

Realism in The Novels of R.K. Narayan



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Abstract - R.K. Narayan is one of the leading figures in Indo-Anglican Fiction. He is a pure artist. He is a class in himself. He is the only major writer in Indo-Anglican Fiction who is free from didacticism. He has no desire to preach, to advise, to convert. The basic theme of his novels is the place of man in this universe and his predicament. He wants to suggest that life is illogical. Man is always trying to translate his fantasies into reality. Through the reversal of fortune, he completes the story of man's rise and fall. He presents a realistic view of life. However he does not portray the photographic reality. He represents reality which is artistic. In this way he differs from the French realist and naturalist who were interested in the stark and naked realism of life. Narayan depicts the realism which is something more than reportage. He grabs the Indian mind fully with all its superstitious comprehension of life, gullibility and appreciation of pseudo-scientific things. This research paper in a humble way presents briefly how R.K. Narayan depicts reality in his novels.

Keywords - Superstitions, Religion, Illiteracy, Marriage, Education, Poverty, Ignorance

Introduction- R.K. Narayan was born in 1906 at South Indian Village named Rasipuram. His full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami. His father's name was Krishna Swami. His mother tongue was Tamil. He settled in Mysore. Along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, he was a leading author of early Indian Literature in English. Graham Greene was his mentor and friend. Narayan won numerous awards. His first major award was in 1958, The Sahitya Akademi Award. He got it for his novel *The Guide*. In 1964 he received the Padma Bhushan. In 1980 he was awarded the AC Benson Medal. He was nominated for the Nobel prize in literature several times. However, he never won the honour. Some of his famous works are *Swami and Friends (1935)*, *The English Teacher (1945)*, *Waiting For the Mahatama (1955)*, *The Guide (1958)*, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961)*, *The Vendor of Sweets (1967)*, and *A Tiger for Malgudi (1983)*.

Analysis

R.K. Narayan is described as a novelist of common people and common situations. His plots are built of material and incidents that are neither extraordinary nor heroic. The tone of his novels is quite

and subdued. He selects day-to-day events that happen to almost everyone. His heroes are average human being. His heroes do not possess extraordinary capacities.

His novels are mainly the novels of characters. His range of characters is like that of Jane Austen is limited. He selects his characters from the ordinary folk of South Indian. They are drawn with a remarkable psychological consistency. These characters are full of life and vitality. They are thoroughly human in their likes and dislikes. They are neither saints nor sinners. They are as ordinary or extraordinary as we human beings are. The heroes of Narayan are never drawn on a heroic scale. Narayan is the creator of unheroic heroes. They are average human beings. They do not possess extraordinary capacities. However, because of some twist of fate they attend greatness. They soon return to their original state. His heroes do not control the events. The events control them. His women characters are married but unhappy in their married life. They move out of their family orbit and take help of those interested men who can help them rise.

Like Hardy's Wessex, the locale of Narayan's novel is Malgudi. The habits and manners, the daily routine and business activities and professions and ways of living of people of Malgudi are portrayed by Narayan in a realistic manner in his novels. The novels present a picture of Malgudi that has gone on growing and increasing from the early thirties to seventies.

Swami and Friends (1935) is the story of friendship of Swaminathan and his four childhood friends and a new boy named Rajam. It takes place in the British Colonial India in the year 1930. The theme of the novel is Innocence Family and Growing up. The story begins by introducing Swaminathan and his friends Somu, Sankar, Mani and Pea. Swami speaks out how different his friends are one another. However, their differences actually make their friendship stronger. In the words of Graham Greene "It is a classical school boy story of child, written with complete objectivity, with a humour strange for our fiction, closer to Chekov than to any other English writer with the same underlying sense of beauty and sadness."

The Bachelor of Arts (1937) is a novel that deals with college life. Chandran is a well-known college debator. He impresses the secretary in the debate. He passes B.A. He falls in love with Malti. However, he could not marry Malti because of opposition from his mother. He soon gets frustrated with the world. He goes to the extent of renouncing it. He becomes a *Sanyasi*. However, after a brief life as Sanyasi he marries a girl chosen by his parent. He joins as a newspaper correspondent. He becomes the chief agent of "The Daily Messenger". He becomes prosperous. He now says to the people that there is no sanity in the institutions of marriage. He now believes that people marry because of the satisfaction of their sexual appetite and the management of home.

The English Teacher (1945) is his third novel. It deals with school and college life of India. Krishnan is an English teacher. He is a product of a system of education which makes us "morons, cultural morons". He believed in freedom of soul and independence of mind. He had studied English

Literature. He admired the wonderful writers. However, he did so at the cost of his creativity. His mind was only a jumble of quotations. He found teaching synonymous with sitting in his chair and keeping his tongue active whether his students understood him or felt baffled by what he said.

The Guide (1956) presents a true social picture of India. R.K. Narayan has used Indian characters and Indian atmosphere to present before the reader the picture of true Indian culture. Raju, Rosie and Marco are the main characters of this novel. Indian manners and customs are presented in this novel realistically. Hospitality of India is a well-known fact. The villagers are shown as suffering from poverty and ignorance. Raju is a hypocritical character from the very beginning of his life. He is dishonest. He is a highly materialistic character. However, he gets transformed by the end of the novel. He narrates his life story to Velan. The rural India is full of Velans who are a gullible lot. Their minds get rippled by a common remark of Raju. They think that Raju is full of wisdom. Raju had escaped from Jail. Women come and worship the self-styled holy man. Raju receives gift and food from the villagers. Indian agriculture mainly depends on Monsoon. Villagers are superstitious. They think that if Raju keeps a fast rain will come and their problem would come to an end. During the draught the village shopkeeper raises the prices without any human consideration. Their main aim was to make profit. Raju's father was a poor shopkeeper. He has a small shop. He sells peppermint, fruit, tobacco, betel-leaf. He remains surrounded by the peasants and drivers of bullockcart. The arrival of the railway shows the change that was taking place. The picture of Indian masses has been shown in the crowds gathering around Raju. They are poor and uneducated. They are so poor that they don't have the advantage of education. They are obliged to lead the life of superstition and ignorance coupled with misery.

Conclusion

Naryan is a realistic writer. However, his realism is different from the surface realism of the French Naturalist. He is a master of comedy who is not unaware of the tragedy of human situation. His irony is like Chekhov. His wit is like Addison. His humour is like Mark Twain. Narayan never uses sophisticated or highly complicated language. He depicts the ironies of life in the most ordinary situations and familiar language.

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