

Religion Interpretations as the Standpoint of the Language of R. K. Narayan's Works

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Abstract: Indian literature has been influenced by religion. In India, Indian English literature flowered in the nineteenth century with prominent writings of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindranath Tagore, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, etc. Indian English writers fabricated plenty of constructive and unforgettable materials by borrowing writing content from day to day life of people. These writers loved to quote their resemblance to work from ancient epics and their everlasting fascinating concepts. Works of R.K. Narayan played a critical role in shaping up the appearance of religion in Indian roots. William Walsh, in his essay "Sweet Mangoes and Malt Vinegar," in *A Human Idiom*, appreciated R.K. Narayan for spiritual maturity and his capability to merge ethical study with a gentle satirical comedy. R.K. Narayan's works gave a description of Indian culture, traditions, strength, astronomy, religious beliefs, social hierarchies, family system, clash between Indian traditions and cultures of overseas, different mindsets of different age groups, etc., although with a touch of light comedy. The works of R.K. Narayan helped the outlanders to comprehend the vivacious ethnicity, moreover religion of India in its extensive outward appearance. The pictorial narrative way of R.K. Narayan presented the Indian religion and culture in a unique, authentic style. This paper discovers how the works of R.K. Narayan assist out comprehend the touch of Indian beliefs, impacts, and contradictions with several examples from his works.

Keywords: Indian culture, Culture, Traditions, social hierarchies, conflicts

INTRODUCTION

Religion performs a significant place in the lives of the Indians from ancient times. It has numerous unspoken forms concerning diverse clusters of people connected with it. Religious ideas, thoughts, and practices differ

among different groups. Indian spirituality is deeply embedded in the truth-seeking philosophy of life and existence. Indian seers develop special yoga techniques that help them explore deep into the depths of consciousness and reveal significant truths about the true nature of human beings and the cosmos. Religion in ancient India intended a person to realize the reality of life and attain Moksha. The core significance of Vedanta is that the intellect must direct each act of life. Religion plays an important role in the lives of Indians and impacts every sphere of life from birth to death. In Indian writing, Religion and faith attained a great association and Indian literature had been influenced by religion. Indian English writers fabricated plenty of constructive and remarkable materials by borrowing writing content from people's day-to-day lives. These writers used quotes from ancient epics and everlasting interesting ideas.

R.K. Narayan is a solitary figure among Indian English scholars of fiction. In his name 'R' is Rashipuram, the rural community from where his family belonged and 'K' in his name stands for Krishna Swami Iyer which is his father's name. The comprehensive outward appearance of 'Narayan' is Narayanswami. The hereditary place of Narayan was Rashipur, where he gained knowledge of religion and we see a deep reflection of religion in his works. This paper traverses how the creative writings of R.K. Narayan reflected the true images of rural Indian customs, oral history, myths, folklores, epics and beliefs to the all over the world through his works. He gave a detailed depiction of complex vibrant Indian culture as he carved a fabricated settlement called Malgudi, the one is India's manifestation. The notion of religion is visible in his works which reflected a

factual depiction of India throughout the British rule. R.K. Narayan obliged an immense treaty with Hindu viewpoint of existence. He carved Hindu myths and legends in his works like Ramayan, Mahabharat, etc. In *Malgudi*, He also talked about Hindu epics and folklores. He also mentioned the custom of fasting and its importance for Hindus for seeking deities blessing. In novel, *The Financial Expert* when Margayya went to deities' temple pujari told him to drink the milk which is the symbol of Dhanya laxmi. Pujari also told him if he will refuse the pot of milk; he will refuse Goddess's blessings and his wealthy future (Narayan). in *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, Nartaj and his friends adored Bhagwan Hari for safety of divine elephant and the elephant is miraculously saved.

Concept of Karma Yoga

The concept of Karma Yoga was introduced by great Indian Hindu Philosopher and religious teacher Swami Vivekananda in his book *Karam Yoga*. He focused on the spiritual significance of work. "The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit Kri, to do; all action is Karma. Technically, this word also means the effects of actions" (Vivekananda, 1). R.K.Narayan told of the concept of Karam yoga in his novel *The Guide*, where Raju became Karam Yogi by serving people. He taught people to choose an unselfish path and motivated folks towards the spirituality. The works of Narayan illustrated that religion, the engagement of faith and devotion, contributed as a vital part of Hindus' life. The Hindu analysis of karma and mukti is mirrored in the novel *Waiting for Mahatma* where Sriram took loan of nine rupees and a few annas from Kanni's granny. When granny passed away, Kanni forced him to pay the money; only this way his Granny's soul will get salvation.

Concept of Guru- Shishya

The Indian Guru Shishya Parampara, deeply rooted in ancient scriptures and spiritual traditions, embodies a sacred bond between the guru and shishya. Fundamental connection of the guru's position as a spiritual guide, imparting not only academic knowledge but moral, ethical, and spiritual wisdom (Mahapatra). According to folklore, once Adikavi Valmiki met the great sage Narada and had a conversation with him about his duties. Moved by Narada's words, he began to chant the word "Mara,"

which meant "die". As he performed his penance for several years, the word became "Rama", the name of the god Vishnu (Wikipedia). In *The Guide*, Velan was a trusting and respectful man. At first glance, he found Raju's spiritual aura and immediately put his faith in him as a sacred man. It was Velan's faith in Raju that helped Raju transform into a divine person. Velan set off as Raju's Guru gave the right direction to the life of Raju. Same as Narada Muni did for Valmiki. In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, Narayan recounted the notion of inner psychological devotion of Raja and religiosity of his guru who switched an awful, dreaded beast to angel angel-hearted mortal. Thus, Narayan proved the ability of the Guru as propounded by great Hindu philosophers. Muthusamy and Sindhu appreciated Narayan's relationship of Raja and his master in their research paper called "A Critical Appreciation of R.K. Narayan's A Tiger for Malgudi." He enlightened Raja and guided him to choose the path of enlightenment (Muthusamy, 6). Sanyasi, the master of Raja, had deep insight and power to reach the mind of Raja, as he alone realized the true desire of the tiger.

Influence of Myths and Folklore

Narayan's themes were based on the classic patterns of sticking to rituals, immense truth, internal conversions, virtue, and integrity. The essence of ethnicity, with the use of folklore, adorned the works of Narayan, which provided the universal populace with the mythic grandeur. Narrative is a lively medium for Narayan to maintain and reform the culture. Raju, Shastri, and master, the popular characters of his novels, came closer in their childhood to religion. In their childhood, they heeded Indian oral traditions, mythology, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. The Indian folklores presented in the consciousness of these characters lead them to salvation. He also gave the moral and psychological touch to his characters with the help of folklore. Through his novel *The Painter of Signs*, he showed the parallel story of the relationship between Daisy and Raman to the myth of the holy Ganga and King Shantanu. In *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, Narayan constructed a constant mythological structure by using the myth of Purans in which a scary and powerful evil spirit threatened the kingdom of heaven with his fundamental forces of turmoil, but lastly shattered into the universe. This novel reminded the old myth of Bhasmasura. With the

lines of Savitiri in which she apprised Vasu that only a person's ego can destroy the future of that person.

The Tiger and Man had themes of reincarnation and salvation. According to William Walsh:

“The religious sense of Indian myth is a part of Narayan's grip of reality of his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human feeling and experience. What one can say about Narayan without qualification is that he embodies the pure spirit of Hinduism” (Walsh, 148).

S.C. Sanyal, in his book *Indianness in Major Indo-Anglian Novel*, mentioned that performing fast will remove the worst situations of life, even drought. The sacrifice of saints spread happiness and prosperity. With the sacrifice of Raju, the happiness came as a form of rain in the lives of villagers (Sanyal, 249). The characters in Narayan's novel also hold examples from religion. The religious stories of Vaklmiki and Angulimala, who followed the spiritual path related to Raju.

Influence of Astrology

In Indian culture, Hindu astrology is both a method of divination and an integral part of their spirituality and cultural traditions (Dreyer, 1997). The philosophical roots of Hindu astrology involve the concepts of karma and reincarnation (Dasgupta, 1997). Vedic Astrology, the system of predicting one's destiny based on the position of the stars and planets, is as timeless as ancient India. Originating from the Vedas, a collection of sacred Hindu texts, astrology is still prevalent today. Many Hindus consult with an astrologer before pursuing any major life attempt, or when they face problems in life (Frawley, 41). R.K. Narayan represented Indian characters realistically and authentically. The tentative thinking and unreasonable attitudes are passed down from generation to generation. In most of Narayan's novels, astrology played a crucial role in the spiritual Indian's life. There are several examples of his novels where astrology became prominent. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chandran and Malathi wanted to marry each other, but their horoscopes did not match. In the story of *The Financial Expert*, Margayya was guaranteed enhanced opportunities by an astrologer. The legendary and conventional performance in the novel revealed the

nature of Margayya, who was deeply in faith of performing rituals and practices which were associated with religion. In the same work, Dr. Pal called another astrologer for match-making of the horoscopes of Balu and Brinda. In *The English Teacher* and *The Tiger for Malgudi*, Sanyasi is represented in a truly extraordinary and influential person. Narayan's works were genuinely embedded in the Indian frame. He used ancient tales of people of virtue and nobility, and the significance of the mantras and slokas for worshiping of Hindu Deities. Oral traditions, stories of deities, gurus, evil spirits and myths adorned the stories of Malgudi.

Ethical moral beliefs

In most of the works of Narayan, ethical and moral beliefs are used. The victory of the divine over sin and the journey of ignorance to wisdom became prominent themes of novels of Narayan. Many incidents from the novels of R.K. Narayan could illustrate the slokas or quotes from Hittoupdesha and Panchatantra. Narayan gave value to the legacy of Indian civilization. Raju begged Velan that he could not perform the ritual for the rain god, which was only performed by a sacred person. Raju revealed all his past in front of Velan, but Velan had great faith in him. They used to execute Vedic yagnas to invoke the gods of rain – Varuna and Indra to obtain rainfall. The most popular verse from Vedic scriptures, that modern Hindus quote in support of this faith-based activity, is from the Bhagavad Gita:

Annād bhavanti bhūtani parjanyaād anna – sambhavah,
Yajnād bhavati parjanyo yajnāh karma samudbhavah.
(3.14)

Bhagwan Krishna revealed to Arjuna in the field of Kurukshetra, as written in Vyasa's Mahabharata, that life is born from food, food is produced by rain, rain is produced by performing yajna, and that yajna is performed by doing Karma. From different types of practices performed by people to worship the rain God, an example used in *The Guide*, where villagers performed the marriage of frogs in ponds. Raju chose to be an escapee as he did not want to face the innocent villagers, but later he thought, “If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? For the first time in his life, he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money

and love; for the first time, he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal” (Narayan, 237).

CONCLUSION

Religion and tradition were two basic elements of Narayan’s novels, where Indian life traced the stories of the Indian community. In most of his stories, the central characters, such as Swaminathan, Ramani, Raju, Sampath, Jagan, Sriram, and Raman, belonged to Hindu joint families. The characters grew in a typical environment that was influenced by caste and religion. R.K. Narayan’s stories also threw light on the lives of Hindus, which were followed by the concept of Varna and Ashram. In his stories, caste, religion, and horoscopes played an important role in Hindu marriage. R.K. Narayan carefully used moral ethics in his stories. Most of his central characters are engaged in the process of internal conversion. Raju and Raja followed the journey of true wisdom and got salvation at the end of the story. R.K. Narayan was an immense narrator, his one side firmly embedded in the myths and the other side in the light-hearted satires.

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