

Representation of Cultural and Social Values in the Novels of R.K. Narayan

Arun Kumar Sharma,

Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

Bajali College, Pathsala

District: Barpeta, Assam.

Abstract

R.K. Narayan, a prominent figure in Indian Literature, has significantly contributed to English-language Indian Literature. He is a renowned individual who articulated his ideas in the English language. The readers were connected to the neighbouring world in a way that was both amusing and authentic. His work has garnered international praise and inspires individuals who seek to bring about societal change by reflecting on the experiences of a man who discovered compassionate humanism through the traditions of everyday living. By depicting the resilience of his characters, he accurately portrayed the image of society in his written pages. His work is a genuine homage to those seeking a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction presented in a great manner.

This study explores cultural and social values in a highly realistic manner. India is a country with abundant opportunities, and its residents are renowned for their indomitable spirit, as exemplified in ancient texts such as the Vedas. Indian ethos encompasses the concept of self-governance, individual or collective, guided by the wisdom found in revered writings such as the Vedas, Quran, Mahabharata, and Bible. Culture is founded around reverence for the elderly, familial cohesion, integrity, and diligent effort.

Keywords- Myth, reality, cultural diversity. Indian and Universal, Societal worth, irrational belief, and the cultural dichotomy between the East and West.

Introduction

R.K. Narayan, the author of *Malgudi Days*, is a renowned writer of early Indian English literature. Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayan Swami was a versatile author who wrote works in the genres of fiction, non-fiction, and mythology. He presented a remarkable variety of written works for his fans around the globe. R.K. Narayan's celebrated autobiographical trilogy, comprising "Swami and Friends," "The Bachelor of Arts," and "The English Teacher," stands as a remarkable collection of his works. Notably, the renowned fictional village of "Malgudi" was first established in the novel "Astrologer's Day" and further explored in "Swami and Friends." R.K. Narayan's novels portray a profound bond between the protagonists and the town of Malgudi. While Malgudi is a fictional village, it has been considered a "vivid and tangible existence" (Hariprassanna 1994:23).

R.K. Narayan was likened to the renowned writer William Faulkner due to his ability to establish a strong bond with his characters and effectively emphasize the societal backdrop. His writing combines Western techniques with Eastern elements, and he has excelled in incorporating Indian sensibilities into English art. For about 150 years, Indians have been using the English language for writing. Indian writing in English, also known as Indo-Anglian writing, is a notable form of the emerging creative expression that emerged in India during the early 19th century, also referred to as the literary renaissance period.

India epitomizes the notion of unity amidst variety. The country is renowned for its opulence and monarchy is celebrated for its esteemed customs and ceremonial practices. India exhibits significant social, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Various civilizations and traditions are depicted in this setting. Diversity is a fundamental asset and catalyst for achievement in all aspects of Indian society. India boasts a multitude of customs and cultures, many of which pique the curiosity of visitors. However, the fundamental essence of Indian society and culture has consistently revolved around the principles of exhibiting good manners, politeness, showing respect for others, and collectively advancing.

This paper aims to examine the juxtaposition between the Indian and Western concepts. India is a country characterized by a rich blend of religious faith and rational thinking. Both run in a parallel manner. At times, belief supersedes reasoning. The belief system embodies the essence of Indian culture, while logic epitomizes the refined nature of Western society.

R. K. Narayan, the narrator of *Malgudi Days*, documents the lives of individuals residing in a fictional town—the narrative delves into the lives of individuals ranging from destitute beggars to ambitious entrepreneurs. Within Narayan's short books, the reader encounters many characters such as an astrologer, a guide, and a vendor of sweets. This narrative keeps the reader in suspense regarding the forthcoming events in the lives of individuals that have become perpetually captivating, mostly because you have encountered them previously in your locality.

The inhabitants of Malgudi represent the middle-class demographic of India. They abstain from political involvement and have no desire for celebrity status. They exclusively desire to spend their days joyfully with their family members and friends. M.K. Naik notes that Narayan's characters are not extraordinary individuals, but rather ordinary people and peculiar locals. Narayan's writing style intentionally appears dull, which enhances the impact of his persistent irony. His depiction of human existence accurately reflects reality.

He consistently depicts the lives of ordinary Indian citizens as he immerses himself in their midst. According to Graham Greene, he has provided me with a second residence. "The Occasional Review" helped me get insight into the experience of being Indian, which I would not have been able to do without his contribution.

The Guide elucidates the Indian way of life, as well as the culture and tradition of India. R.K. Narayan has employed archetypal Indian characters and the Indian ambiance to depict Indian culture. The primary protagonists of this literary work are Raju, Rosie, and Marco. R.K. Narayan has provided an authentic portrayal of Indian society in his novel 'The Guide'. This tale also mirrors the characteristics of Indian etiquette and traditions. The hospitality of Indians is a widely recognized characteristic that is renowned globally. Narayan has provided an accurate portrayal of India during the narration, avoiding both excessive praise and criticism. The author has portrayed the poverty of India with a personal perspective. The villagers are depicted as enduring poverty and ignorance, with their lack of literacy being portrayed as the fundamental source of their hardships. The Indian rural inhabitants are just as gullible and kind-hearted.

Narayan conveyed the essence of Indian culture through the use of symbols in several of his works. Narayan employs symbols in *The Guide* that embody vital elements of Indian tradition and culture. The Temple, River, religion, and overwhelming innocence symbolize the traditional essence of Indian civilization. The bustling Railway Station, as depicted by Narayan, depicts the emergence of a new culture and tradition. It signifies the advent of modernity in Malgudi. The involuntary fasting undertaken by Raju serves as a symbolic representation of a fraudulent sanyasi commencing his genuine act of self-sacrifice for the betterment of the Mangala villagers. The swami's appearance embodies the distinctive traits of an Indian swami.

'An Astrologer's Day' is an intriguing narrative that explores the themes of deception and an unexpected meeting between an astrologer and a man named Guru Nayak. It is evident from the beginning that the astrologer is a fraudulent individual, without genuine abilities to foresee the future or possess any other magical capabilities. Nevertheless, the narrative contains a pervasive sense of irony that, despite being highly evident, is only elucidated after the story, when it is disclosed that the astrologer and Guru Nayak were once acquaintances.

The film also explores a recurring topic of the cyclical nature of time, which is subtly foreshadowed by Guru Nayak's unexpected meeting with the astrologer, who represents a past adversary. The astrologer's ability to predict the future further reinforces this idea. This also serves as a nuanced link to the Hindu belief in the cycle of birth and rebirth, as well as the notion of karma.

The narrative, as previously mentioned, abounds in symbolism and vivid imagery of India and its diverse regionalism: the backdrop of the Town Square of Malgudi, the astrologer's vocation of divination, the bustling crowds, cramped streets, street vendors, inadequate municipal lighting, cheroots, jutkas, jaggery, coconut, a pyol, and, naturally, the astrologer's notorious equipment.

The astrologer's interaction with Guru Nayak highlights an intriguing observation of the contrast between modernity and tradition. Despite being a charlatan, the astrologer engages in the practice of astrology due to the demand created by traditional beliefs. On the other hand, Guru Nayak's skepticism exemplifies the rationality associated with modern thinking.

The novel "The Vendor of Sweets" by R. K. Narayan was released in 1967 and published in London by Bodley Head Limited. The primary focus of the narrative revolves around the interaction between Eastern and Western cultures. The story portrays the clash between a traditional Indian father and his son who has been influenced by Western culture. It explores the intricate dynamics of the Indian middle-class society as it grapples with the challenges of adapting to a rapidly changing world, where traditional values are being overshadowed by a Western perspective. Jagan is the most dynamic protagonist in the novel 'The Vendor of Sweets'. Mali, his son who came back from America after completing his three-year study, has undergone a complete transformation from an Indian to a Westerner. Grace, Mali's companion from America, is unquestionably Western and logical. The father-son connection is strained, characterized by repetitive drills and the father's demands on the boy. The narrative centers on the protagonist's life, actions, uncertainties, principles, and convictions, culminating in his definitive choice to detach himself from the material realm and embrace a reclusive and isolated existence.

Grace The woman that Mali has married is a woman characterized by her sense of duty, responsibility, and sensibility. She, who is deeply affected by Indian traditions and culture, finds it overwhelming.

The individual is captivated by the practices and traditions and often goes to great lengths to adhere to them, sometimes even surpassing the efforts of the Indian people themselves. She quickly gains the affection of Jagan, her father-in-law, via her exceptional kindness and logical demeanor.

The introductory paragraph of the work is quite humorous, especially for those from Western cultures. Jagan, in response to his listener's question about why one should conquer the self, stated, "By conquering taste, one can ultimately conquer the self." Jagan stated, "I am unaware, but all our sages counsel us in this manner." Jagan's response to the listener's inquiry reflects a blend of Western and Eastern cultural perspectives.

In conclusion,

Narayan's fiction skillfully explores various aspects of Indian life, customs, dreams, and reality, effectively capturing the ethos of the culture through his exceptional personal talent. The scientist has analyzed the commentator's remarks regarding his notable achievements. One such achievement is the successful integration of "the Indian universal, combining strategy and attitude" in his books on dharma and karma. These books primarily explore how the protagonists embark on a spiritual quest for self-acceptance and self-awareness, delving into various aspects of Indian philosophy, values, religious beliefs, superstitions, myths, traditions, women's roles, the human condition, struggles, cosmic reality, supernatural phenomena, daily life in India, human relationships, the interplay between Eastern and Western cultures, and the philosophical perspectives of children on life and the pursuit of identity. This section provides a detailed analysis of these themes.

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