



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

The Portrayal of Women Characters in the Selected Novels of R. K. Narayana: A Critical Study

Nilesh Nandaniya

Assistant Professor,
Government Arts College, Jamkalyanpur

Dr. Bipinbhai R. Parmar

Associate Professor,
M. N. Kampani Arts and Commerce College, Shardagram, Mangrol



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

ABSTRACT

R.K. Narayana is one of the most well-known Indian English writers. He wrote novels as well as short-stories. One of the most important components of his works is the art of characterisation. Through his portrayals of middle-class families in his works, he has distinguished himself as a master of characterisation. His books are on the everyday lives of south Indian middle-class men and women. In his novels, he has created a sizable cast of both male and female characters. At least one key female character may be found in each of his novels. Rapid social transformation occurred in Indian culture after Independence, and a new kind of woman developed as a force in all spheres of life. Women's problems still dominate the literary world today. Narayan has written novels that address the status and function of women in the home and in society. His books depict the transition of Indian women from a traditional society to one that is contemporary and progressive. He depicted a woman's personality in all of her elements. The present paper is a modest effort to investigate this element of R.K. Narayan's portrayal of women.

Key Words: Women, Traditional, Modern, Indian, Characterization, Personality



Introduction:

The works of R.K. Narayana are founded on a set of unique assumptions that are fundamental to his worldview and creative practice. The notion of a stable world underpinning all human activities and evolutions may be found in his works. Many Indian authors create English literature in a language that is not their native one. It is also true that the authors' works are not written in their native language. It is exceedingly challenging to describe numerous elements of Indian life in a language that is not of Indian origin. Narayan has garnered a significant number of readers, authors, and critics. As a writer of social novels, he approaches life with levity. He is typically photographic and realistic. His perspective of the present-versus-past conflict is more objective and dispassionate. The responses from E.M. Forster, Graham Green, and William Walsh have been overwhelmingly positive. In this regard, it is stated:

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 assignments with a circumstantial world which is full of ambiguities and ironies. (Naik 34)

R.K. Narayan has begun his career as a writer by writing about school and university life. Early periods as an author reveal a degree of immaturity. He invented the imaginary city of Malgudi. The renowned Malgudi Days by Narayan presents a fictitious, semi-urban city in southern India. His ladies have some typical feminine characteristics. He has noted common



feminine vices and virtues, such as love, sacrifice, and loyalty, as well as bravery. In R.K. Narayan's universe, males have the upper hand over women. They do not climb beyond men, save for a select few, and finally, they accept loss despite their efforts to the end. They enjoy a life of effort and pain, but ultimately concede defeat. They withstand any hardship that comes their way. They approach life with acceptance and not denial.

The Status of Women in India:

The deeply ingrained controlling mentality of Indian males crushes the individuality of a normal Indian woman. In the sake of custom and culture, her hands are restrained. She is even made to believe that the pains she endures are praiseworthy. Up until very recently, she continued to be the always suffering Sita. Inasmuch as they are consistently deprived of all the individualizing characteristics of a sentient being, such women, who are steamrolled and flattened into the family roles, tend to be dehumanized. In the midst of all these generalizations about Indian women, the purpose of this paper is to follow the gradual evolution of Indian women's perspectives as shown in R.K. Narayan's novels. India's social, political, economic, and cultural features have experienced a profound alteration as a result of Western influence. Even the most meek, obedient, and selfless Indian women have begun to consider their selfhood and identity. The insurrection flag that has already been raised in the West has echoed across the East. Abuse of power cannot persist indefinitely. Thralldom cannot exist in perpetuity. The lust for power, which has held women down for centuries, has been abruptly shattered. Woman, the weakest and most wounded of all, is also on the offensive. She is determined to better herself without the assistance of a guy. She is attempting to assist herself.



The fight in her life has permeated several industries / civilizations, including politics, education, employment, and most importantly, her household.

Even formerly male-dominated literature has now begun to represent her struggle. Women who have been constrained by tradition and culture have begun to see themselves from a new perspective. There is also an enormous shift in men's attitudes regarding women. This shift in perspective among both sexes has a noteworthy position in literature. In the Indo-Anglian literature discovered alongside Western consciousness, the woman is no longer a symbol of self-pity, submission, retreat, and personal regressiveness, but of growth and progress. Literature possesses Regarding their depiction of women, Indo-Anglian novels are no longer "consent" books. They have become "dissenting" books because they reflect the shift in public opinion. The transformation reflects not just the change in the reader's sensibility, but also that of the author. The natural result of Indian exposure to Western culture and aesthetic forms is Indo-Anglian fiction. In the earliest Indo-Anglian literature, women were unrealistically moralized and sentimentalized. The authors were incapable of grasping reality. Later, however, the necessities of reality compelled the authors. The Indo-Anglian novels of the early twentieth century exhibited a sluggish but continuous progression. As pointed out by Srinivasa Iyengar in 'The Indian Writing in English, there is a bolder approach to the realities of life.

Portrayal of Women Characters in R.K. Narayana's Novels:

The Bachelor of Arts has two female characters created by R.K. Narayan. One is Chandran's wife, Susila, who is the protagonist, and the other is Chandran's nameless mother.



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

Susila's role is more significant as a conventional Indian wife. She has superior attributes than those of her mother-in-law. As with any typical Indian girl, she accepts her parents' choice of arranged marriage. She is dutiful, faithful, and devoted to both her spouse and her in-laws, even after marriage. She holds her family members in the highest regard. She has the Sita-Savitri image of providing for her husband's every need. Susila is the ideal traditional Indian wife. She dramatically alters Chandran's life. Love becomes a reality in Chandran's life once he marries; he is more comfortable now that he has learned how to make the world of his fantasies match to the world of reality. Thus, Susila is the only one capable of bringing Chandran into the adult world. Her whole life is devoted to her hubby. Susila is a lovely and alluring lady who exemplifies the finest of traditional Indian women.

Susila is also a devout lady. Daily, she presents flowers and incense to God and prays for the health and happiness of her husband and in-laws. Susila is the female protagonist in Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*, and I'd want to laud her character. Her spouse considers her a friend, companion, servant, counsellor, well-wisher, nurse, etc. She is also a playmate, a companion, a guide, an adored, a disciplinarian, and has sufficient knowledge of the fine arts to instruct her spouse. William Walsh remarks accurately on the duties of women by saying that: "... the woman rather than the old represents Custom and Reason and knows what is and what is not proper" (75).

A family has two segmented parts, the female half and the male section. A society is composed of several families encompassing just the aforementioned two categories. Therefore, the function performed by a woman in the family is comparable to that of a husband in the



family and in society. A woman is as accountable to society, which is a broader type of family, as her husband is. Women's kinship and family bonds, promoting the perception of the woman as a wife. The majority of Indian women will likely continue to be driven by the notion of the Indian traditional lady as a loyal wife and will do her annual ritual for the longevity of her husband.

According to Indian cultural traditions, Susila holds the notion of responsibility in the highest regard. She socializes, teaches, loves, nourishes, and supports each family member with dedication, affection, love, sincerity, and submission. She is the cornerstone of both the family and the community. In this light, Pandit J.L. Nehru's observation is noteworthy: “To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves” (99).

Susila is an ideal lady who fulfils the responsibilities of wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law. Her life is completely devoted to her family, leaving her little time to consider herself. Her only focus was the care and protection of her family. Susila embodies the authentic Indian woman's individuality. Thus, Narayan depicts Susila with key characteristics of an Indian lady as a conventional wife to her husband and all in the context of constructing a joyful family environment. His representation of such a female figure is an effort to create human values in an era of insensitivity, within the context of Indian Traditional Culture.

Waiting for the Mahatma is a non-political novel in which Sriram and Bharati just superficially seek the Mahatma's lessons on love. If the work is viewed from a female



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

perspective, the roles ascribed to Sriram's grandmother and Bhatai are those of conventional and traditional Indian femininity. They exemplify the stereotypically submissive, compassionate, conservative, and conventional Indian ladies. R.K. Narayan is dominated by seventy patriarchal norms and ideologies. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, although he portrays the female characters with realism, he also reproduces the age-old Indian stereotypes about women.

The Man Eater of Malgudi was published for the first time in 1961. It has been noticed that mythical undertones are evident in almost all of Narayan's writings. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, he has openly addressed the mythical issue. It is also emphasized in Sastri's discourse on the Indian mythology of Ramayana and Bhasmasura. In this story, Lord Vishnu is Natarajan, Mohin is Rangi, and Vasu is Bhasmasura. The examination of women's characterisation demonstrates, however, that Narayan made no effort to alter the construction of characters in this work. The grandmother, mother, aunts, wife, and Rangi of Natarajan represent many aspects of traditional Indian womanhood. They are not a fundamental component of the story. They stay on the margins of Indian society and contribute to its construction.

Daisy, the female heroine of *The Painter of Signs*, heralds the emergence of a new woman willing to battle against the traditional male-dominated society. She reinterprets the conventional societal ideals with her fresh thoughts. She is opposed to the institution of marriage and views it as an impediment to her profession. She is also opposed to antiquated practices and the caste system. She has the fortitude and determination to overcome her



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

biological cravings, sacrificing her personal comfort for the sake of her missionary fervor.

Raman recognizes,

I don't know if she cares for any other god or religion, and I haven't asked. Her worship takes the form of service to the poor and the ignorant and helping them live a decent life. She cares not for wealth or luxury or titles. She can live with the poorest in their huts, eat their food and sleep on the mud floor (The Painter of Signs 112).

His characters' psychological core is understood by Narayan. He has a strong grasp of human psychology, which gives his characters realism and liveliness. He has investigated and analyzed the emotional world of women with exemplary understanding. He comprehends women's sorrows and inner conflicts. His female characters fight to escape the conventional roles placed upon them by society and family, but in the end, they demonstrate a commitment to traditional family values.



Conclusion:

In the variety of female characters shown in R. K. Narayan's writings, we experience many characteristics of women. Sometimes they seek substantiation from the prevailing discourse, and sometimes they choose inner confirmation in pursuit of their liberated identities. It is true that R. K. Narayan corresponds to his era, and throughout the time he wrote, the position of women underwent profound transformation. Furthermore, he maintains a dispassionate distance from his topics and people. Therefore, it is dangerous to make any conclusions about his perspective and values from his works. It is made more difficult by the fact that Narayan seldom comments on his works and is often unwilling to discuss his underlying views. However removed he may be from his characters, it is easy to discern the conception and depiction of women characters in his works. His books have a unique depth due to Narayan's conception and comprehension of women in Indian culture. In addition to grandmothers, wives, and mothers, Narayan examines the blending of traditional and contemporary women, as well as their strong sense of uniqueness and uncompromising attitude. His ladies find their identities inside the Indian middle class. This analysis of the many depictions of women in R.K. Narayan's works allows us to assert that R.K. Narayan was aware of the irrefutable.



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

References

Naik, M.K. *Prospective of Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1997.

Narayan, R.K. *The Bachelor of Arts*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1935.

---. *The Dark room*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1938.

---. *The English Teacher*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1946.

---. *The Guide*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1958.

---. *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1961.

---. *The Painter of Signs*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1977.

Walsh, William. *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation*. New Delhi: Allied, 1982.