

Narayan as an Indian English Novelist: A Critical Overview

Dr. Khursheed Ahmad Qazi

Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, North Campus, University of Kashmir
E-mail: qkhursheed@kashmiruniversity.ac.in

ABSTRACT

R. K. Narayan, one of the greatest Indian English writers and a world-renowned literary figure of the twentieth century, is among the founding fathers of Indian English fiction. Along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, he not only pioneered the novel form in Indian English literature but also defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate so far its theme, concerns and characterization are concerned. Each of these three novelists – called the great trio – used his own version of English, freed from foggy taste of Britain, and transferred it to a new setting of brilliant Indian light, challenges and purified heart.

In this paper, a humble attempt is made to present a critical overview of R K Narayan as an Indian English novelist who undoubtedly contributed prolifically enabling the Indian English novel to evolve and earn an independent niche of its own on the world literary map.

Key words: Indian, English, novel, Malgudi, culture, ethos, rebellion

Main Argument

Among all Indian English writers R. K. Narayan's fiction is substantial, supreme and the best because his writings reveal varied dimensions of Indian life, tradition and ethos through his unique individual talent and manner. Shiv Gilra, while talking about the place and position of R K Narayan in contemporary Indian English Literature, concentrates on his 'use of the locale', his art of story telling, plot construction and character delineation. Narayan's great distinction as a novelist also lies in creating an imaginary landscape, Malgudi, for giving his characters 'a local habitation and name'. For this distinctiveness, and other characteristic features, critics have compared him with Jane Austen – for being content with his 'little bit of ivory' – equating Malgudi with 'boarder countries' of Sir Walter Scott, 'Lake District' of Wordsworth, 'The Wessex' of Thomas Hardy or 'The Five Towns' of Arnold Bennet. They believe what Hardy did for Wessex and Faulkner did for Mississippi, Narayan has done for Malgudi placing it on the literary map of India. According to them, Narayan's Malgudi, like Hardy's Wessex, serves as a special and useful background for events and episodes, helping readers to understand fully the actions of the characters inhabiting it. Srinivasa Iyengar says:

Narayan's is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration; he is content like Jane Austen, with his "little bit of ivory", just so many inches wide: he would like to be a detached observer to concentrate on a narrow scene, to snap a small group of characters in their oddities and angularities: he would, if he could explore the inner countries of the mind, heart and soul, catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, tragic in the prosaic.... Malgudi is Narayan's Casterbridge, but the inhabitants of Malgudi – although they may have their recognizable local trappings – are essentially human, and hence, their kinship with all humanity. (Iyengar 2001:360)

A thorough study shows that there are critics and scholars who consider Narayan to be the third world's best writer in English and talk high of his finest achievements such as attaining a balance between 'the Indian' and 'the Universal', combining technique and 'temperament' exploring the ancient Indian culture embodied in the Indian epics *Shastras*, *Purnas*, myths and mythologies. The Indian epics, *Purnas*, and *Shastras*, are the depositories of ancient values of life and moral codes of conduct used consistently by different Indian writers to delineate various facets of Indian Culture and Civilization; and Narayan being no exception exploits these treasure houses of Indian scholarship and wisdom in order to make it known to the world that India is traditionally the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Purnas*. The values remain the same in every village, town or city. He is not only faithful to his national tradition but also his own cultural ethos and people. John Updike, the American novelist, observes on Narayan's oneness with his people and surroundings:

What a wealth of material becomes available to a writer who can simply assert such a sense of community! ... of writers immersed in their material and enabled to draw tales from a community of neighbours, Faulkner was our last great example. An instinctive, respectful identification with the people of one's locale comes hard now, in the menacing cities or disposable suburbs, yet without it a genuine belief in the significance of humanity, in human significance, comes not at all! (Rao 2004:116)

Taking a clue from these critics, others have explicated the doctrine of *dharma* and *karma* in the novels of R. K. Narayan by focusing mainly on how the protagonists pursue the spiritual quest for self-realization and self-understanding. According to them, Narayan's novels depict the genuine human condition by presenting such characters who go through a series of frustrations on account of various involvements and finally end up in isolation. Narayan's treatment, they argue, lies in highlighting the fluid nature of the protagonist's character sandwiched between different identities. Similarly, there are other critics, a thorough research and reading shows, who have explored and eulogized R. K. Narayan's presentation of the national tradition, with a particular reference to the questions of cultural fusion and racial consciousness. According to these critics, Narayan's philosophy of traditionalism, which permeates all of his novels, is the fountain-head from which his other philosophical concepts – such as orthodoxy, superstition and the role of fate in life – gush out. It has been established by such scholars and critics that Narayan, very proficiently and skillfully dealt with various philosophical concepts in all his major works – *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Dark Room*, *The English Teacher*, *The Guide*, *Waiting for Mahatma*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *A Tiger for Malgudi* and *The World of Nagaraj* – which paint a graphic picture of Indian society profoundly caught in mythology and drawing sustenance from spiritual legacy of its saints, seers, prophets and ascetics. For example, Bhagwat S Goyal has traced beautifully the growth of Raju from spurious no-good-fellow to a genuine human being and his acquisition of genuine humanity through the realisation of his human and spiritual selfhood.

Similarly, in his "Thematic Patterns in the Early Novels of R. K. Narayan" and "Thematic Patterns in the Later Novels of R. K. Narayan" Goyal establishes that Narayan's novels delineate upon the problems encountered by a human life and suggest that life is a journey in quest of self-identity or emancipation from the miseries of life.

There are scholars who argue that the novels of Narayan are a unique mixture of myths and reality. In most of his novels, they assert, both myth and reality have been so deftly fused together that they seem to coalesce as in actual life. Narayan's realism, unlike the stark and naked realism of the French realists and naturalists, is believed to be psychological and sociological at the same

time. With the help and use of myths and fables, Narayan penetrates the core of Indian mind and reveals it with all its bewildering contradictions, superstitions and traditions. U.P. Sinha in *Patterns of Myth and Reality: A Study of R. K. Narayan's Novels* has made a very serious study of R. K. Narayan's fictional mode based on the premise that Narayan's consciousness is Mythic. The author explicates Narayan's fiction in order to show how the configuration of myth and reality enforces a specific artistic design to his novels, thus securing an authentic spiritual vision to his fictional reality. S. Krishnan in his "A Day with R. K. Narayan" says that when I asked Narayan regarding the unorthodox bent of mind his new heroines reveal and which is quite different from Savitri of *The Dark Room*. He said:

In *The Dark Room*, I was concerned with showing the utter dependence of women on men in our society. I suppose I have moved along with the times. The girl in my new novel is quite different - Not only is she dependent on men: she actually has no use for them as an integral part of her life. To show her complete independence and ability to stand by herself I took care not to give her a name with any kind of emotional connotation. I am calling her simply Daisy. She is a very strong character. (Krishnan 1975:42)

Narayan uses myth as a technique to illustrate his moral vision of life, and more interestingly, in most of his novels he comes upon an ancient myth that enables him to express this view and vision of life. William Walsh remarks:

Narayan's fastidious art, blending exact realism, poetic myth, sadness, perception and gaiety ... it is kind but unsentimental, mocking but uncynical, profoundly Indian but distinctively individual. (Walsh 1983:169)

Some critics have analyzed Narayan as a social realist who exposes widely Indian characters, their eccentricities, absurdities, emotions, social customs, conventions, and tradition. Narayan's protagonists show us everything that happens in every walk of society. Narayan puts forward a new kind of consciousness in fiction and places us in a position where we find ourselves in a new world of reality. It is truly the large human concern that characterizes his characters and makes him a novelist of broad vision encompassing the whole of humanity. He has an extra-ordinary, penetrating and sensitive understanding of human beings of both men and women. He can see deeply and very clearly the springs of emotion and understand the finest shades of social and personal feelings. His approach towards his characters is generally realistic. In fact, he is not obsessed with the qualities of his characters rather he looks seriously at how his characters respond to their social world, world in which they perform their daily routine life. Narayan is the novelist of character; he has a concern with the life and society. The social consciousness comes closer when we meet genuine people, the peasants, the shopkeepers, the housewives and teachers. Standing at a distance from politics, romantic analysis and preaching. Narayan portrays social consciousness in its totality. His hero experiences everything that occurs in every walk of society and probes only to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride. V. S. Naipaul states:

He operates from deep within his society. The India of Narayan's novels is not the India the visitor sees. (Mahood 1977:94)

There are critics who talk of Narayan's commitment to and faith in Hindu ideals and ideology arguing that Narayan deals consciously and repeatedly with Indian religious themes like renunciation, incarnation, rebirth, ahimsa, and the law of Karma, immortality of soul, its transmigration and the ultimate merger with the Divine Spirit. Since these ideas and beliefs are an

inseparable part of the Indian consciousness and way of life, Narayan's Malgudians too have a firm faith in these due to their deep rootedness in traditional family systems and moral codes of conduct against which they never revolt.

The traditional world of Malgudi does not sanction romantic love but adheres to the convention of arranged marriage; man and woman living together as husband and wife, without getting married, are regarded as sinners. This traditional society has its own sexual ethics according to which sex aberration or perversion with any motive is bound to end in frustration and misery. As a result of this, critics have commented on Narayan's traditionalism or the way tradition dominates and overpowers modernity whenever there is a clash between them. Narayan, these critics argue, promotes blind acceptance of the traditional values of life and seems to point out, overtly and obliquely the value of heritage, of a past: what the *Shastras* have prescribed is good for everybody for a peaceful and harmonious and happy life as a result of which any revolt against the set system or tradition brings despair and frustration, which amounts to their ultimate defeat.

Critics writing on R. K. Narayan's narrative technique are of divided opinion: some praise him for his mastery of narrative techniques whereas others find his narrative technique defective. R. S. Sharma, for example, in "Falsification and Authentication in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*" traces the deceptive "accessibility" and the enigmatic nature of Narayan's art in his narratology and considers *The Guide* as Ur-text or self-reflective fiction. On the other hand, Keith Garebin has detected frequent interruptions, pauses, and breaks in Narayan's narrative of *The Guide*, though according to him these disruptions accord well with the Raju's agitation and changes in identity. There are critics who consider Narayan as an absorbing storyteller whose easy flow of words entertains the audience. In other words, as a good story-teller, Narayan sees to it that his story has a beginning, a middle and an end. Graham Greene states:

There are writers – Tolstoy and Henry James to name two – whom we held in awe writers —Turgenev and Chekhov - for whom we feel a personal affection, other writers whom we respect – Conrad for example – but who hold us at long arm 's length with their "courtly foreign grace". Narayan (whom I don't hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian. (See, Graham Greene's Introduction to R K Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chennai: Indian Thought Publications, 2004.)

Even P. C. David and S. Z. H. Abidi in "Levels of Irony in the Short Stories of R. K. Narayan" praise Narayan's art of story-telling and the delicate beauty emerging out of a tragic or ironic situation. They analyse several Narayan's short stories in order to explicate the subtleties and modulations of irony. Narayan's art of characterization too has been seriously analysed by a number of critics and scholars. Ramesh Dymte in *Novels of R K Narayan: A Typological Study of his Characters* adopts a three-tier framework which, he argues, underline different modes used by the novelist to reveal the characters' roles in the novels and to present the worldview. According to him the typology of four major characters – innocent, rebels, eccentric and sanyasi – is used by Narayan to project through his characters the picture of true India to the outside world. Following these critics, some scholars even have tried to work on Narayan's characterization especially the British characters that are very few and have been treated in a light-hearted and superficial manner. These are Mr. Brown, principal of Albert College in *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher* and Mr. Mathieson, the coffee planter in *The Waiting for Mahatma*. They are just minor characters and their episodic appearance does not place them in different situations to bring out the various

aspects of their personality. Narayan's characters, unlike the English novelists, are not topical or of utilitarian value; they are really true to life and deep rooted in their tradition, ethos and culture. His approach to his character is greatly based on his personal experience. What amuses Narayan most are the oddities, angularities, and eccentricities in his people. He seeks to delineate through his novels the way of life of the group of people with whose psychology and background he is fully familiar. In praise of Narayan's characters, Graham Greene remarks: "His characters must live, or else the book has no claim whatever on our interest". (See, Graham Greene's Introduction to R K Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chennai: Indian Thought Publications, 2004.)

Various scholars including O. P. Bhatnager and Shiv K. Girdla have profoundly looked at Narayan's use of irony. They believe that the victims of irony in Narayan's novels suffer not because they are crushed by a ruthless social order. His irony not only eschews the dialectics and drives of colossal, megalithic characters but also even his megalomaniacs like Sampath, Vasu and Raju not only spring from the middle class but also create just a middling situation of social norm. They also believe that his use of irony in his earlier novels is limited only to observations whereas it becomes a total vision in his later novels. Irony is undoubtedly an integral part of his vision of life. His use of irony is invariably in tune with the readers' mood and it becomes ambiguous when it is inclined to conceal the complexities of meaning. M. K. Naik in *The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R K Narayan* has analysed how irony operates at different levels in Narayan's novels. While making a thorough and intensive study of Narayan's fiction, he projects Narayan as a serious artist who always preoccupied himself with what man can make of himself and of the entire human society.

Scholars have even seriously dealt with the major themes of Narayan's novels in the context of Indian philosophy and Indian social reality. According to them Narayan's fiction usually focuses on Gandhian concept of personality, concept of marriage, Indian philosophy, value system, characters, religion, superstition, myths, traditions, women, human condition, politics, human struggle, cosmic reality, supernatural, day-to-day living in India, *Hindu Dharma, Shastra*, tradition, Man-women relationship, human relationship, East-west theme, portrayal of children, philosophy of life, quest for identity, socio-cultural processes and problems, perception of the psychological process and Indian make-up, spiritual quest, idea of love, sainthood, self-transcendence, men and women in Indian society, relationship between the individual and the community, new women with her struggle for independence, man's quest for wealth and acceptance of *Karma*. According to these critics his themes are based on the archetypal motifs of withdrawal, renunciation and non-attachment.

Critics have even delineated upon the presence of Mahatma Gandhi in R. K. Narayan's novels, not as a politician but as a great soul. Though Srinivasa Iyengar has rightly pointed out that Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part and 'the best thing for the contemporary novelist would be to keep Gandhi in the background' so as to make 'his influence felt indirectly'. (See, B. Parvathi. "Mahatma in Malgudi", *Journal of English Studies* 10, 2 (1979) and Michael Pousse. "Narayan as a Gandhian Novelist". *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 19, 2 (1991), pp. 1 - 9). These critics have discussed the development of Gandhian influence in independence and post-independence India in detail. In fact, Narayan transformed him into a saviour in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, presenting him as an embodiment of patriotism, love of truth, and practice of non-violence. People worshipped him like a god and made him almost a mythical figure: mahatma, a man with a great soul. In the novel, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan not only looks at him as

an influence but also as much an endearing figure as Christ when he comes to his concern for and interaction with people who flock around him.

Critics have even seriously dealt with the concept of rebellion in Narayan's novels as almost all his heroes appear rebels against the accepted norms or the established tradition. Ramesh Dnyate in *The Novels of R. K. Narayan: A Typological Study of Characters* looks at the different types of rebels and rebellion in his novels. His work also exposes the nature of rebellion in Narayan's novels. Usually, rebellion in his fiction is a deviation from the accepted norms: the socio-cultural codes. These rebellions put forward a view highlighting the fact that those who accept the tradition live a peaceful, balanced and quiet life and those who go against or react suffer a lot.

Critics have even looked into the treatment of superstition in Narayan's novels, particular in the over-all backdrop of Hinduism. These critics believe that in Narayan's novels the reader comes across such characters as are profoundly fixed in a world fully equipped with superstition. For example, Margayya in *The Financial Expert* credulously believes in the strange rituals prescribed by the priest, and considers it a part and parcel of his religion.

There are critics and scholars who have analysed various recurring symbols in Narayan's novels: the temple, the village, the town of Malgudi and the river Sarayu. In fact, it has been very rightly pointed out that the most important symbol in his novels is river Sarayu. It is called the pride of Malgudi and is undoubtedly an integral part of Malgudi landscape. The other striking symbol is the lotus pond, always associated with a garden and a ruined temple. It also acquires special significance when viewed against the background of the Hindu mythological and literary tradition. Similarly, the temple is not just ruined temple but it is a static symbol of an eroded religious culture, a symbol of creativity and light. Besides these major symbols, one frequently comes across such common thing as fire, milk, and the banyan tree which very often attain symbolic dimension and significance in his novels. Similarly, some researchers have tried to study R. K. Narayan's novels by deciphering the heterogeneous, simple and frozen images, in metonymic and metaphoric progression in a specific discourse. R. K. Narayan's novels have also been evaluated from the existentialist and the semiotic perspectives and he has been compared with not only other major Indo-Anglican writers but also with Patrick white, Chinue Achebe, Arnold Bennett and others.

Critics have even made a thorough study of Narayan as a child psychologist arguing that Narayan is at his best in the portrayal of children's world and psychology. According to these critics Narayan does not hide anything regarding his child heroes and goes deep into the inner psychic recesses of these children characters in order to expose their false notions of ego, selfhood and other mischievous acts. He tries to understand the children – their liking and disliking, their resentment over being discriminated against and their hatred for discipline – as is more significantly evident in *Swami and Friends*. In this context, H. W. Williams remarks:

Swami's adventures are in some respects those of any schoolboy. East or West: the eternal hostility of school masters, the vagaries of parents, the rivalry of cricket in the pain of growing up. (Harrex 1978:52)

Even S. C. Harrex feels that Narayan finds the child a natural medium for humour both because the child has an innate sense of fun and capacity for joy, and because the child is often unconsciously funny, particularly when it is being most serious or when it adopts grossly exaggerated attitudes.

Critics have also discussed Narayan's treatment of woman, asserting that his novels project woman generally as a housewife, with her self-image, her relations with others and her fear, hopes for the future, and of course often with her desire for emancipation. No doubt, Narayan also sometimes

has dealt with the overall complex inter-personal relationships which a married Indian woman experiences as, for example, in *The Dark Room*, *The Guide* and *The Painter of Signs* but his women characters are typically Indian housewives who are meek, docile, submissive, and orthodox having age-old traditional views of virtue in the male-dominated families where they fully merge their individualities with their husbands. According to R. K. Narayan:

A perfect wife must work like a slave, advise like a Mantri, look like Goddess Lakshmi and be patient like Mother Earth and courtesan like in the bed chamber. (See, R K Narayan. *Grandmother's Tale*, Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 1992, p.3).

Though she is supposed to be the equal partner (*Ardhanigi*) of her husband, in actual practice she is subordinate partner, expected to be always at husband's beck behaving, according to his whims and caprices. Britta Olinder has rightly classified Narayan's presentation of female characters in terms of their relations of power to men into three main groups:

...first, dominating, powerful women; second, powerless, frustrated, oppressed women; and third, women accepting the system – in this case, the Indian society of strong masculine dominance – but at the same time finding ways and means to informal, indirect control of their situation (Olinder 1994:97)

A number of critics have discussed the theme of human relationships in Narayan's novels besides the theme of man-woman relationship. Even Narayan himself accepted it that his novels are the studies of human relationships in, both marital as well as extramarital environments. "My main concern", says Narayan "is with human character - a central character from whose point of view the world is seen and who tries to get over a difficult situation or succumbs to it or fights it in his own setting" (See, Interview with BBC London, Third Programme, 1968).

Undoubtedly, in the great Indian traditional culture, the husband-wife relationship is treated in sublime manner but there are other equally important relationships which are treated with honour and dignity in our well-knit and culturally integrated societies. Even Narayan himself admits:

I value human relationships very much, very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. (See, Interview with BBC London, Third Programme, 1968).

It is important to note that one of the concerns of Narayan has been the study and exploration of the nature of evil in human life as was done by such great writers as Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Melville, Henry James and Conrad. Narayan believes that the evil is within us and it is to be fought not only by the individual alone himself but also by all human beings. He has been preoccupied with the challenging problem of evil in life and the possible solution for it. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, for example, Vasu's identity as an evil force is established fully for the people of Malgudi. His anti-social activities erupt like venomous weeds which threaten to choke the green wheat lands of an otherwise peaceful Malgudi. Nataraj and Vasu are not merely two individuals, but two opposite forces of society representing the perpetual struggle of Good and Evil. Even in *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide*, Narayan portrays social menaces and rogues in Margayya and Raju, though as compared to Vasu they are lesser evils. However, taken together the three constitute an excellent evil-trio of Narayan whose preoccupation with evil as a tenacious enemy that affects the characters in particular and the society in general constitutes one of the main subject of these three novels.

A good number of critics have very seriously looked at Narayan's archetypal figures. They believe that in his fiction these archetypal figures appear frequently. According to Ashok Kumar Jha the plots of Narayan's *The Guide* and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* have archetypal patterns. In *The Guide*, Narayan explains the archetypal drive working within every individual towards acquiring the knowledge of the true nature of the self and the hindrances created in this process which form another archetypal pattern in the novel. Archetype of the serpent woman forms the essential part of the main archetypal pattern. In another novel, *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, archetypal pattern of "inevitable triumph of good and the destruction of evil" (Holmstrom 1973:68), which also forms the pattern of myth, is enunciated. It is also important to note that the archetypal conflict between good and evil and the inevitable triumph of good and destruction of evil, as enunciated in Classical Mythology too, forms the pattern of *The Man Eater of Malgudi*.

Most of the critics writing on R. K. Narayan are of the opinion that Narayan shuns politics and political ideologies; and even the freedom movement did not stir him as it did to Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh or even Nayantara Sahgal. C. D. Narsimhaiah has pointed out the cause of R. K. Narayan's aloofness from the then national movement for freedom.

Narayan's language and style too have been profoundly appreciated by a good number of critics who opine that Narayan's use of English language is very simple. Narayan himself remarks:

English has proved that if a language has flexibility and experience can be communicated through it. Even if it has to be paraphrased sometimes rather than conveyed and even if the factual detail is partially understood ... We are still experimentalists. It may straight way explain what we do not attempt to do. We are not attempting to write Anglo-Saxon English. The English Language, through sheer residence and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as adapted ... All that I am able to confirm, after nearly thirty years of writing, is that it has served my purpose admirably, of convey unambiguous by the thoughts and acts of a set of personalities who flourish in a small town located in a corner of South India. (See, R. K. Narayan. *English in India*, p.123)

It is very pertinent to note that usually a creative writer strives very hard to communicate his ideas in a language that does not belong to him or is other than his own. Even Raja Rao, in the Preface to *Kanthapura* expressed the problem of the Indian writers writing in English in the following words:

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. (Raja Rao. *Kanthapura*, 'Preface', New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 2001)

Narayan, however, seems to be an exception because he has proved to be one of the most dedicated and capable novelists whose language and style have distinctive features, not common in Indian Writing in English. He himself says:

I was never aware that I was using a different, a foreign language when I wrote in English, because it came to me very easily. I can't explain how English is a very adaptable language. And it's so transparent it can take on the tint of any country. (R. K. Narayan in an Interview with William Walsh, as reported in William Walsh's *R. K. Narayan*, London: Longman, 1971, p.7)

We see that Narayan's narrators maintain credibility in their handling of English language, and use this language both for intellectual as well as emotive purposes. To cite just one instance, the

abusive language of the school master in *The Guide* does never appear out of context as the novelist seems content with allusion to the Old Man as one who habitually addresses his pupils as donkeys and traced their genealogy on either side with thoroughness. Like Thackeray, Narayan's words flow from his pen effortlessly which makes his style clear, forcible and natural. Here is a typical example of Narayan's lucid and direct style:

The moment she got down from the train I wish I had hidden my self somewhere. She was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not whit, but dusky, which made her only half visible – as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice. Forgive me if you find me waxing poetic. I gave some excuse and sent them off to the hotel, and stayed back to run home and tidy up my appearance. (Narayan 2004:65)

William Walsh sums up Narayan's use of English Language in the following words:

Narayan uses pure limpid English, easy and natural in its run and tone but always an evolved and conscious medium, without the exciting, physical energy sometimes adventitiously injected that marks the writing of the West Indians. Narayan's English, in its structure and address, is a moderate traditional instrument ... The history, the social condition, the weather, the social memory - and transferred to a wholly different setting the brutal heat and hovering vultures, flocks of brilliant glittering parrots, jackals rippling over the rubbish and the deadly grey of an appalling poverty... Narayan's Language is beautifully adapted to communicate a different, an Indian sensibility. (Walsh 1964:128-29)

No doubt at times Narayan's language is even coarse particularly when he cynically deals with middle class values, but his heart seems full with the milk of human kindness. Whether it is fiction or story, he has a perennial appeal for his readers. C.D. Narasimhaiya rightly observes:

Indeed the world makers and world forsakers never ceased to amuse him, such was his detachment from everything that was going on around him that it only helped to sharpen his wit and quicken his provinces. And his province was the south Indian middle class. (See, C D Narsimhaiah. *The Swan and the Eagle*, Shimla: Indian Institute of. Advanced Studies, 1969.)

Narayan's success in using English language as a medium of expression in creative writings has been eulogized by almost every critic and its greatness, according to them, lies in his exploiting the devices of using irony, satire and humour as major weapons to expose the sham, the follies, the foibles and the hypocrisy of his contemporary society. His language is objective, convincing and simple and therefore it is undoubtedly found to be "closest to the language of the newspaper and the Sunday Weekly." (See, V. Y. Katak. "The Language of Indian Fiction in English". *Critical Essays*, Karnatak University, 1972). His ironical device shows the gap between the promise and the fulfilment, the pose and reality, the intended and the committed and then ultimately the incongruity of society. We even view a nice amalgamation of humour and realism; both are intermingled into irony.

From the above analysis, it is quite clear that R. K. Narayan is one of those fortunate writers who have enjoyed love and recognition, as well as appreciation of scholars and critics, in their own life. Great men of letters like E. M. Forster, Graham Greene, Pearl Buck, Henry Miller, John Updike, V. S. Naipaul, Mulk Raj Anand, Santha Rama Rau, Khushwant Singh and Ved Mehta have admired him. He has been honoured not only with many distinguished awards but has also now

been analysed fully against the backdrop of modernism, postmodernism and post-structuralism, probably because of his being a staunch realist in the conventional and almost traditional way.

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