

ISSN: 0976-8165

THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English

BI-MONTHLY REFEREED AND INDEXED, OPEN ACCESS E-JOURNAL

The Criterion



October 2014 Vol. 5, Issue-5

5th Year of Open Access



Editor-In-Chief
Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor
Mrs. Madhuri Bite

www.the-criterion.com

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>

Spiritual Values in R. K. Narayan's Novels

Dr. Madhuri Sood

Head of Dept (English)
Jwalaji Degree College, Jwalamukhi.

Every author is a product of his time; cultural realities of one's country are subconsciously working at some level or the other in author's mind. One cannot escape these realities and one's social milieu. This may happen consciously or subconsciously. The author may not be consciously contributing towards the movement of the narrative which acquires autonomy of its own. Some kind of inner subversion takes place. The literature especially drama originated from religious traditions. According to Aristotle Greek Tragedy developed out of the improvised speeches of Greek Choral lyric originally connected with the worship of Dionysus sung by a choir. The representation of tragedies in Greece was an incident of public worship. The Altar of god stood in the center of the orchestra. It always had a religious background. The plays of Sophocles are based on Greek legends. English literature also has similar examples. The ancient literature is essentially religious in character. Every religion endorses some spiritual values. It is not that foreign authors are not influenced by spiritual values T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and the poems of Yeats are the examples of the writers of other countries being influenced by spiritual values. John Milton wrote the unmatched epic *Paradise Lost* in which he tried to justify the ways of God to man. The subject is the fall of man; Milton could not foresee an age to which the story of Adam would appear no less mythical than the tales of Achilles and Orestes. The religious poetry of John Donne and epic of modern time *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot are the examples of continuation of this tradition in spite of influence of science and new techniques of poetry. Eliot has made use of ancient myths and references to depict modern reality.

In case of India the influence is more pronounced. Indian culture is steeped in religion. Indian people lead a mundane life based on culture and tradition which is steeped in religion. Religion becomes a part of their lives. Literature is imitation of life and values of life are portrayed in the literature of a particular country. The Indian writers are always influenced by these ideals to some extent. The more deep rooted or unconscious the influence, the greater are the chances of the author being unaware of it. In India the religion is the life of people. It is more true in the case of post colonial times, many middle class men experienced the post colonial sense of inadequacy and failure. They searched for cultural authentically and tried to find it in the neglected but once glorious past. They have made their journey from pre-independence era to modern times. The authors of this period in India have delineated this journey of common man in their works. R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and many others are the prominent writers of this period who by their powerful writings made literature, specially fiction, a significant and strong literary component; and philosophy and Indian thought formed the core content of their writings, while Mulk Raj Anand's focus is on social problems, Vedanta forms the backdrop of Raja Rao's metaphysical vision of life, R.K. Narayan has flavored his works with Indian religious forms. The critics may differ on the treatment of protagonists spiritual development.

Spirituality is not the exclusive domain of India. When Milton wrote *paradise Lost* and justified the ways of God to man he proved the point. When Eliot emphasized the importance of leading

value based life and attributed the ills of life in 20th century to the sexual sins of man, he was influenced not only by the spiritual values of western culture but also Vedantic values of India. When the writers of western tradition are so much influenced by Indian Spiritual values, the Indian writers who are brought up in Indian traditional and cultural environment are naturally influenced by these values. Indian English literature is also influenced consciously or unconsciously by religious tradition. In the present paper, however, the focus will be on the spiritual values depicted in the novels of R.K. Narayan.

R.K. Narayan is considered to be the most Indian of various Indian English writers. "His portrayal of life is realistic in physical detail and at the same time, it is suggestive of the depth beneath without being didactic. He presents a profound moral vision in his novels. This vision has its roots in an ageless heritage of culture and tradition." (Gilra 9).

His novels reveal many layers of meaning. If examined chronologically it appears that with the passage of time, the spiritual values become more pronounced in his writings. The spiritual values depicted in his novels constitute the Indian view of life. It is the values which form the Indian middle class cultural and social milieu.

His novel *The English Teacher* is a testimony to the fact that his novel is full of "Hindu metaphysics" in the words of Jayant K. Biswal "the Indian background in this novel is envisaged in terms of the grave and serious Hindu Metaphysics." The first half of the novel is full of pictures of conjugal harmony and the second half relates the attempts of hero to come to terms with death of his wife which culminates in the realization of oneness of being by the hero. The protagonist realizes in the end that the boundaries of their personality do not matter because the ultimate reality is one.

The Guide by R.K. Narayan has been called "the large irony of life itself" by M.K. Naik. *The Guide* is the story of a tourist guide, Raju. He comes in contact with Rosie and Marco, husband and wife. Rosie is devdasi by birth. Raju takes advantage of disharmony in their conjugal life and seduces Rosie. He became a holy man by chance when he is jailed for forgery and on his return from jail takes shelter in a deserted temple. The simple villagers take him to be a saint, masquerade becomes the man and the real transformation starts which culminates with Raju's performing fast for rains. It is not made clear whether it actually rains or not. The ending is ambiguous. It is left to the imagination of the reader whether Raju dies or merely faints. The question raised by M.K. Naik and the author's comment in the novel itself at page 238 complicate the issue further.

First, when an official message arrives requesting the swami to break his fast, Raju just smiles and insists instead on going to the river to pray, an act which hastens his death. Why does he do this? Is it something done in a spirit of sheer fatalism? Or, has Raju identified himself with the saint's role so completely that he does not mind losing his life? (Ironic vision 58)

His novel *The Financial Expert* emphasizes that the money earned by wrong means yields bad results. The money earned by dubious means by Margayya proves to be undoing of his son. When materialism and its after effects dawn on Margayya he realizes the worth of peace of mind and the value of human relationships. *The Gita* says that one cannot escape the result of one's

Karma. The means are also important. The money earned by improper means cannot yield proper results. Though Margayya is a common man, he is neither western materialist nor eastern spiritualist. There is duality in his character when he was too much attached to money he lost his peace of mind. But when he loses all his wealth he is redeemed and his son comes back to him chastened. Shiv K. Gilra confirms this when he says that:

Margayya- “one who showed the way”- loses his own way in the wilderness of materialism. The initial note of irony grows as Margayya’s mad pursuit of money corrodes the very foundation of his being. Happiness through money and his son Balu turns out to be mirage. The realization of his one real and abiding value of life –love –dawns on him but only after his financial collapse”.

Similarly the transformation in Raju’s character is hinted at page 238 in *The Guide* the author comments: “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 out side money and love, for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested” (p.238) this comment points out towards disinterested action advised by *The Gita* here lord Krishna states, “ deZ.;s okf/kdkjL; ek Qys”kq dnkpu~” One can only act the result is not in one’s hand. That is to be decided by the supreme power depending upon one’s action.

Jagan in his *The Vendor of Sweets* analyses his action, while taking stock of his life he realizes his mistakes. He identifies his weakness and tries to make amends. There is a clash of material and spiritual values in the novel and the protagonist true to the spirit of sermons he professes is on the verge of a new realization. Biswal is right when he says : “ Narayan operates in a religious frame work where the ancient India is more pronounced.” (Biswal 25) Jagan’s belief in Gandhian philosophy is depicted by his remark: “how every human notion acquired a meanly when it was performed as a service.”

The study shows that the common people delineated in his novel lead life and are swayed by materialism. They acquire material possession but faced with crisis in their lives they resort to self analysis and come to a new understanding of life. They decide to lead life based on religious and cultural values of India. Their decision is the winning of the age old traditional wisdom of India.

Works Cited:

- Biswal Jayant K. *A Critical Study Of The Novels Of R.K. Narayan, The Malgudi Comedy*. New Delhi ; Nirmal publication and Distributors, 1987.
- Gilra Shiv K. *R.K Narayan , His World And His Art*: Meerut : Seema Publishing House, 1984
- Naik M.K *The Ironic Vision : A Study of the Fiction of R.K Narayan*. New Delhi: Sterling Publisher 1983
- Narayan R.K *The Financial Expert* .1952 Mysore Indian Thought Publication, 1995
*The English Teacher* Mysore : Indian Thought Publication
 ... *The Guide* 1958. Mysore : Indian Thought Publication 1978.
 *The Vendor Of Sweets*.1967 Mysore Indian Thought Publication 2001
- The Bhagwat Gita* Trans S. RadhaKrishan New Delhi Blakie and Sons 1976