays the role of a gorgeous temptress who seduces Raju and leads him down the path of debauchery. As the story develops, Rosie's westernized, 'modern,' persona becomes the polar opposite of the traditional Indian lady exemplified by the mother, who forbids her daughter's participation in public life. Rosie is portrayed as the racially and sexually ambiguous 'other' to Raju's mother, and as a result, she is seen as a figure who 'corrupts' Raju. The eventual catastrophe that Rosie encounters is not portrayed sympathetically, but rather inscribes racial stereotypes that serve to strengthen the text's nationalist roots by shifting responsibility to the 'foreign' other.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

Normal Indian women have their independence stifled by Indian men's innate need to dominate. Her hands are bound as a sign of respect for her culture and traditions. She is even led to feel that her sacrifices in this regard are admirable. She was still seen to be eternally afflicted Sita until quite recently. Women who are routinely pressed into conforming to stereotypical family duties can lose their humanity as a result of the dehumanizing effects of this oppression. This paper's goal is to examine how R.K. Narayan's novels depict the steady growth of Indian women's perceptions in the middle of all these preconceptions about Indian women. The Western world has had a significant impact on the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of India. Even the most submissive and altruistic Indian women are starting to think about who they are and where they fit in the world. The call for revolt, first heard in the West, may now be heard in the East. Misuse of authority cannot continue forever. There is no way for thralldom to last forever. For ages, women have been subjugated by men's need for dominance, which has now been suddenly destroyed. Even the frailest and most hurtful

among us, women, are fighting back. She is set on developing herself in spite of the absence of male companionship. She's trying to help herself, it seems.

Her personal conflict has affected many spheres of society, including government, academia, the workplace, and most significantly, her own family.

Her plight is increasingly being depicted even in works traditionally written for men. Women who have been limited by cultural norms and customs have gained a fresh perspective on their lives. The way males see women is also changing dramatically. This change in attitude, shared by both sexes, merits attention in literary history. Women are no longer a sign of woe, subjugation, retreat, or personal regression thanks to the discovery of Indo-Anglian literature alongside Western awareness. The literary arts have Indo-Anglian novels are no longer "consent" books because of how they portray women. These novels are now considered "dissenting" because they go against the grain of popular thought. The shift reflects not just the author's own maturation but also the reader's. Indo-Anglian literature emerged as a natural outgrowth of Indian exposure to Western cultural and artistic traditions. Women were unreasonably moralized and sentimentalized in early Indo-English literature. The writers had no concept of reality. The writers were, however, eventually pushed by practical considerations. There was a slow but steady development in the Indo-Anglian novels of the early twentieth century. Srinivasa Iyengar, in his book "The Indian Writing in English," argues that contemporary Indian literature has a "braver approach to the realities of life".

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN R.K. NARAYANA'S NOVELS:

R.K. Narayan included two distinct female characters into his novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. Susila, Chandran's wife, is the protagonist, while Chandran's mother goes unnamed.

As an Indian wife, Susila has a more prominent function. She excels in more ways than her in-laws' mother does. She agrees to the planned marriage her parents have chosen for her, as do most Indian women. She continues to be a loyal wife and loving daughter-in-law to her husband and her in-laws. She has the utmost respect for her loved ones. She looks like the Sita-Savitri kind of woman who takes care of her husband. Susila epitomizes the stereotypical Indian housewife. She makes a huge difference in Chandran's existence. When Chandran finally settles down and gets married, love will no longer be a fantasy; he will finally be able to make his ideal life line up with the actual one. Therefore, Susila is the only one who can really mature Chandran. She gives her husband her whole attention. Susila is a beautiful and captivating woman who represents the best in conventional Indian femininity.

Susila is a religious woman as well. She prays for the well-being of her husband and her in-laws every day and offers daily sacrifices of flowers and incense to the God she believes will answer her prayers. I'd want to sing the praises of Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*' female heroine, Susila. Her husband or wife thinks of her as a confidante, helper, counselor, nurse, etc. She may be a friend, a confidante, a lover, a disciplinarian, and an expert enough in the arts to teach her partner. William Walsh's observation that "... the woman rather than the old represents Custom and Reason and knows what is and is not proper" is a sage assessment of women's responsibilities.

There are two halves to any family: the women and the men. Those two types of families are the building blocks of every civilization. Thus, a woman's role in the home is analogous to that of a husband's in both the family and the larger community. A wife has just as much responsibility to the extended family that is society as her husband does. Familial ties and kinship, with an emphasis on the wife role for women. The majority of Indian women are likely to remain motivated by the idea of the Indian traditional woman as a faithful wife, and will continue to perform the yearly ritual for the health and life of their husbands.

Susila places a premium on accountability, which is highly valued in Indian culture. Each member of the family benefits from her undivided attention as she engages in social activities, provides instruction, nurtures, and socializes them. She is the rock upon which her family and neighborhood rest. Pandit J.L. Nehru made a pertinent statement in this regard when he said, "To rouse the masses, it is the woman who must be woken. When she moves, her loved ones follow, and eventually the whole country changes direction.

Susila is a model woman because she is devoted to her roles as a wife, daughter, and in-law. Her whole existence revolves on her loved ones, and she seldom stops to think about her own needs. Her only concern was for the safety of her loved ones. Susila personifies the unique spirit of a true Indian lady. Narayan paints Susila as a traditional Indian wife, complete with the qualities that make a home a happy place for everyone. In the framework of Indian traditional culture, his portrayal of such a feminine character is an attempt to promote human values in an age of insensitivity.

GRACEFUL WOMEN OF R.K. NARAYAN

Narayan is unique in Indo-English literature for his empathetic humor and expansive humanism. Narayan excels in witty, dry irony. It has been said of Narayan's fiction, "Under the shade of eccentric individuals polishing their absurdities, Narayan creates a world of sun-shine and laughter, a happy, warm, and compassionate humanity." (Badal, 39) "If Anand has power and amplitude, Narayan has the gift of healthy, refreshing, invigorating humour; compassion, sympathy, and even profundity," says Triveni in July 1967. (Badal, 39) Narayan is widely regarded as one of the most dispassionate and unbiased authors working today. Narayan, in contrast to Anand, who wrote with a purpose, notably societal edification, mostly wrote to amuse his readers by recounting the events he had seen in the lives of ordinary middle-class people in the south of India. He has a satirical approach to life and depicts situations that struck him as humorous rather than serious. His protagonists are often educated middle-class people, such as college students, instructors, guides, school principals, business owners, and municipal officials. They stand in for the kind of actual persons we interact with in the course of our daily work. Narayan's tales are rooted in their communities; they are the product of the logical needs of his characters and the circumstances they find themselves in. The plots of Narayan's novels develop naturally out of the interactions between people and events. His protagonists stand in for the uneducated and the working class. C.D. Narasimhaiah claims that,

Himself a product of the Hindu middle class, sharing the beliefs, superstitions and perhaps the prejudices of his class in a small town and viewing its going on with sympathy but also with a keen eye for the comic in the life around him. He had

qualified himself to be a writer of this own class and the provincial town...he has scarcely stirred out of Malgudi nor have his characters; and if by ill-luck, they did stray out of the municipal of Malgudi, they invariably came back, sadder and wiser.”

Not all of Narayan's short tales take place in Malgudi, even though that's where most of his books take place. The setting varies from Mysore to Bangalore to Madras to Kritam and others.

Narayan sometimes provides a predictable, though reasonable, tale conclusion. On occasion, O'Henry surprises his readers with a shocking denouement or sardonic ending. Everyday occurrences in the lives of different people provide him with a wealth of material for his writings. The subtle irony and harmony with which he reveals the tale make his straightforward narration compelling. His use of everyday language makes him easy to understand. The tales have the earthy aroma of Indian literature. He deftly weaves together reality and imagination, giving readers a comprehensive look at the kind of modern life they may lead in a typical South Indian home. The basic premise of many of his tales is an ironic twist at the conclusion that comes as a shock to the reader. He examines the inner workings of people by dissecting their thoughts, feelings, and deeds. There is no place in any of his fiction for sermonizing or pontificating. He is completely neutral, and his tales convey no overarching theme or moral. He doesn't give sermons or attempt to win people over; he doesn't even try to teach them right from wrong. He allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions on the dangers of propaganda and prejudice in Mulk. A. Raj Anand.”

Except for the foreigner in "A Horse and Two Goats," all of Narayan's protagonists are Indian. He hasn't done any real research before going into the Indian scene. He likes to only touch the surface of everything in life. He enjoys life for what it is and shares the everyday sights that make him happy without worrying too much about the more serious or troubling elements of it.

Narayan favored short tales above novels as a means of expression. Narayan spoke about it with his buddy S. Krishna in an interview from April 1975 in *Span*,

What a time-consuming business writing a novel is: I am tempted to make my next contracts for collections of short stories, say four or five at a time, each of about 20,000 words or so. Then I will be rid of this tyranny. In fact, I think I shall give up writing novels altogether.

Dr. Disha Sharma praised his short tales for their "simple but fascinating plot, lively characterization, strict economy of narration, and beautiful simplicity of language." They're helpful for those who wish to learn about Indian culture but don't speak the language. (Disha, Introduction) Although *Malgudi Days* (1941), *Dodu and Other Stories* (1943), and *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1944), the first three story collections, are no longer in print, their contents have been republished in subsequent editions. Besides *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1985) and *Malgudi Days* (1982), there are also the collections *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road* (1966), and *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970).

CONCLUSION

We get to see numerous facets of women via the many female protagonists in R. K. Narayan's works. In their search of free identities, people sometimes go to the dominant discourse for support, while other times they look inside. It's true that R. K. Narayan was a product of his period; throughout his writing career, women's rights made significant progress. In addition, he writes objectively and without bias toward the subjects or characters he discusses. As a result, it would be foolish to infer anything about his worldview and ethics from his writings. This is made more challenging by the fact that Narayan almost never offers commentary on his writings and is notoriously reluctant to defend his philosophical leanings. No matter how detached he is from his characters, it is simple to see how he conceived of and portrayed women. Narayan, in sharp contrast to Anand, draws inspiration for his writings from city life and thinks rural existence is uninteresting and pointless. As a journalist, his writing voice is appropriate. He covers the oddities and vices of regular individuals without ever desiring to alter them, and he focuses on highlighting those characteristics of a character or situation that have immediate present appeal. Intelligently and humorously, he exposes the frailties and follies of the individuals he meets in the urban south Indian neighborhood, as well as the irony of the situations that arise in their lives.

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