

The English Teacher as an Autobiographical Novel by R.K. Narayan

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Abstract:

The Indo-Anglian literature is different from the Anglo-Indian literature. The former is the genre written and created by the Indians through the English language; the latter is written by the Englishmen on themes and subjects related to India. The Indo-Anglian literature, therefore, is very much associated with Indian English - the evolution of a distinct standard a standard the body whose soul is Indian in thought, colour and imagery, and now and then, even in the evolution of an Indian mind while conforming to the correctness of English usage. It is illustrate of a social type of language phenomenon a language foreign to the people who use it but acceptable to them because of political and, recently, cultural reasons.

R.K. Narayan is a novelist of common people and common situations. His plots are built of material and incidents that are neither extraordinary nor heroic. The tone of his novels is quiet and subdued. He selects day-to-day incidents that happen to almost every one of us one time or another. His heroes are average human beings and they do not possess extraordinary capacities.

Introduction:

A Novelist of Common Men and Common Situations

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His Characterization

Narayan's novels are mainly the novels of characters. His characterization may not be as great as that of Shakespeare or Charles Dickens, but it is only next to the greatest artists. His range of characters, like that of Jane Austen, is limited. He chooses his people from the middle classes of South India. But they are drawn with a convincing psychological consistency. These characters are full of life and vitality. They are thoroughly human in their likes and

dislikes, and are neither saints nor sinners, but beings as ordinary or extraordinary as we are. Narayan is able to draw complex characters too. Krishnan, Ramani, Savitri, Sampath, Raju, Rosie, Marco Gajpathi, Shanta Bai, Margayya are some of his memorable creations.

Krishna decided to spend the entire day in the company of the child. Of late his college work, the extra activities and his visits to his friends took up so much time that he could devote less than two hours to his child. It was a painful realization. When the child was ready to go to school, he reminded her that it was Sunday. The child told that she had her school even on Sunday. She asked her father not to accompany her school because her friends would be frightened at seeing him. He assured her that he would not frighten her friends. She smiled patronizingly and said to herself ; "Poor father, let him come too."

Krishna invited the headmaster to visit his house. The headmaster readily accepted the invitation

and accompanied him and the child to their house. The child showed the headmaster the big catalogue and told that she used to read that book. The headmaster took meal with Krishna and the child. After taking meal he reclined on the mat in the hall. The child placed before him a plate of betel leaves. She sat nestling close to rubber balls and her big doll. After sometime both of them slept. Krishna went away to his room, picked up a book and dozed. The child persistently asking for the cat, they started out at four in the afternoon to the headmaster's house.

They walked down the road to Anderson lane. The lane was dusty and dirty Krishna wanted to carry his daughter on his arms but she refused to be lifted. The headmaster cautioned Krishna and the child not to fall down into the gutter. As soon as they had crossed the gutter, three boys standing on the doorway, embraced the headmaster. The headmaster was happy to learn from his sons that their mother was not in the house. The boys looked at Leela with interest. But Leela felt repulsion for the dirty, untidy, unkempt boys. She tried to hide herself behind her father, and asked him to depart from there. The headmaster spread a mat in the passage. Krishna and the child sat down on it. The headmaster asked his three sons to take the child with them, they went away themselves shouting. Krishna asked him why he did not get his own boys admitted to his school. The headmaster told that they were their mother's special care and her mother did want them to get educated.

Twenty years ago he had passed his B. A. His parents wanted him to study law and take up the profession of a lawyer but he refused to do so. He wanted to run a children school. Then he was forced to marry the present lady. His father behaved with him bitterly. So he left his home. The memory of the past days was rankling in the heart. Of his wife. He went. Back home only on the

day his father died. His wife wanted him to occupy the house which he did not do. His step mother's relatives might be fighting for the house and money. He then revealed a secret. He told that an astrologer had foretold him the exact time of his death which lay in the offing.

Krishna missed his friend's sittings continuously for three or four weeks. His friend the Medium man was ill for a few days and then he was busy with works and guests. He had now gone to Tichinopoly on some urgent business. Krishna went to his residence and sought permission from the friend's servant to sit on the pyol of the shrine. The still surface of the pond, the lotus and the evening breeze had a reviving effect, but the sense of disappointment was very keen. He shut his eyes and visualized the form of his wife. He asked aloud : "Are you here, can't you devise some means of communication with me, O great spirits ?" There was not even the faintest response. He repeated his appeal in vain. For the first time all these months he felt desolate.

Gajpathy told him that the principal wanted him to take a special class of the history of English literature. Krishna offered damaging remarks at the history, but said : " All right. I cannot but obey you. But I will tell the boys what's sense and what is nonsense. I will tell them that they are being fed on literary garbage and that we are all the paid servants of the garbage department."(p20)

Critical Note. The piece shows Krishna's extreme love for his wife Susila. It also shows a deep pathos. Krishna had been communicating with his wife with the help of the Medium man. Now as the medium man away, he cannot communicate. And when he cannot communicate with his wife, he becomes desolate, miserable and pathetic.

CONCLUSION:

The Indo-Anglian fiction owes its origin to the translations of various fictional works from the Indian Languages into English, notably from Bengali into English. Tagore cast a sweeping and transforming influence on it. His novel *Gora*, *The Wreck*, *The Home and the World* and short stories were originally written in Bengali. They were translated into English. The form of his novels is old fashioned. His works brought to Indo-Anglian fiction realism and social purpose. He gave emotional and psychological depth to character portrayed. The early pioneering works of Indo-Anglian fiction were social, historical, detective and romantic. They lacked depth and style and technique to leave any permanent imprint. Yet they helped in the development of the genre. Indo-Anglian fiction was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. The period between and after the freedom struggle has been the most fertile period. Anand brought to India the new technique of the stream-of-consciousness. Raja Rao adopted the autobiographical form of narration. Plot and characterization were also enriched. There was larger quantity and better quality. We have the social, the rural, the detective, the historical, and the romantic type of novel.

Reference:-

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