

J Jasmine Suja, Research Scholar, Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu-600062, India.

Dr. M.R. Bindu, Professor and Head, Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu-600062, India.

Dr. Prakash A, Professor, Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu-600062, India.

Abstract

This study aims to shed light on the female characters in Narayan's books. Many people think that Narayan displays traditional Indianness in the way he thinks about and depicts female characters. The combination of modern and traditional women, their fierce sense of identity, and their unwavering stance are all topics that Narayan explores. Within the context of the Indian middle class society, his women come to terms with who they are. This study examines the various ways in which women are portrayed in the works of R.K. Narayan, which enables us to argue that undisputable fact was known to Narayan. Narayan sheds light on the detrimental effects of gender discrimination, which, when coupled with the fact that a woman's inability to provide for herself due to a lack of adequate education, contributes to the widening of the gap between husband and wife. The result of this is that she will inevitably become obnoxiously aware of the evils that are associated with patriarchy, and she will make a valiant effort to combat these evils in order to achieve freedom, genuine identity, and independence. In patriarchal society, traditional women are always taken advantage of because to their ignorance, economic subordination to men, lack of confidence, intolerable modesty, self-denial, and humility.

Keywords: Gender, Patriarchal, Protagonists, Tradition, Women

Introduction

R. K. Narayan depicts the precarious situation that women find themselves in within traditional patriarchal societies. He does not grant her female characters the same level of freedom that western women have, but rather he shows them the reality of their situation in a society that is strongly patriarchal. As a result of the social circumstances that they are raised in, males and females are truly two different cultures, and their life experiences are completely dissimilar. The development of a person's gender identity during childhood is the culmination of the parents', peers', and culture's conceptions of what is appropriate to each gender in terms of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. This process takes place during childhood.

Young men are encouraged to develop aggressive impulses by cultural values regarding male gender identity, while young women are encouraged to either stifle their own aggressive impulses or to turn them inward. As a consequence of this, the male has a tendency to have aggressive behaviour reinforced in his behaviour, which frequently includes significant anti-social characteristics. Therefore, the culture agrees to believe that the possession of the male indicator, which includes the testicles, penis, and scrotum, in and of itself is indicative of the aggressive impulse. It even celebrates this trait in a vulgar manner by saying things like "that guy has balls." The same process of reinforcement is evident in the production of the primary "feminine" virtue of passivity.

Traditionally, patriarchy consisted of a system in which men were granted nearly complete ownership over their wives and children, including the authority to physically abuse them and, in some cases, even the authority to kill them and sell them. Traditionally, in a system in which kinship is considered property, the father as the head of the family is both the father and the owner of the children. However, in societies that adhere to the strict patriarchal system, kinship is only recognised through association with the male line.

As non-persons who lacked legal standing, women were not allowed to have any actual economic existence in traditional patriarchal societies. This was due to the fact that they were not allowed to own property or earn money on their own. Considering that women have always been employed in

patriarchal societies, frequently performing the most mundane or laborious tasks, the issue at hand is not labour but rather the economic reward that they receive.

Review of the Literature

The novel "*In The Dark Room*" by R.K. Narayan aims to elevate the status of women in a patriarchal society. The film portrays the difficult situation faced by Savitri, a typical Hindu housewife. She endures silently in a dimly lit room. Narayan believes that Indian women have been marginalised in Indian society, being assigned a subordinate position. Narayan's Malgudi books depict the social values, rules, and ancient customs that have a profound influence on the lives of individuals in Hindu society. Narayan endeavours to safeguard the long-standing customs, ethics, and societal principles deeply rooted in the community, which are vulnerable to the influences and attacks from Western culture. Any transgression of norms and values is seen by him as a sacrilegious act against the Hindu tradition. The societal tradition of marriage is based on reciprocal trust and marital faithfulness. In *The dark room*, Savitri, a submissive woman, demonstrates her justified fury by leaving her husband's residence. Ramani, the husband of Savitri, gets captivated with Shanta Bai, a coworker, and disregards his wife Savitri. Savitri declines to be seen as a domesticated canine or servant and departs from the premises. However, she is incapable of living in seclusion and is willing to go back to her unfaithful spouse. Narayan portrays two ladies who are distinctly different from each other. Savitri and Shanta Bai respond divergently to the identical scenario. Savitri possesses qualities like simplicity, modesty, gentleness, love, and obedience. She possesses traditional and religious beliefs in her own unique manner, whereas Shanta Bai is more inclined towards flirtation, modernity, and unusual perspectives and conduct. She has a disregard for conventional conventions. The significance of uniqueness in women is evident in both Savitri and Shanta Bai. However, although Savitri is unable to remain in seclusion and is willing to reconcile with her unfaithful husband, Shanta Bai is self-sufficient and does not want anyone's assistance. While Savitri's dreams and disappointments accurately depict a normal Indian woman, her statements resonate with the revolutionary spirit of emerging women.

The characters in *Women and Family* are shown in the context of their families and the connections within their families. Narayan's literary creativity is driven by his enduring, compassionate, and conscientious fascination with regular people, particularly the great majority, and the boundless potential of their life. Therefore, each character is assigned a distinct and easily identifiable identity. The family constitutes a microcosm within itself. The group consists of a married couple, their offspring, and their parents and grandparents. Narayan utilises the domain of the family and familial circumstances to examine the essence of human behaviour and portray intricate interpersonal connections. The family is a recurring theme in Narayan's writings. The importance of family is more significant for women than for males.

The novel "*The Man-Eater of Malgudi*" by Narayan explores the dichotomy between morality and immorality. The story starts with an elaborate depiction of Nataraj's family and its historical context. He serves as both the main character and the storyteller. He resides in his hereditary residence with his spouse and little son Babu. They live a fulfilled and joyful existence. Nataraj was up in a sizable extended family consisting of five brothers, their spouses, and children. While his grandmother was alive, she ensured the brothers remained united. The matriarch of the family, my father's elderly mother, played a crucial role in keeping them united by serving as a unifying force.

In *The Dark Room and The English Teacher*, Savitri and Susila, characters respectively, are shown within the confines of a traditional and conservative Indian middle-class society. Bharati is a contemporary and well-educated woman, a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi. She is an orphan, after her father passed away during the 1920 revolution. Bapuji bestowed the name Bharati upon her, signifying her as the daughter of India. Sriram's Granny is another significant female character in this tale. She is a kind, conventional, and superstitious elderly woman. She possesses a keen wit and expresses her ideas directly, similar to Bharati. Sriram remarks that she possesses a similar manner of speech to that of his grandma.

The novel "*Swami and Friends*" by Narayan portrays women characters as fulfilling traditional roles such as mothers, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and servants, with defined responsibilities and

representations. They are purely domestic. They engage in culinary activities, uphold the household, attend to the needs of their spouses and children. There are several aspects of traditional femininity in India. They are deprived of separate and autonomous roles and identities. This indicates the author's partiality for the creative perception in character portrayal. Indeed, these ladies accurately depict reality, but portraying this reality runs the risk of perpetuating the concept of the ideal woman.

The novel "*The Printer of Malgudi*" by Narayan explores the concept of perfect human relationships via the portrayal of mutual assistance among four distinct households. The episodes featuring oldman, Sampath, Srinivas, and Ravi evoke strong emotional and sentimental responses. They combine with one other at various levels and in a certain manner to form a cohesive and interconnected theme. However, the portrayal of female characters suggests that women are seen insignificant and inconsequential in shaping these ideas, as if values are only intended for males. Female characters are prohibited from developing and taking on the central role in the storyline. They are only seen as mothers, wives, and daughters whose purpose is to bear offspring and fulfil their role in serving men through cooking and other household tasks.

In "*The Financial Expert*," Narayan primarily explores the recurring topic of receiving the consequences of one's actions via the story of Margayya. He initially began his job as a facilitator, assisting villagers in acquiring loans from the cooperative bank and managing the repayment of those loans. He exudes an air of fake self-importance and behaves haughtily towards the bank secretary. He modifies his work just to maintain his self-respect and engages in unethical behaviour that ultimately leads to his decline. He forfeits all the ill-gotten money he has acquired and is returned to his former position and location.

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan portrays Sriram and Bharati as coming together just to superficially learn about love from the Mahatma. When examining the story from the perspective of women, Sriram's Grandmother and Bhatai embody the typical and conventional ideals of Indian womanhood. They embody the archetypal dutiful, compassionate, submissive, traditional, and conventional Indian ladies. Narayan's thinking is strongly influenced by patriarchal ideology and beliefs. Although the author accurately depicts the women characters in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, he also perpetuates the traditional image of Indian women that has existed for a long time. In his books "*Waiting for the Mahatma*" and "*The Painter of Signs*," Narayan explores the subject of the new woman. The ladies he associates with reject traditional gender roles and exert dominance over their male colleagues. They possess a strong drive for success and aim to establish a self-sufficient economic entity based on their skills and abilities. Bharati serves as the primary protagonist in the literary work titled *Waiting for the Mahatma*. She is distinct from the female characters in Narayan's previous works. In "*Painter of Signs*," Narayan exemplifies the portrayal of Aunt and Daisy as representative of Indian women belonging to distinct socioeconomic strata. The aunt symbolises the traditional and traditionalist Hindu Brahmin woman. She fulfils all her obligations as defined by the social order, being a woman. She manages the household, procures groceries from the nearby store, prepares meals for Raman, and often goes the temple where she recounts the family's narrative and her own several times. Being a Hindu Brahmin woman, she adheres to the customs and traditions of her caste. She objects to Raman's marriage with Daisy solely based on this issue. In "*Waiting for the Mahatma*" and "*The Guide*," she portrays the roles of a grandmother and Raju's mother, respectively. While anticipating the arrival of the 19th Mahatma, the grandmother departs for Benares. In the novel "*The Guide*," Raju's mother also leaves for her ancestral home as a form of protest against the inter-caste marriage. Daisy is a girl who was born in a hamlet. She was born into a vast extended family. Despite successfully eluding an arranged marriage and independently making her way to Madras city without any financial resources or essential provisions, she ultimately becomes a victim of seduction by a man of higher social status and is subsequently rejected by the hierarchical system that favours the upper caste. Despite her numerous virtues and accomplishments, she remained confined to the perception of being just an object of beauty and fragility.

In "*Talkative Man*," Narayan offered a novel and non-repetitive concept. While other novels may have individuals who engage in flirtation and womanising, the author has created a character whose motives for abandoning his marriage and engaging in flirtatious behaviour with other women remain

ambiguous. This phenomenon seems to be a novel form of fixation and contagion that is often depicted solely in movies. The portrayal of Talkative Man is imbued with legendary connotations. He is accountable for the duration of the stay and his escapades with Girija, and it is upon him to resolve this predicament. Therefore, he is referred to as the mythological figure Narada. In terms of the portrayal of female characters in the novel, all four women - Sarasa, Girija, the Station Master's wife, and Girija's grandmother - are shown in a stereotyped manner. They are just marionettes under the societal framework of patriarchy. While they have distinct functions in the story, they differ in their temperament. There are several facets to the Indian traditional woman.

The novel "*The Guide*" by R.K. Narayan showcases the author's exceptional skill in handling ambiguity and irony. It also adopts a more audacious narrative method and incorporates elements of modern satire. An analysis of the portrayal of three female characters from a feminine perspective uncovers certain elements that stem from a masculine perspective. Both the readers and critics of *The Guide* focus on the novel with Raju as the central character. The use of irony, ambiguity, and sarcasm in the portrayal of Raju serves to enhance his image, but it comes at the expense of the portrayal of female characters. The number is 60. Raju's mother's characterisation effectively embodies the traditional Hindu woman and simultaneously reinforces this portrayal. The author has made no effort to alter the conventional portrayal of a Brahmin mother. The portrayal of Rosie aims to symbolise and uphold the Devadasi tradition, which views women as objects of beauty and sexuality. The characterisation of this picture of a lady remains unchanged. However, she is held responsible for all the disasters that Raju encounters. Contrary to popular belief, it is really Raju who bears the responsibility for the destruction of Rosie's life. Velan's sister embodies the archetypal portrayal of rural femininity. These women embody the societal stereotypes about women. The portrayal of female characters in *The Guide* aligns with the image established and produced by foundationalism.

Narayan's novel, *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, prominently exhibits mythical undertones, a recurring theme in his body of work. The author of *The Man Eater of Malgudi* has directly included a mythical motif into the story. Additionally, it is emphasised in Sastri's discussion on Indian mythologies surrounding Ramayana and Bhasmasura. In this story, Lord Vishnu assumes the role of Natarajan, Mohin takes on the character of Rangī, and Vasu embodies the persona of Bhasmasura. However, the analysis of the portrayal of women in this work indicates that Narayan has not taken any efforts to introduce any changes or improvements in the development of female characters. Natarajan's grandmother, mother, aunts, wife, and Rangī represent distinct facets of traditional femininity in India. They are not essential to the storyline. They occupy the outskirts and permeate the framework of Indian civilization.

The novel "*The Vendor of Sweets*" explores the spiritual transformation of the character Jagan in Narayan's characteristic manner. An in-depth analysis is required to critically scrutinise the portrayal of female characters in order to assess Narayan's depiction of women.

In "*The World of Nagaraj*," Narayan acknowledges Anisha Ali's astute assessment that the novel possesses a cohesive and meticulously structured narrative, with interconnected characters and events. The narrative has interconnected people and events. The action is juxtaposed between Nagaraj and Tim. The activity is cyclical, as it concludes at the same point where it started. The beginning of the story portrays Nagaraj's determination to become a man with a purpose, while the end of the novel illustrates his efforts to fulfil his goal. The circular motion has a structure characterised by a climax followed by an anticlimax. Nagaraj's mother, Charu, Sita, and Saroja represent different aspects of the rational Hindu Brahmin womanhood. They continue to be submissive and compliant to the patriarchal conventions of their culture. Nagaraj's mother exemplifies the open-mindedness of the older generation of Brahmin women. Charu has possessive tendencies towards her hubby. Sita embodies a blend of all traditional features, whereas Saroja adheres strictly to traditional norms.

Empirical Literature

The novel *Modugula* (2022) investigates the notion that the protagonists in Narayan's works are fragile and weak, and that they are primarily known for their relationships with men. It is clear that Narayan depicts a diverse range of Indian women. Narayan is of the opinion that men and women contribute to

one another in a complementary manner. On the other hand, he did not begin with equality but rather advocated for equal opportunities in his writings. In *The Guide*, the portrayal of women evokes the idea of how Indian women think and behave in their homes and communities. Furthermore, Pushpanathan (2017) is of the opinion that the Rosie character is too difficult to comprehend. It is more accurate to say that she is a dreamer than a real person. She is unable to alter her behaviour in response to the ever-changing forces of life. It is both her husband and her lover who have caused harm to her soul. Her inner world is the one that she is most concerned with, and it is discovered that she is somewhat unconcerned with society.

The same observation has been made by Tamizhmani and Sivalingeshwari (2018) regarding the character of Rosie. They argue that the character description of Rosie in *The Guide* is ambiguous and difficult to comprehend in terms of both her nature and her behaviour. In addition, Saikia (2020) defines patriarchy as a social structure in which the highest level of authority is held by the male members of the family. As a consequence of this, a relationship that is both hierarchical and hegemonic becomes established between two biological constructions. The submissiveness of women that can be found in *The Guide* demonstrates how the strength or voice of a woman is attacked and attempted to be eradicated.

In terms of obscuring the existence of a woman, Eve and Poonkodi (2021) echo Saikia's sentiments and explain the situation of Velan's sister, in which a single decision she makes causes a change in the household. On the other hand, the fact that Raju's mother asked her brother to help her resolve a family complication demonstrates that she is under the control of both Raju and her brother. They rush through the wedding without taking into consideration the factors that led to her acceptance or rejection of the proposal. The female characters from *The Dark Room* were also the subject of the research that was carried out.

Similarly, Tamizhmani and Sivalingeshwari (2018) demonstrate that from the very beginning of the novel, it is not difficult to discover that Ramani's wife maintains no influence over the activities that take place in the household after 15 years of marriage. The novel also features a number of other female characters who are characterised as being passive and different. Within the context of Indian societies, the novel depicts the manner in which women are expected to be disciplined under the authority of men. Furthermore, Madhavaiah (2022) depicts how Savitri makes a concerted effort to find her identity and to achieve freedom. Once more, however, she is held back by responsibility, which is the primary characteristic that is associated with Indian women according to the social outlook.

Madhavaiah and Chaki (2019) comes up with the same idea and asserts that Narayan has disclosed the search for identity that the main female character is engaged in. Although Savitri has a hard time breaking free from her mundane existence, she continues to fulfil her responsibilities as a devoted wife and a loving and affectionate mother. Savitri's darkroom, on the other hand, is a metaphor that reveals the deplorable condition of women and the oppression that is imposed upon them (Suganya, 2013).

Jeevanandam (2021) explored the viewpoint of Narayan regarding the equality of women in Indian Orthodox society, which is characterised by the reverence of men and the expectation that women will remain at home. When I was growing up, there were a lot of traditions and rituals that were performed in the home. This dichotomy is depicted in a nuanced manner by Narayan. He places an emphasis on the oppressive aspects of the existing tradition and their role in stifling women's voices. The character of New Woman is portrayed in this article within the context of her oppressive environment, in which she must exert a great deal of effort in order to establish an identity in order to survive. Through his exploration of the conflict that exists between modernity and tradition, Narayan laid the groundwork for the concept of the New Woman. The woman Shantabai, who is emotionally unstable, is a modern rebel who establishes her own identity in opposition to a society that is dominated by men. On the other hand, Savitri is a typical oppressor who is subjugated by her husband Ramani, who realises her aspirations by forging her individuality. It is the birth of the new woman, and along with her. In a way that is truly remarkable, Narayan tells the story of feminist principle.

According to Balaswamy et al. (2019), since Bankim Chandar Chatterji published *Rajmohan's Wife* in Indian English in 1864, the field of Indian English fiction has been facing increasing difficulty. Narayan is one of the few individuals who are responsible for the Indian English Novel ascending to

the fortunate position. When it comes to fiction readers all over the world, he has now established himself as a unique figure. Books written by him are required reading for classes at universities located in other countries. His significance as a writer is demonstrated by the fact that his works have been reissued on a regular basis. Narayan, in a manner identical to that of Shakespeare, is enthusiastic about the development of strong and independent female protagonists. The protagonists in his stories are well aware that they are members of a society that does not grant them the independence that they desire. From dominant and powerful to helpless and dissatisfied to downtrodden to accepting of the system of strong male authority in Indian culture, Narayan's female characters range from all of these extremes to acceptance of the system. The dissertation places an emphasis on the significance of the female protagonists in his writings as well as the challenges experienced by these characters.

According to Kumar (2015), Narayan is a true original and stands out among the best authors from India who write in the English language. Through his writings, Narayan manages to capture the pristine nature of Indian culture as well as the Indian mind. Malgudi is a fictional town in South India, and the majority of his stories are about people who belong to the middle class and live there. The number of male and female characters that appear in his works is quite extensive. It is true that Rosie is one of the few female characters in his novels who is given a significant role, and this has been the case throughout all of his literature. She exemplifies the modern educated and ambitious woman who, at great personal cost, strives to establish a viable economic existence for herself in accordance with her own distinct set of skills and values. She accomplishes this by attempting to create a viable economic existence for herself. The female protagonists of the book include Raju's mother and Velan's sister, among other female characters. It is common for us to think of Raju's mother as a symbol of traditional and orthodox women when we are thinking about women. Both as a wife and a mother, she is a lovely person. She serves as a moral compass for Raju and Rosie, pointing out the wrongs and rights that they have committed in their own lives. But because her suggestions are not taken into consideration, she decides to pack her belongings and move in with her brother. In spite of the fact that she is only present in the book for a brief period of time, Velan's sister plays a significant role in the story because she contributes to the portrayal of Raju as a saint. This thesis was written with the intention of investigating that aspect of Narayan, which was my modest goal. The portrayal of Narayan's character.

Sil (2014) analyses Rosie's development and the steps she takes to become the person she becomes at the end of the book by using Narayan's "The Guide" as a case study. Because of her lack of fear, people have the impression that she is not something that is typical of Indian women. It is my hope that I have been successful in persuading you that she is more similar to our multifaceted Indian culture, which is able to show appreciation for both tradition and progress, than you might think. An Indian woman is the only person who could possibly understand her yearnings, conflicts, and choices. Consequently, this indicates that modern Indian women may still be able to relate to Rosie. In actuality, her journey to independence is a precursor to the changes that are occurring in the cultural position of women in India. From this vantage point, Rosie exemplifies the very definition of an Indian lady.

Dash and Panda (2012) indicate that R. K. Narayan depicts a wide range of female characters, including those who are devout and religious, as well as those who excel in virtues such as happy-go-lucky young women, housewives, and contemporary women. The female protagonist in R. K. Narayan's novel adheres to the conventional roles of mother, wife, and sister, and she places a high value on the responsibilities that come with being a member of the family. The characters he creates are not heroic but rather the average people. The author takes a realistic approach to addressing a variety of aspects of Indian life. Irony and a subtle sense of humour are employed, and he concludes with some words of wisdom. The female characters in his works were always allowed to think and act in a manner that was typical of women, but they were not permitted to adopt western ways of thinking or behaving. He frees them in a controlled, uncomplicated, and gradual manner.

All of these studies have made an effort to discover how Narayan's novels portray the female characters, and they have discovered that these characters are depicted as being oppressed and suppressed in both their families and in society as a whole. However, they have not addressed the fundamental reasons that are responsible for the representation of women in such a manner. There are some of them that have identified one or two factors, but they are not based on any specific theoretical

ideas. Narayan's novels have been given a new dimension as a result of his concept and understanding of women operating within the Indian society.

Conclusion

Within the context of the home, the workplace, and society as a whole, this study illustrates the unequal and unjust status of women. a. R. K. Narayan has presented the ideas of patriarchal dominance, economic disparity, the social outlook for women, and the psychological turmoil that women experience while dealing with all of these unjust phenomena that are prevalent in society. These occurrences position women in peculiar circumstances and force them to struggle to the fullest extent possible. They ought to go through a number of tests from birth until death, and they have a responsibility to make other people happy, even if doing so causes them to feel miserable. In spite of their unwavering commitment, unwavering loyalty, education, and economic autonomy, they are unable to break free from the shackles of patriarchy and are forced to endure suffering. Self-discovery and psychological freedom are the only paths that can lead them to a life that is worthy of being lived to the fullest extent possible. While portraying these characters, Narayan is aware of the fact that the timeless ideals of Indian womanhood are still very much alive even in the present day, as well as the fact that it is both impractical and impossible to adhere to these ideals in the modern world. In the modern era, the women of India are at a crossroads, and they are facing a critical decision. Those who are women in India are confronted with the difficult decision of choosing between the old and the new, between western modernism and eastern traditionalism. It would appear that the traditional values of spiritualism and living a solitary life are no longer relevant. However, despite appearances to the contrary, the eternal ideal has not been tainted in any way because it has not been corrupted. The conflict and tension that exists between the myth of the past and the reality of the present is portrayed by Narayan. Narayan has demonstrated, through his works of fiction, the transformation of women who were submissive, meek, and suffering into individuals who were educated, active, and independent. All of his characters are realistic, modern, and traditional at the same time. All of them are individuals who have a strong will and a progressive outlook on life, and they are moving forward with confidence in their chosen path in life. With the intention of bridging this gap, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors or aspects that lie beneath the portrayal of women as the subject of subjugation or suppression in accordance with particular theoretical concepts. This research would lay the groundwork for further research into texts of this kind that were written within the context of India.

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