

P R E F A C E

The present dissertation is an humble attempt at a critical study of the Themes and Characters of R. K. Narayan's Novels. The study of the characters of R. K. Narayan's Novels has not been done quite arbitrarily. It has been done in thematic perspective. Moreover, the observations on them have been derived from an analysis of his novels. The dissertation is written with full awareness that no last word can ever be said about a writer with such vast range of perception and profound understanding of life. It can at best claim to be an effort at realizing that range and depth.

R. K. Narayan may be called a native-talent because though he was inspired by the wealth of western literature and Philosophy that came to him by the medium of the English language, his root was deep in Indian tradition and Indian culture. As an Indian Novelist writing in English, R. K. Narayan may be said to have achieved greater success. He never deliberately attempts to be an Indian, but because he deals with convincing human beings in authentic situations and records their responses honestly and because these human beings happen to be Indians, he succeeds in achieving that difficult task. His style is direct and characterised by an economy of expression and vocabulary adequate to deal with the range of subject matter and Indian sensibilities. He believes that the task of a novelist in modern India is to deal with the real India with all her problems and features and not the India which has been a mere literary region of the Maharajas and mystery.

The disruption of the traditional joint family disturbs the individual in most of Narayan's novels. He has shown that this domestic dislocation comes not out of personal animosity or bitter relationship but because of the centrifugal impact of the new socio-economic changes in the country. He has noted that the impact of industrialisation and increasing urbanisation naturally tell upon the traditional culture.

The theme of conflict between tradition and modernity has always assumed a vital significance for him. It is more than a manifestation of his constant awareness of the changing circumstances in the social and political spheres of the country. The theme appears to the novelist as an attitude, as an idea or as a set of values. The changes which are taking place in the country transformed the modern concept of his writing in them^e, technique and style.

Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature has brought about results at various level - particularly in the realm of style and theme. Narayan is explicit in his imaginative interpretation of the national ideology, embedded in Gandhian Philosophy. The Gandhian myth has been the inescapable substance of his works in which Gandhi appears as a Pervasive influence on the social and political scene.

R. K. Narayan has used myths as structural parallels where a mythical situation underlines the part of a novel. His mystical structural pattern is only partly a self conscious device. He uses the same archetypal pattern in his novels. Besides he clearly explains asceticism as a stage of spiritual uplift. Renunciation or non-attachment is not the result of the acceptance of dogmas or his-

toric events. It is our experience that kindles the flame of the spirit in every individual soul and affects our entire being, cessates us from actions which are prompted by worldly desires and end our disquittitude and anguish, the sense of aimlessness of our fragile and fugitive existence. This dissertation also aims at stydying the themes and characters of Narayan's novels from the stand point of Reality, Comic Vision and Ironic Perspective. It explores the immense possibilities of the comic in the common place world of Malgudi. Comedy here is not only confined to physical details; it also embodies the Philosophic awareness of life which integrates man into his society and reconciles him with his gods. Narayan's 'Realism' and 'Comic Vision' have their anchroage in his strong Indian sensibility. The ironic dimension which some critics find to be Narayan's sole rhetoric mode and vision is, in fact, an integral part of his comic vision.

My principal obligation, a considerable one is to my supervisor Late Dr. G. S. Banerjee, and I gratefully acknowledge it here.

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