

SOCIAL PERTINENCE IN R.K. NARAYAN'S NOVEL *THE DARK ROOM*

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ABSTRACT

This paper focus on intricacies of a middle-class family that result from marital discord and the macho attitude of the husband who neglects his morally upright wife. R.K. Narayan is an Indian author. His works mostly depends on Tradition, women culture. In his novel *The Dark Room* depicts on Savitri's biography to illustrate how women are viewed in society. Both inside and outside the home, the woman is defenceless and weak. An old society prevents Savitri from going back to the dark room. However, she only partially succeeds in amplifying the voice of victimisation by embracing her mothering position. The book highlights the inequalities that Indian society perpetrates against women and throws light on its patriarchal culture.

Keywords: -Indian woman-Male Chauvinism-Traditional-Society

Savitri, the protagonist of the novel *The Dark Room* is searching for her own unique human identity since she refuses to be satisfied with being her husband's helpless property, suffering from mental anguish and uneasiness outside the house, and being subject to the priest's authority an additional male supervisor. Consequently, Savitri returns to her home with a negative outlook, having been humiliated by the unchanging harsh truths of Indian culture. While society changes with time, *The Dark Room* documents a woman's early attempts to express herself and find happiness rather than her quick ascent to prosperity. Despite her shortcomings, Savitri's persona has provoked reflection on women's situation in Indian society in not only Ramani but all readers.

Ramani was in a terrible temper... He stood in the doorway and roared. "What is this?" "Is everybody in this house dead?" he asked. Savitri was angered by this, "What a thing to say on a day like this, and at this hour! I have seen very few who will swear and curse at auspicious times as you do. (TDR 36).

The core of the Indian social system, the traditional family, has fiercely guarded morals and values. Among Indian ideals, marital fidelity is arguably the most valuable and resilient. Every character in *The Dark Room* is real and alive. Savitri, the silently suffering wife, may tolerate abuse and insults, but she cannot stand her husband's adultery. She sobs against her husband after learning of his relationship with Shantha Bai. Savitri comes to terms with her human dignity and understands that a wife and husband's relationship cannot be considered complete until they are both committed to one another. Savitri demands an answer since she is aware of Ramani's relationship with Shantha Bai. Savitri challenges her economic and social independence. In order to help her daughters she become self-sufficient and not rely on her spouse for food and housing, she makes the decision to provide them with higher education. She is conscious of the wonderful quality of the husband-wife bond. This is the reason why, despite her desire for financial independence, the woman never considers marrying other men. Feeling betrayed and mistreated, Savitri's emotions explode, prompting her to take a stance and claim her humanity. She now discards all of her negative self-talk and attitude. She suddenly erupts at him. Savitri is a middle class but not highly educated woman, who is burdened by the immense weight of the Indian past, by her caste, her religion and role as a wife and mothers. He is an ordinary, amiable housewife, not deeply dissatisfied

with her allotted part, given on occasion to boredom with its pointlessness, but increasingly oppressed by her loud, assertive and elegant husband.(61). She can now successfully modify Ramani's behaviour and have a pleasant life. So, her protest isn't completely pointless. Shantha Bai has been portrayed as a romantic woman. In Indian traditional and orthodox society, extramarital relationships are not viewed with the same dignity as, for example, Raju-Rosie in *The Guide* and Ramani and Shantha Bai in *The Dark Room*. It would be impossible to evaluate Narayan without mentioning Malgudi. In studying Narayan, it is impossible to overlook the repeated references to a single universe with a distinct geography and its progressive growth over time from an agricultural to an industrial town.

In *The Dark Room*, Narayan investigates the status of women in 1930s India. It was challenging to pursue a life outside of the family in the social and cultural context. However, one of the regrettable aspects is that, despite India's eighty-six years of independence, women's status has not much changed. Men and women are entitled to equality under our Indian constitution. Many of the laws pertaining to equality are still merely written down. Equal treatment under the law does not equate to equality in daily life. In actuality, women in Indian society are frequently denigrated and males still hold the majority of the power. Narayan has conducted extensive research on Indian women and their minds amid intricate societal contexts. The story of marriage told from the perspective of a wife in the novel presents an image of an Indian lady who is at the mercy of her husband's whims. Despite her lack of education, middle-class Savitri bears the burdens of caste, religion, and her responsibilities as a wife and mother. She is well rooted in the values, customs, and ethos that are unique to India and has a solid cultural foundation. In addition to her regular tasks, she has to take care of her three children each morning, bathing Kamala, tying up her girls' bunches and sending them off to school, and listening to her husband Ramani's hurtful remarks when his food of choice is not provided. She needs to act like a conventional housewife, doing everything in her power to satisfy her husband. Savitri desperately attempts to persuade her husband to take the children, but he refuses to come. Her circumstances are not unusual. It is the stereotypical image of an Indian woman in general. She recalls her own grandmother, who gladly served as her husband's concubine at home, and her aunt, who endured daily beatings from her husband and didn't say anything about it for fifty years. Years later, if her husband had commanded her to do so, she would have jumped into a well with another friend of her mother's. These memories highlight how vulnerable wives are to abuse not just physically or sexually, but also psychologically. Savitri, a weak, obedient and completely defenceless lady, is unable to confront her husband because Ramani can frankly tell her that she has no parental rights over their kids.

So she weeps, preoccupied with feeling of powerlessness, she curls herself in *The Dark Room*, next to the stores. She can only use it as a kind of protest against her husband's oppressive actions, but he never offers support or helps her escape this dark room. Ramani instructs the cook to prepare the dinner while she lies there in an attempt to demonstrate that no one is infallible, rather than bothering to persuade his wife. He lavishes more love on his kids at this time and leaves for work, completely ignoring Savitri. He demonstrates his uncompromising and unbending conduct, displaying all the traits of a typical Indian man full of male chauvinism. Herpouting is not acknowledged. Later, Savitri exits *The Dark Room* and goes back to her regular activities after being persuaded by her friend Janamma about how men are.

Savitri charges and rebels for the goal of a social and cultural mission in addition to her personal self-help. Savitri's realisation of her uniqueness is forced by Ramani's bond with Shantha Bai. She starts to realise that she is here. She says

I am a human being. You men will never grant that. For you, we are playthings when you feel like hugging, and slaves other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose.(110)

The fact that Savitri used the word "us" twice in her final phrase demonstrates her determination to stand up for all women against the oppression and injustice perpetrated by men. Savitri's attempt to learn the purpose of her life away from her family is unsuccessful. She chooses to ignore her husband's slight and heads back home. However, when viewed in a larger context, it's hardly a failure. She has accepted her responsibilities to her children and is conscious of her limitations. Her initial determination to never go back becomes less strong in the face of her mother's love, which has the effect of making her realise the truth. The novel raises awareness rather than calling for a protest against the patriarchal system, which would not result in a workable solution. Savitri matures during her protest and goes back to her house.

A little storm in a domestic cup that is colourless and slightly cracked indicates that she is protesting her husband's adultery for the safety of her children as well as for her personal protection from their father's callousness. Though Ramani is made to sit up and consider the family, the protest is not entirely pointless because he doesn't challenge Savitri's return. *The Dark Room* serves as an example of a circular voyage. Across the globe, society is patriarchal. Patriarchy is a form of masculine supremacy in politics. Males hold the reins of power and rule. Because of patriarchal power, women experience marginalisation, discrimination, and oppression due to their gender. The traditional gender norms that patriarchy imposes limit women's potential. For ages, male writers have jealously guarded the domain of writings and discouraged women from pursuing their artistic aspirations. Savitri is traditionally portrayed as an angel of love and sacrifice. The first step in women's strategy is to subvert the oppressive structure of language. The previous consideration of *The Dark Room's* binary opposites in relation to the theme, character, sociocultural context, and point of view highlights the different storytelling techniques Narayan uses to express his theme of the position of women in 1930s Indian culture. Male domination and challenge prevailed, and women had not made any meaningful educational progress. A middle-class woman's simmering dissatisfaction culminates in a protest to its fold; when the options become more daunting, she goes home to fulfil her motherly responsibilities, but to her husband who also recognises the value of his wife. Therefore, the demonstration was not entirely ineffective. They both pointed to a life lived with more knowledge. By continually framing the scenario from Savitri's point of view—which has a propensity to analyse the occurrences too precisely—the author retracts his own critical judgement on the theme. Stated differently, economic liberty refers to the ability and right of an individual to make money. Women have filled in some of the gaps between the sexes, but only via employment and acquiring the means to support themselves. The notion that a woman needs to get financial and physical support has been disproved. Working and financially independent women have demonstrated that they are no longer a burden to society that a man must bear in his arms. She shouldn't be seen as nothing more than a parasite who preys on her partner and is exploited. The structure that supports her reliance breaks down between her and the universe the moment she stops being a parasite; a male intermediary is no longer required. Savitri's issue is that she isn't allowed to accomplish anything. The fact that she isn't believed to be capable of anything is actually the true issue. In the example of Savitri and Ramani, we witness a man-woman connection; Savitri is never seen as equal. Men alone are ever able to assume the role of the subject and the doer; women are always objects. In a patriarchal social structure, femininity is related to inferiority and masculinity to supremacy. Additionally, masculinity is associated with action, strength, dominance, and docility, whereas femininity is associated with passivity, docility, obedience, and self-negation. In *The Dark Room*, the issue is that, generally speaking, man-woman relationships have followed a predetermined path over the ages. i.e., a lady should submit to her husband. Savitri also brings up important Marxist feminist concerns, such as the need for women to be economically independent in order to express their unique personalities. Patriarchal ideology has permeated every aspect of masculine thought. The temple priest, who is a clear example of the mindset of a male-dominated society that believes that treating a woman equally renders a man weak, finds it

incomprehensible that a man should give a damn about what his wife says. Women's only purpose in such an environment is suppression. Savitri is a passive entity who exists only in the mind; there is no other possibility. However, this does not imply that she is voiceless; rather, the issue is that her language, emotions, and viewpoints are not understood by the outside world. She thus never stops searching for ways to uncover her genuine self, which has been lost in assuming various personas and leading a life predetermined by societal myths and prejudices. According to the Marxist viewpoint, a woman's situation must change if she is able to earn money and be economically independent. She regains her transcendence in her work when she is engaged and productive. She thereby affirms her subject status in a real way. After studying Savitri's life and family role, we may conclude that she will not be able to contribute much to this world until gender and sexual prejudice are eradicated and women are given the freedom to feel and be recognised as unique individuals.

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