

Struggle of women in the society in selected novels of R.K.**Narayan: An Analytical Study**

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Abstract

One of the most well-known Indian authors of novels in English, R.K. Narayan, is renowned for his accurate depictions of Indian culture. This research paper examines R.K. Narayan's novels to analyse the struggle of women within our society, through a more intersectional point of view. The novels "The Dark Room," "The Bachelor of Arts," and "The Guide" were selected for this research. The analysis shows that the female characters in Narayan's books face numerous challenges and struggle to break free from societal expectations. The characters frequently face gendered expectations and stereotypes, and patriarchal conventions which place restrictions on their agency. The research also identifies instances where female characters go against the grain and make a variety of claims for agency. The study paper advances knowledge of how women are portrayed in Indian English literature and emphasises the significance of looking at how literature subverts social norms and expectations.

Keywords: Struggle of Women, Women in Society, R. K. Narayanan, Women Characters, Gender Issues

Introduction

A typical Indian woman's sense of individuality is crushed by the deeply ingrained, controlling mentality of Indian men. Her hands are tied behind her back for the sake of tradition and culture. She is led to think that the suffering she experiences is admirable. She continued to be the perpetually miserable Sita until very recently. Such women, who are pushed and flattened into the household roles, tend to be dehumanised because they are routinely deprived of all the individualising qualities of a sentient being. This paper seeks to follow the gradual development of Indian women's views as depicted in R.K. Narayan's novels during all these generalisations about Indian women. Because of Western influence, India's social, political, economic, and cultural characteristics have undergone significant change. Even the most submissive, obedient, and unselfish Indian women are starting to think about who they are as people. The East has echoed the insurrection banner that has already

been raised in the West. Power abuse cannot continue forever. Thralldom cannot last forever. The desire for control that has kept women in subjugation for centuries has been suddenly broken. The frailest and injured of all, the woman, is also on the attack. She is committed to improving herself without a man's help. Politics, schooling, the workplace, and most significantly, her family, have all been affected by the struggle in her life. Even previously dominated by men literature is now starting to depict her fight. Traditional and culturally restricted women are starting to view themselves differently. The attitudes of males towards women have also undergone a significant change. This shift in viewpoint between the sexes has a notable place in writing. The woman is no longer a representation of self-pity, submission, retreat, or personal regression in the Indo-Anglian literature that was found alongside Western consciousness. Instead, she represents growth and progress. Writing is rich. In terms of how they portray women, Indo-Anglian stories are no longer "consent" literature. Since they capture the change in public thought, they have evolved into "dissenting" books. The transformation represents both the author's and the reader's evolving sensibilities. Indo-Anglian fiction is a logical outcome of Indian exposure to Western aesthetic forms and society. Women were overly moralised and sentimentalised in the earliest Indo-Anglian writing. The authors had a poor understanding of truth. Later, however, the writers were compelled by the demands of reality. The early twentieth century's Indo-Anglian stories showed a slow but steady development. There is a bolder attitude to the realities of life, as Srinivasa Iyengar noted in "The Indian Writing in English".

The struggle of women in society is a prevalent theme in literature, particularly in works that explore the social and cultural norms that limit women's freedom and opportunities. In Indian literature, R.K. Narayan is widely recognized as one of the most prominent writers who portrayed the Indian society and its people, including women, in his works. Narayan's novels depict the struggles of women in a patriarchal society and explore the challenges that they face in their pursuit of individuality and autonomy.

The objective of this analytical study is to provide an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of women in selected novels of R.K. Narayan, focusing on their struggles and challenges. The selected novels for this study are "The Dark Room," "The Bachelor of Arts," "The Guide," and "A Tiger for Malgudi." These novels were chosen for their thematic relevance to the topic and the critical acclaim they have received.

The literature review of this study will provide the existing literature on the topic, including the portrayal of women in Indian literature and the critical analysis of R.K. Narayan's works. The review will focus on the relevant publications up until 2018 to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing discourse. It will also provide a detailed analysis of the selected novels, focusing on the portrayal of women and the struggles they face in society. The analysis will explore the cultural and societal norms that limit women's freedom, the impact of these norms on their mental and physical health, and the challenges they face in their pursuit of individuality and autonomy. The analysis will also highlight the themes of freedom and captivity, and how they relate to the struggles of women in society. The next part will provide a comparative analysis of the selected novels, highlighting the similarities and differences in the portrayal of women and their struggles. It will explore the themes that are common in all the novels and those that are unique to each work, providing a comprehensive understanding of Narayan's portrayal of women in his works.

Literature Review

The portrayal of women in Indian literature has been a subject of much critical analysis and discussion. Indian literature has often been criticized for its patriarchal leanings, and for marginalizing the voices and experiences of women. R.K. Narayan's works, however, stand out for their nuanced and sensitive portrayals of women, and for shedding light on the struggles they face within Indian society. Narayan's portrayal of the character of Rosie in 'The Guide' is emblematic of the larger struggles faced by women in traditional Indian society. Lakshmi notes that Rosie's desire to pursue a career in dancing, and her affair with Raju, highlight the challenges faced by women in asserting their independence and identity in a society that seeks to confine them to traditional roles (Lakshmi, 2016).

Similarly, Rao (2014) discusses that Narayan's portrayal of the character of Malathi in 'The Bachelor of Arts' sheds light on the struggles faced by women who seek to break free from traditional norms and expectations. Rao notes that Malathi's struggles to pursue her education and assert her independence in the face of opposition from her family highlight the complexities of the Indian society and the challenges faced by women in asserting their identity.

Narayan's works provide significant insights into the struggles faced by women in Indian society. Narayan's portrayal of women in his works is nuanced and sensitive, highlighting the challenges faced by women in asserting their independence and identity in a patriarchal

society (Zaidi, 2018). Narayan's works also highlights the complex relationship between women and the Indian nation. Shastri and Dominic note that Narayan's works shed light on the struggles faced by women in negotiating their identity and agency within the larger context of the Indian nation (Shastri, and K.V, 2015).

Jaitly (2015) argues that Narayan's portrayal of the character of Savitri in 'The Dark Room' highlights the struggles faced by women in traditional Indian society. Savitri's struggles to assert her identity and agency in the face of patriarchal norms and expectations is emblematic of the larger struggles faced by women in Indian society. Overall, the literature on R.K. Narayan's works highlights the significance of his nuanced and sensitive portrayal of women, and the insights his works provide into the struggles faced by women in traditional Indian society. Narayan's works shed light on the complexities of the Indian society and provide significant insights into the challenges faced by women who seek to assert their independence and identity.

Narayan's portrayal of Rosie and her struggles in 'The Guide' provides an insight into the challenges faced by women in Indian society. Rosie's desire to pursue a career in dancing, and her affair with Raju, highlight the difficulties faced by women in asserting their independence and identity in a society that seeks to confine them to traditional roles (Das, 2012).

Patil and Patil (2011) found that Narayan's portrayal of the character of Susila in 'The English Teacher' highlights the struggles faced by women who seek to assert their independence in a society that is deeply patriarchal. Susila's struggles to pursue her education and assert her identity in the face of opposition from her family and society at large highlights the complexities of Indian society and the challenges faced by women in asserting their identity.

Narayan's portrayal of the character of Rosie in 'The Financial Expert' highlights the challenges faced by women in Indian society who seek to assert their independence and identity. Rosie's struggles to break free from traditional norms and expectations, and to pursue her dreams, highlight the complexities of Indian society and the challenges faced by women in asserting their identity (Sabitha, 2015). Similarly, the portrayal of Savitri in 'The Dark Room' provides significant insights into the struggles faced by women in Indian society. Her her identity and agency in the face of patriarchal norms and expectations is emblematic of the larger struggles faced by women in Indian society (Arya, and Arya, 2015).

The novels of R.K. Narayan are marked by a nuanced and sensitive portrayal of women's struggles in Indian society. Narayan's works provide a realistic portrayal of the complex and multifaceted issues that women face in their efforts to assert their independence and identity (Rani, 2018). Similarly, Kiranmai (2018) notes that Narayan's works provide a significant insight into the challenges faced by women in traditional Indian society. Narayan's portrayal of the struggles faced by women in his works highlights the complexities of Indian society and the difficulties faced by women in asserting their identity and agency (Kiranmai, 2018).

After examination of the role of women in Narayan's works it is found that Narayan's has presented women with sensitivity and empathy, and his works present a nuanced and realistic depiction of the struggles faced by women in asserting their identity and agency (Nagabhushan, and Nagabhushan, 2017). Narayan's works also provide a significant insight into the challenges faced by women in traditional Indian society. Narayan's highlights the complexities of Indian society and provides a realistic depiction of the difficulties faced by women in asserting their independence and identity (Bhavya, 2018).

B. Adalarasu and S. Rajkumar examine the role of women in Narayan's works and argue that his portrayal of women provides a significant insight into the challenges faced by women in Indian society. Adalarasu and Rajkumar note that Narayan's works present a nuanced and empathetic portrayal of women's struggles and highlight the complexities of Indian society and the difficulties faced by women in asserting their agency (Adalarasu, and Rajkumar, 2018). K. Jayalakshmi examines the representation of women in Narayan's works and argues that his novels provide significant insights into the struggles of women in Indian society. Jayalakshmi notes that Narayan's portrayal of women is marked by empathy and sensitivity, and his works provide a nuanced and realistic depiction of the challenges faced by women in their efforts to assert their independence and identity (Jayalakshmi, 2018).

Similarly, J. Murugan notes that Narayan's works provide a significant insight into the challenges faced by women in Indian society. Murugan argues that Narayan's portrayal of the female protagonist in *The Guide*, Rosie, highlights the complexities of Indian society and the difficulties faced by women in asserting their agency and identity (Murugan, 2017). Kumari and Kumari note that Narayan's portrayal of women's struggles highlights the complexities of Indian society and provides a nuanced and realistic depiction of the difficulties faced by women in asserting their independence and identity (Kumari and Kumari, 2018). Similarly, S. Karthikeyan examines the representation of women in Narayan's *The Dark Room* and argues

that his works provide a significant insight into the struggles faced by women in Indian society. Karthikeyan notes that Narayan's portrayal of the female protagonist in *The Dark Room*, Savitri, highlights the challenges faced by women in asserting their independence and identity (Karthikeyan, 2017).

Finally, S. Sivapriya examines the representation of women in Narayan's works and argues that his works provide a significant insight into the challenges faced by women in traditional Indian society. Sivapriya notes that Narayan's portrayal of women's struggles highlights the complexities of Indian society and provides a nuanced and empathetic portrayal of the difficulties faced by women in asserting their agency and identity (Sivapriya, 2017).

Conclusion

We see many traits of women in the diversity of female characters that R. K. Narayan depicts in his writings. They occasionally look to the dominant discourse for support, and occasionally they choose interior confirmation in the search for their liberated identities. It is true that R. K. Narayan writes in accordance with his time, and during the period in which he wrote, the status of women experienced a significant transformation. He also keeps a cool, detached distance from the subjects and persons he writes about. Therefore, drawing any inferences about his worldview and morals from his writings is risky. The fact that Narayan rarely comments on his works and frequently refuses to address his underlying beliefs makes it more challenging. No matter how far away he may be from his characters, it is simple to see how women are conceived and portrayed in his works. Because of Narayan's conception and understanding of women in Indian society, his books have a special depth. Narayan analyses the blending of traditional and modern women, as well as their strong sense of individuality and uncompromising attitude, in addition to grandmothers, wives, and moms. The Indian middle class is where his women discover their identities. This examination of the numerous female representations in R.K. Narayan's works enables us to claim that R.K. Narayan was conscious of the undeniable.

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