Review Of Social Approaches In The Novel Of R.K.Narayan

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Abstract

This review critically analyzes the social approaches depicted in the novels of R.K. Narayan, a prominent Indian author known for his portrayal of everyday life in South India. The abstract provides an overview of the social themes explored in Narayan's novels and examines the effectiveness of his portrayal of societal dynamics. The review delves into the social issues addressed in Narayan's works, such as caste system, colonialism, gender roles, and cultural traditions. It explores how Narayan depicts these issues and examines the social commentaries and critiques embedded within his narratives. Furthermore, the review evaluates the effectiveness of Narayan's social approaches in shedding light on the complexities of Indian society. It discusses the nuances and authenticity of his characterizations, narrative techniques, and contextual understanding of the social milieu. The abstract also discusses the relevance and impact of Narayan's social approaches in a broader cultural and literary context. It explores how his works have influenced the representation of Indian society in literature and contributed to a deeper understanding of social structures, power dynamics, and individual struggles. Additionally, the review considers the limitations and potential criticisms of Narayan's social approaches. It examines whether his depictions perpetuate stereotypes, overlook marginalized voices, or fail to fully address the intricacies of social issues. It analyzes the effectiveness of his portrayal of social themes, evaluates his contributions to the understanding of Indian society, and highlights potential limitations in his social approaches. The findings of this review provide valuable insights into the social dynamics and cultural reflections presented in Narayan's works, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of his literary legacy and its implications for social analysis and commentary.

INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan, a celebrated Indian author, is known for his captivating novels that provide an insightful exploration of Indian society. His works present a wide range of social approaches, offering a glimpse into the complexities and nuances of everyday life in South India. This introduction sets the stage for a critical analysis of the social approaches depicted in Narayan's novels. Narayan's novels delve into various social themes that are deeply embedded in the Indian context. One prominent theme is the caste system, which has been a fundamental aspect of Indian society for centuries. Narayan skillfully portrays the hierarchical structure and the associated prejudices, discrimination, and social barriers that exist within the caste system. Through his characters and narratives, he exposes the impact of caste on individuals' lives,
dreams, and aspirations, shedding light on the challenges and constraints faced by those outside the privileged castes. Colonialism is another significant social theme addressed in Narayan's novels. Set during the British Raj, his works depict the encounters between the Indian populace and the colonial rulers. Narayan explores the power dynamics, cultural clashes, and socio-political implications of colonialism, offering a critique of the British rule and its effects on Indian society. His novels often reflect the tension between tradition and modernity, as the characters navigate the changing landscape under colonial influence.

Gender roles and women's experiences are also central to Narayan's social approaches. He portrays the constraints imposed on women by societal expectations, traditional norms, and patriarchal structures. Narayan's female characters defy stereotypes and challenge gender norms, providing insights into the struggles, resilience, and agency of women in Indian society. Through their stories, he highlights the societal shifts and evolving roles of women in a changing India.

Narayan's novels delve into cultural traditions, rituals, and customs, showcasing their significance in shaping social dynamics. He explores the intricate web of social relationships and community bonds that exist within Indian society. Narayan's keen observations and storytelling prowess enable readers to engage with the richness of Indian culture and traditions, providing a deeper understanding of their impact on individuals and communities.

The social approaches depicted in Narayan's novels have had a lasting impact on literature and cultural discourse. His works have contributed to a nuanced representation of Indian society, challenging stereotypes and providing a platform for critical analysis of social issues. Narayan's narratives serve as a mirror to society, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of social structures, power dynamics, and individual struggles within the Indian context.

In this critical analysis, we will explore the effectiveness and limitations of Narayan's social approaches, examining the authenticity of his portrayals, the scope of his social commentary, and potential criticisms regarding the representation of marginalized voices. By delving into these aspects, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the social approaches employed by R.K. Narayan in his novels and their significance in exploring the intricacies of Indian society.

**Scope of the Research**

The scope of research on the social approaches in the novels of R.K. Narayan encompasses an in-depth analysis of his works and the examination of various social issues and themes that he explores. This research can involve a comprehensive study of Narayan's novels, including but not limited to "Swami and Friends," "The Guide," "The Dark Room," "The Bachelor of Arts," "The Financial Expert," and "The Vendor of Sweets." The research can focus on identifying and understanding the social approaches employed by Narayan in his works. This may involve examining his portrayal of the caste system, gender dynamics, socio-economic disparities, and other prevalent social issues in Indian society. The analysis should explore the ways in which Narayan brings these themes to the forefront, the depth of his observations, and the impact of his narratives on readers. To conduct a thorough research, it would be important to study the cultural, historical, and social context of Narayan's novels. This includes an exploration of the
time period in which he wrote, the specific regions of India he portrays, and the social norms and customs prevalent during that era. Understanding these contextual factors is crucial in comprehending the nuances of Narayan's social approaches and their significance. The research can also involve a comparative analysis of Narayan's works, examining how his social approaches evolve or differ across his novels. It may explore the evolution of his writing style, his changing perspectives on social issues, and the recurring themes and motifs that emerge throughout his body of work. Additionally, the research can delve into the reception and impact of Narayan's novels on Indian society and literature. This can involve examining critical responses to his works, the influence he has had on subsequent generations of writers, and the ways in which his narratives have contributed to broader conversations on social issues. The scope of research on the social approaches in the novels of R.K. Narayan encompasses a detailed examination of his works, the social issues he addresses, and the impact of his narratives on Indian society. It requires a comprehensive analysis of his novels in their cultural and historical context, along with a consideration of the critical reception and influence of his writings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Narasimhan, T. (2014). Indian writing in English is a living and evolving literary aspect. It is richer in content and wider in range. It has always been responsive to the changes in material reality and theoretical perspectives that have impacted and governed its study since the time of its inception. At the earlier stage the fictional works of the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan were the main works. Besides fiction, these authors were also good Non-Fictional essayists to some extent. R. K. Narayan’s popularity as a fictional writer, both at home and abroad, led most of his readers-and even his critics not recognize the existence of his Prose or Non-Fiction writings. Narayan’s language is very lucid, transparent, vivid and racy. He uses simple English and never attempts to mix the flavour of Tamil or any other Indian language into it. There is no distortion of the rules of English grammar. He uses a lot of Indian words in his writings. He uses common Indian Idioms without bringing any change in their structure. His language is perfectly capable of presenting ideas. So everyone can read and comprehend his essays. They are ‘Pragmatic in value’. R. K. Narayan’s recognition at home and abroad by academies is well known, especially because of his novels and short stories; but his non-fiction should not be overlooked, for it accurately reveals many different aspects of the author’s life and thought, interests and style. All have Pragmatic Value in reader’s life.

Sudha, M. (2013) Gandhiji, a socio-political figure, struggled for the sake of India’s development and independence. He is an immense source of writing and has influenced different disciplines and many writers from different fields like history, politics, philosophy, literature, sociology, and so on. He served as a central figure for their writings. Gandhiji not only struggled for India’s independence but also taught the people of India to love one another and advised them to show bitterness towards non-violence. In this principle of non-violence Gandhiji introduces technique of resistance to evil and untruth. His Satyagraha is inspired by boundless love and compassion. It is opposed to sin and evil. Gandhiji was the speaker of truth and he does not like falsehood. These principles of Gandhiji were very well exhibited in the novels of R.K. Narayan. One or in another way the characters of the novels explore Gandhiji
himself or his views. For example, in a novel called Waiting for Mahatma Gandhiji, himself has participated as a character. Bharati an important personality in the novel serves as a disciple of Gandhiji. The famous novels of R.K. Narayan were Swami and Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937), The English Teacher (1945), Waiting for Mahatma (1955), The Vendor of Sweets (1967) were all set in Narayan’s imaginary town, Malgudi.

Venkatesh, R. (2012). In this research paper it is observed that - Unlike many colonial and post-colonial writers Narayan does not directly attack or criticize the colonial system, although elements of gentle criticism and irony directed towards the colonial system are scattered through out many novels. Narayan encounters with colonialism, through protagonists who are mainly Brahmins and marginalized by a fast-changing world. Narayan explores the inevitable clash of both the colonial and the post-colonial. Colonialism to the Malgudians is an external phenomenon. Many times they challenge it or otherwise they feel secure and make a restricted use of English manners and habits which satisfy their needs; the coloniser and the colonised could live together in harmony, benefiting each other. Post-colonial reading of Narayanís works formules a synthesis between the Indian element and the colonial one. Narayanís works, with regard to his attitude to the English language would likely to reveal that he endeavours to formulate a synthesis between the Indian element and the colonial one. The colonial education that he received might have influenced his views on the English language since in the classroom he had to see English as the first language, his native language being a second language.

Adhikari, Kousik(2014): To justify his title he gives the examples of The Mahabharata epic and mythology of Bhasmasura in his paper. In the Mahabharata there is an episode in which the Pandavas passed through the jungle and they were tired and wanted to drink water so Yudhisthira sent his younger brother to fetch water from the river or well nearby but he couldn’t come back then he sent his other younger brothers but they also couldn’t come back and at last he went to the spot and watched his brother laying dead on the earth and then a mysterious voice came out from the river and asked him a philosophic question that “Which is the biggest wonder of this earth?” and he replied promptly that “To feel that one is immortal. Everyday a person sees people dying, still one person thinks that he will not die or he should not die.” Narayan might have impressed by this philosophy of Vedvyas and he tried to apply this philosophy in his literary works. The scholar also cites another story of Bhasmasura from Hindu mythology.

Krishnaswamy, V. (2009). The present paper is an attempt to discuss the individual working memory profiles of children with learning difficulties. In the present study 64 children aged 7 to 11 years are taken as a sample. The central executive, visuospatial skills and phonological loop were taken as the measures on which all the selected children were tested. The children in all three special needs subgroups performed below the expected attainment levels for their age in central executive and visuospatial tasks, but not in measures of the phonological loop.

Ambion,(2014) The current paper presents an analysis of the fictional writings of two Asian countries India and Philippine. The study examines key Indian short stories side by side with Philippine modernist writings. Through this comparative study, it reveals the manner in which several Indian and Philippine writers have taken full benefit of the experimentation that
modernism offers to undertake their own crisis of culture. The most significant commonality of the Indian and the Philippine literature is that both reflect the long, hard, colourful history of their respective country.

Ashalata,(2011) In this present paper author has selected novels like ‘The English Teacher’, ‘My Days A Memoir’ and in ‘Malgudi Days’, The Guide’, ‘Reluctant Guru’ ‘Swami and his Friends’, ‘Man-eater of Malgudi’, ‘The Dark Room’, etc. In all these novels and short stories Narayan has perfectly observed children and narrated them well in his literary works. Children like Swami, Mani, Rajam, Raju, Babu, etc. are the result of his observation of Narayan’s daughter, his own reminiscences of childhood and the experience he gathered from the community. Swami doesn’t like Monday because after enjoying weekend he doesn’t like to attend school where there is discipline and rules and regulations. Raju like Swami likes to play with hoop in his childhood. The writer intends to prove that bodily punishment cannot control the children but through love treatment children can be controlled.

Chincholkar(2014) The present paper has been attempted to discover the ethos of Indian village and town life in the short stories, by Mulk Raj Anad and R. K.Narayan. The paper mainly focuses on the depiction of family and its setting with Indian culture and further tries to show how injustice, exploitation, untouchability, inequalities, class conflicts are the features that run through all their writings to demonstrate two cordial qualities, one is humanity and the other is their gentle irony.

Bhat,(2012) The scholar has discussed that R.K. Narayan’s psychological insight into child’s nature is the secret behind his successful depiction of child’s ‘Rainbow World’. In his very first novel Swami and Friends the rainbow world of children is decorated through many colours and shades. In the present novel Narayan has fully narrated the behaviour of all the children like Swami, Mani, Somu, Rajam etc. Swami is typical school boy who doesn’t like Monday morning because he has to go to school having enjoying the weekends. In the school students have to follow the strict rules and regulation. There is no full freedom to the students in the school where as students like to play in the open ground with their friends and peer group. Swami possesses all the characteristics of child of his age. Narayan keenly observes all the children of this age and pours his observation into this novel. Swami is very coward boy, Mani is very carefree boy who neither bother for his study nor his teacher. There is a rumor that teachers never dare to call or scold him because of his physical strength. Rajam is very intelligent student with all the European manners and discipline. The rest of the children possess all the characteristics of this age.

Chakraborty, Arup Ratan(2014) The fictional South Indian town of Malgudi is the setting for almost all of R.K. Narayan’s stories and novels which was first introduced in Swami and Friends (1935). He narrates his fictional world of Malgudi as a basically Indian society or town. Guide (1965), a Hindi movie starring Dev Anand and Malgudi Days, directed by Shankar Nag are the two of Narayan's best known screen adaptations which was first telecast in 1987 on Doordarshan. Swami and Friends is also a part of that television series. This paper is an attempt to compare the socio cultural environment of these screen adaptations with the novels. Swami and Friends is the novel of ten year old Swaminathan. He is a boy of full of
innocence, wonder, and mischief and his experiences of growing up at Malgudi. Dev Anand's Guide, based on The Guide (1958), is a romanticized version of the original story and in the film the south Indian town of Malgudi is changed into a city of Rajasthan. Narayan was happy to see the T.V. serial but was not happy with the Hindi film Guide but later he accepted the changes of the film from the main novel.

**Dalal, Dr. Rita and Mehta,(2012)** The present paper evaluates R.K. Narayan as a moralist. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan have created a path of and for the Indo English novels. The three were the unique personalities of their generations who have enriched the Indo English literature. R.K. Narayan keenly observes the society and presents his observation through his literary works. The present paper focuses on his novel The Guide which was adopted for the Hindi film Guide in which Dev Anand performed as a hero and made the film earned success. The current paper discusses how Narayan presents the characters of Raju and Rosie to bring home the point that criminality never pays.

**Dar, Showkat Hussain(2013)** The present article deals with the Narayan’s contributions to Indo English literature. R.K. Narayan is one of the leading figures in Indo-Anglian fiction and a pure artist. He is the only major writer in Indo-Anglian fiction who is free from didacticism. He is neither a spiritualist nor a social reformer nor a pure writer of comedies. He is an observer of life as it appears to him. His works are neither purely tragic nor purely comic. It is the mixture of the two genres. He believes in domestic harmony and peaceful relations. Narayan is a typical Indian writer by every inch. He presents India of his time in his major literary works. He projects the two faces of India; Pre and Post Independence India in his novels and short stories.

**Shukla, R. (2008).** In the present paper the scholar evaluates R.K. Narayan as a novelist. In many novels Narayan talks about America and Americans. How Narayan has depicted the American culture and society in his novels. Narayan tries to differentiate two cultures American and Indian through his characters in his novels. Narayan visited America and he observed American tradition and costumes and narrated in his novels and short stories. In Vendor of Sweets Mali wants to visit America to be a good writer and comes back with his friend Grace. Jagan in the beginning of the novel likes America and feels proud about his son who is in America but when he accepts American culture and starts to eat beef and takes wine he criticises the American culture. He also doesn’t like Grace with Mali under the same roof without having marriage. Eventually he escapes from the bitter reality of his life and wants to pass the rest of his life in the midst of the nature in the service of God.

**Dash, Rajendra Kumar et.al(2012)** R.K. Narayan is considered as the pre and post independence Indo English novelist. Most of his writings set in his imaginative South Indian town called Malgudi. He portrays all types of middle class characters. He dives deep into his characters and presents them before his readers. R. K. Narayan depicts with equal ease both the genders male and female. If varieties of male characters please him with their peculiarities, his female characters are never inferior to any. However, many critics do not consider Narayan as a feminist novelist. Narayan’s female characters are typical Indian woman who care her husband, her children, runs all the errands and perform all her responsibilities of the family. The present paper is an attempt to evaluate Narayan as a feminist novelist.
Dastmard, et.al(2012) They have discussed in their research paper that the relation between psychology and literature is a bilateral relation. Human’s soul makes the literature and literature nourishes human’s soul. Literature and psychology both, pay attention to fancy, thinks, feelings sensations and soul psychical issues. Past writers and poets by detecting “unwilling conscience” psychical unwilling and reflecting many of psychical contention had found the meaning of this problem in their works.

Dave,(2014) The present paper is an attempt to evaluate Narayan as the realistic novelist of Indo English literature. In the novels of Narayan, one can find the true representation of Contemporary Indian Life, Traditions and Culture in its vivid and realistic form. The Social realism is widely and minutely described. Narayan is a purestory teller, an artist who represents reality in its real rare rhythm. Social customs andreality are vividly expressed with unbiased objectivity and complete detached observation.

Dharmadhikari, Prashant(2014) The current paper is an effort to find the elements of myth, history and memory in the works of R. K. Narayan. Narayan ruminated and translated the Indian epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. R.K. Narayan has used multiple myths and tales of these classics in many of his novels. In The Guide (1958) he uses myth of Valmiki where the protagonist of novel Raju transformed in to a Sage from an ordinary man. He explored the tale of Bhasmasura in The Man Eater of Malgudi (1969) and used the Savitri Satyavan story in The English Teacher (1945).

Dieter, Riemenschneider(2009) R.K. Narayan’s fourteen novels have established him as the most famous of the three founding fathers of the modern Indian novel in English. The Guide (1958) is Narayan’s most popular novel. The present paper is an attempt to study The Guide as the late colonial novel.

GrishmaManikrao,et.al(2011) R.K.Narayan is a traditionalist in his characterizations . He does not draw his heroines as astonishing women. He is not preoccupied with religion nor does he draw his women as being product of the middle age. His heroines are typically Indian and are drawn with the depth. No two women characters are alike yet are finds in their characters. He tells the story as a distant observer and leaves the interpretation to the readers.

Gunasekaran, S.(2010) This novel is a full of humour incidents and dialogues. It proves Narayan as humorist. The incident of poring ink in the school, making the voices of different animals in Rajam’s house, teasing Swami as tail etc. incidents are full of humour. Ignorance of Grandmother about cricket all creates fun and humour. Narayan presents the element of humour through the situation and characters reaction to that situation.

Gunasekaran, S.(2010) In the present novel Narayan presents post independence India. Raju, Rosie and Marco are the major characters of this novel who represent the post independence Indian tradition and thinking. Raju is very carefree type of fellow who has full guts to convince his customers when he was a railway guide. His communication skill makes him success in his life. Though Rosie is a married woman, he can win the tender heart of her. He also put behind the bars because of his greed about the money. After releasing from the jail he again with his communication skill attracts the villagers and earns is comforts. Marco is a
real researcher always sinks in his study but at the same time he cannot perform his duty of a responsible husband. Rosie is a typical woman and a dedicated dancer. She leaves her husband to make her carrier as a dancer and lives with Raju without any relation between them. As an act of repentance Raju at the end of the novel makes fast of twelve days to bring the rain for the villagers and at the end Rosie comes to meet him.

Janrao Nikam and Dr. Madhukar(2012) The present paper is an attempt to evaluate R.K. Narayan as a post colonial novelist. Narayan differs from other colonial and post colonial writers. Narayan protagonists are mostly Brahmins who present colonialism. Narayan has depicted the clash of both the colonial and the post colonial. Malgudians, an external phenomenon are the example of colonialism. In Narayan’s novels we find very orthodox Brahmins who strongly believe in their higher class. They never ready to compromise with any matter in any situation. They are very strict parents and they do not agree with their children in the matter of marriage. They believe in dowry system and astrology. In The Bachelor of Arts Chandran cannot marry with his dream girl Malathi because her father strongly believes in astrology.

Jaya, Parveen, J.(2012) The present paper focuses on the cultural clashes among the characters of the novel. The novel is full of the atmosphere of orthodox middle class life and society. The Painter of Signs moves around three characters; Raman, his aunt Laxmi and Daisy. Raman is a young painter who designs signboards for businessmen and traders in the town Malgudi. The cultural clash is depicted among the characters of the novel which is well discussed in the present paper.

Conclusion

In conclusion, R.K. Narayan's novels are marked by a distinctive social approach that delves into the complexities of Indian society. Through his astute observations and engaging narratives, Narayan highlights various social issues, cultural nuances, and human interactions prevalent in his time. His works serve as a mirror to Indian society, shedding light on both its strengths and shortcomings. One of the prominent social approaches employed by Narayan is his exploration of the caste system. In novels such as "Swami and Friends" and "The Guide," he delves into the rigid hierarchy and its impact on individuals. Narayan portrays characters from different castes, highlighting the discrimination and prejudices they face. By doing so, he offers a critique of this deeply ingrained social structure, provoking readers to question its relevance and fairness. Narayan's novels also shed light on the gender dynamics prevalent in Indian society. In "The Dark Room" and "The Bachelor of Arts," he portrays the struggles and limited opportunities faced by women in a patriarchal society. Narayan sensitively explores themes of gender inequality, the stifling of ambitions, and the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles. By giving voice to female characters and portraying their hardships, he challenges societal norms and advocates for gender equality. Narayan's social approach also extends to his depiction of poverty and the socio-economic divide. In novels like "The Financial Expert" and "The Vendor of Sweets," he portrays the struggles of individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their aspirations for a better life. Narayan explores the impact of poverty on human dignity, the pursuit of wealth, and the moral dilemmas faced
by those in disadvantaged positions. His nuanced portrayal invites readers to reflect on the socio-economic disparities in society and consider ways to address them. R.K. Narayan's novels offer a rich tapestry of social approaches that resonate with readers. Through his insightful narratives and vivid characters, he addresses issues such as the caste system, gender inequality, and poverty, providing valuable commentary on Indian society. His work continues to captivate audiences, serving as a reminder of the importance of examining social structures and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable world.

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