Creed and Credo in the Novels of R. K. Narayan

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Preface

R.K. Narayan is generally acknowledged the most wonderful and the most creative Indian author writing in English. He is at his best when he unites gentle irony with serious moral concern. His solitary endeavor is to give artistic gratification and he undoubtedly emerges as a notable writer in the 1930's. R.K. Narayan whose first novel appeared in 1935 is the most unpretentious and unassuming novelist. He always creates a convincing situation to suit his characters who live in the limited region of Malgudi. We may recall Thomas Hardy immediately. This small South Indian town imposes structural limits on Narayan's novels, but it also tends to provide them with textual cohesion and unity, leaving little space for digression and ramblings. Narayan is the truest artist who does not bother about social or political doctrines, nor is he bothered about the contemporary nature of his subject matter. Sex does not make an appealing theme to him. Thus, R.K. Narayan keeps himself distinct and distinguished from other Indo-English novelists.

It has been said that Narayan is at his best in novels like *The Guide, The Man-Eater of Malgudi* and *A Tiger for Malgudi*. *The Guide* describes the adventure/ misadventures of Raju who starts his career as a tourist guide. The novelist shows how Raju uses his holiness only as a convenient disguise in order to fulfill his own vicarious wishes.

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R.K. Narayan is world famous for creative literature in English. The most fascinating feature of his personality is that he is a pure Indian though he prefers English over his mother language for the expression of his creative urge. Living absorbed in religion and family, he is understandably indifferent to literary fashions of the west. His fiction mirrors through his central-character the microcosmic India and he describes different dimensions of Indian society as a silent on-looker. He is a humanist and therefore, to bring out human predicament is his prime concern. Narayan's social consciousness is conspicuous in his novels yet his awareness is covered with a blanket of irony. He maintains a frontier of norms in his fictional writing and therefore, is free from all partialities.

Narayan's approach to subject-matter is always marked with intellectual inspirations. He is a merchant of human metaphors, an artist who presents the reality with detachment least caring to correct it. He highlights the duality of human nature, hypocrisy and absurdities of society.

In his lifetime; he has given us a number of novels, short stories, and non-fictional work. His most important and unforgettable novels of his life include *Swami and Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937), The Dark Room (1938), The English Teacher (1945), Mr. Sampath (1948), The Guide (1958), The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961), The Vendor of Sweets (1967) and Many Other Anthologies. The Guide Won Him The Sahitya Academy Award in 1960.*

R.K. Narayan's writing technique is very modest and unpretentious. His characters remind the readers

of their friends and family, not any heroes which provide them a greater ability to relate to the story.

Thus the study intends to research on the topic *Creed and Credo in the Novels of R. K. Narayan.* No doubt, Narayan is an accomplished novelist because of his art, techniques, and way of writing, mind and ideas. He is a novelist of common people and common situations. He was a great lover of India. He likes the principles of Mahatma Gandhi who was a role model of many people of our country. R.K. Narayan has tried to save the small problems of the people of the society though his novels. His novels are being appreciated and read by all the readers of the world. If one takes the life of a school boy like Swami, one finds nothing extraordinary or strange in his life. Similarly, Mr. Sampath, Chandran, Raju, Rosie, Savitri and others live, love and suffer in a maze of incidents which are just common place.

A brief survey indicates that most of Narayan's characters belong to middle class, especially to the lower middle classes of South India. Chandran belongs to middle-class family. Editor Srinivas also is bothered with the idea of earning his bread and butter.

Narayan thus undeniably, may be described as an accomplished novelist of the middle class common man. The theme of his novel is very common. He tried to write the common things of the people.

—Dr. Meenakshi
—Dr. Radha Madhab Jha

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Introduction

1.1 Origin of Indian English Literature

The element of style may be put next on our list; and with this it might seem that for practical purposes our analysis is complete. But there still remains a sixth component to which too much importance can hardly be attached. It is difficult to find a name for the sixth element which is altogether satisfactory, for whatever may be suggested, we are in danger of implying too little or too much. But postponing any decision of this till we reach it in our proper course, we will for the present call of the *novelist's criticism, or interpretation, or philosophy of life.*

Omitting the element of style, which, as common to all kinds of literature, need not detain us here, we will take the other components one by one and consider some of the questions which naturally arise in connection with each of them in any novel we may select for our study.

Too many even today Indian English literature seems to be a contradiction in terms on the round that what is Indian just cannot be rendered in English, a foreign language. Even though English has been the medium of education in India since quite sometimes, a second language is a second language, and spontaneous expressions do not come naturally in this case. The gap is very much there of which most of the writers are

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conscious. In fact, the better the greater; the better the consciousness of his handicaps. Being an Indian, being familiar with India's culture complex, her natural life, it is only natural that the Indian writes in English would look or the staff of his writings in Indian life and cultural complex. But the language that he has chosen is an alien one and this is root of all problems culminating in a serious conflict between experience and expression, theme and idiom. Parthasarthy tells that language is an expression of human feelings and emotions. There has to be a time lag between the British language and the Indian English language. The associations that an English word is for an English man are not available to the Indian writings. *Similarly there are a number of* Indian expressions to which an English equivalent is difficult to be found. The need therefore is to evolve a personal language either by extending the resources of the English language or by indianizing it, so the Indian variety of English with distinctive linguistic features-something lie American English or Australian grows from the soil. In "Kanthapura" *RAJA RAO* states this predicament *of the* Indian English writer in very explicit terms:

> Someone has to express that language which is not a feeling of self which is of self. Someone has to express different sizes and impressions of a certain idea-which is ill in foreign language, I use the word 'aliens', but English is not really a foreign language for us. This is the language of our intellectual make-up like Sanskrit or Persian were not the first of our emotional make-up. We all are easily bilingual, many of us are writing in our own language and in English. We can not write like English. But we should not feel nervous. We cannot write in the form of Indians only. We have emerged to see the larger part as

> our share. That's why our method of expression should be a dialect which will prove to be distinct and colorful in the form of Irish or American someday. Time alone will justify it".

And time had indeed justified it. Raja Rao himself has mad experiments of considerable values with his language. His use of "little mother" in kanthapura is unforgettable.

Another experiment to retain the original words rather than replace them by their English equivalents has been quite successful. The well–known Nigerian novelist has a number of places retained in Hindi original instead of using it in English equivalent. One does feel that people feel easy to write in English in place of Hindi. Words that he very justifiably chooses to retain would have taken away much of the flavor of the poem.

It is undoubtedly a precarious position, Indian English literature has now become mature enough to be able to handle the English language to suits it requirements. Significantly, it has been true of a number of Indians educated Indians- that they have been using English fairly happily. The fact of the matter is that the use of the idiom has gone into the vey lifestyle: They write their letters in English and use it for effecting diverse wonders for use as well as for fun. Therefore; there is no denying that Indian English literature is a field that has immense possibilities. It all depends on how well the rich resources of English language are exploited. There has to be a one-to-one relationship between the poet and the language that he uses. To name one, Kamala Das almost did it. She has used the English language for her frank and direct expressions with the spontaneity of one completely at ease with the language.

Catherine Canday makes an interesting observation about his identity being a reflection of Paul Scott's

character. Hari Kumar from the Raj Quarter-'the English- educated gentlemen, too Indian for the English and too English for the Indians…' Both western and eastern influences work upon the imagination of Salman Rushdie. Amon the westerns, Rushdie acknowledges his indebtedness to the medieval artists such as Gogol, Kafka and Bulgakov, experimental modernists such as Joyce and Brecht, European and Latin Marquez. This long list by no means undermines the eastern influences under which Rushdie was brought up. Hence his reliance on the Hindu mythology, particularly in midnight's children. The role of the Quran, Urdu and other Sufi is very important in the field of any literature. Urdu is being used by most of the novelist in Hindi literature.

The writers write about the problems of the society through their novels. The roots of Indian literature in English could legitimately be traced in what has been said in the British and European attempts to understand and interpret India. A lot of hue and cry is raised by nationalist historians who argue that English is not a language of India and therefore Indians cannot and should not write in English. An objective assessment reveals that over the centuries, so many languages and cultures have assimilated in India that it is difficult to call them alien. Sanskrit, Urdu and English have not only been natively contextualized but they have also become a part and parcel of the fabric of Indian reality, its social and metaphysical consciousness. India has had great narrative traditions exemplified by works like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata,* the *Puranas*, the *Panchatantra* and *Kathasaritsagar*, to name a few. Partha Chatterjee in his Colonial and Postcolonial theories observes:

> India is a great country but it was being ruled over by the Britishers for almost two centuries. During this period; they had to suffer a lot.

> In spite of the colonial rule, Indian culture grew incredibly over these years. Britishers invaded India on the maneuver of doing business and soon comprehended that having political command over India will boost their economy. Gradually, they set up a colonial empire. The weavers and artisans had to lose their jobs and the old existing order underwent a complete change. Later, the Britishers introduced English language in Indian education system. Macaulay, a member of colonial Indian parliament introduced an education system where 'mimic men' were to be produced. Their sole purpose of introducing English was to strengthen their rule.

The early English fiction in India was largely designed to pulling the attention of English audience. The later novels were about the praise of British Empire and the Queen. Women in that period were not given opportunity to get education. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments:

> In the 19th century, the major themes were – social injustice, poor condition of peasants and artisans, widow remarriage and women's education and emancipation. This stage is known as the "renaissance" of Indian fiction writing. Rabindranath Tagore wrote stories, prose and poetry in Bengali and English. His *Gitanjali* is a great lyrical achievement. Realizing the need for self-representation and expression, many Indian writers wrote historical fiction during the Indian freedom movement. Then, The Big Three writers of our country have modernized Indian English novel by presenting a realistic picture of Indian society under the colonial rule. Gandhiji was a source of inspiration to the

writers. The prevailing nationalistic fervor was portrayed in the literature during that time. The partition of India had a long-drawn-out disquieting and harrowing result on the consciousness of Indian writers and became one of the most talked about and discussed themes in their writings. After independence, an era of hope dawned in India. The themes of partition, political satire and growing disillusionment greatly affected the literary scene. Caste and communalism became major themes. An elongated journey of Indian English writing has been witnessed. Now it is emerging at a remarkable cadence with different writers experimenting with different forms, techniques and linguistic styles. They like the style of Gandhi ji very much.

1.2 Introduction to Indian English Fiction:

History of Indian fiction in English may be dated to 1930's. This is a period which is related to the development of the genre, negotiation with the Western concept of romance, and of historical writing and the beginning of an engagement with India's freedom. Novel as a form of literature and vehicle of human relationship has significant contribution in the modern Indian context. The dominance of fiction as a literary form can be understood in the words of T. D. Bruntun:

> The modern world demands novels just as it demands films and television programs. Indeed, it is only through the novel that literature, the unglamorous written words without color or illustration, is able to compete with its brush competitors of the screen. …novels present a juxtaposition of reality and imagination and with a variety of themes different writers have given words to their

> experience. They have presented it as a wonderful form of art.[3] (1972:57)

India is a vast country with geographical, historical, social, cultural and economic diversity and it provides a vast scope to the fiction writers. Indian English literature means writings by writers of Indian origin. These writers may write in any foreign languages but they are originally from India and they can speak Indian languages very well. They are originally belong to India, it is also possible that later on they may be shifted in a foreign country but they have not forgotten the taste of the fruit of Indian languages. They have been given warm reception and have received International recognition. It has encouraged Indian English authors and they are writing with a new belief. These writers have explored and extended English for their creative purpose. Marudanayagam P. opines:

> If Indian English fiction has arrived at breaking through age... it is due to its abundance and variety, its superb handling of innovative techniques and last but not the least, its mastery of English language.[4] (1999:161)

Indian English writers have proved to the world that they can effectively write in English. They have offered to the world new subject matters and a wide range of fictional themes. Their major themes include rising nationalism, religious reforms, status of women in the contemporary world. In this regard, Bhabani Bhattacharya asserts:

> It is the right of an imaginative writer to communicate in which manner he wishes. In this regard, he is free to express his innermost feelings to the world.[5] (1964:43)

During British rule in India, a careful attempt was made to select certain kinds of texts while excluding

others. British rulers ensured that secular writings, analytic texts and imaginative products that give free play to an inquiring mind, were excluded from the academic system. With the purpose of introducing the natives to the best of Western thought and imagination, rather certain classics were selected that would reinforce feudal beliefs, and allegiance to a higher order. To enact the British policy of divide and rule, an attempt was made to polarize the Indians along a discursive terrain. Thus, British education system did not include English literature up to 19th century... It was at that time that a rising middle class and reading public posed a challenge to the establishment, demanding alternative courses incorporating modern studies like Physics, Chemistry, and Biology and so on. The British system also became aware of the exclusivity of secular and religious education, and was looking for a neutral territory where the secular concerns and the missionary zeal could meet. Such a synthesis was found in English Literature. During the colonial rule, the assumption that maternal language is the natural medium of expression, created tremendous and much reaching impact on the Indians because it conjointly happened to be the fundamental gospel of nationalism. Language is that external visible badge of distinction that distinguishes one nation from another.

It was the period when Indian intellectuals realized that English was a medium to connect with the world. Many Indian writers chose to write in English though their mother-tongue was one of many languages spoken in India. Raja Rao, the reputed novelist in his preface to his novel *Kanthapura* comments:

> After the advent of Britishers, Indian English novelists had an inevitable task of defining the civilization ruptures caused by the colonial intervention and at the same time make it counter-canon, paradoxically, accessible and