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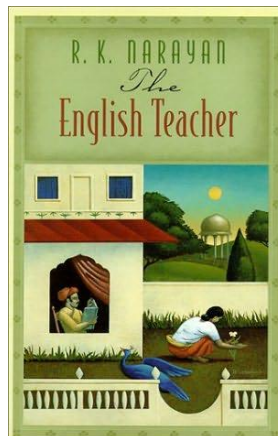
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Family Relationships in R.K.Narayan's Novels A Study of *The English Teacher* and *The Dark Room*

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Composite Culture of India and Indian English Literature

Indian English Literature is the outcome of the cross-fertilization of two fruitful cultures of Indian and English. Indian writing in English is a definite contribution to the composite culture of India. It is primarily a part of the literature of India like other literatures written in various regional languages. All Indian writers in English since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy down to our time belong to Indian English writings. It has come to say a part of world Literature growing steadily in bulk, variety and maturity. Indian English literature has now caught the attention of quite a number of readers and literary scholars both in India and abroad.

Authenticity of Creative Writing in English in India

The creative writing of English has a bearing on our socio-political consciousness; therefore it is likely to be more authentic. Except for a few who use English as their mother-tongue, Indian writers in English by and large are bi-lingual and their best writings are concerned with the socio-economic problem of the country. It spontaneously and powerfully expresses the varying shades of emotions, thought and feelings of typical Indian people.

Indian English Fiction and R. K. Narayan

Indian English Fiction is a very popular known component of Indian English Literature. Fiction in India has been a graphic chronicle of varied vicissitudes of the people as they passed from economic, sociological, cultural and political subjugation of various hues and shades. R.K.Narayan was born in Madras, India on October 10, 1906. His full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyer Narayanaswami. First he worked as a clerk in the Mysore secretariat, and decided to devote all his time to writing. He married Rajam in Coimbatore on July, 1934. Their marriage was a very happy one.

Focus on Human Relationship

Human relationship is the most important of human existence. It is a bond that binds human beings intimately, emotionally, sentimentally, spiritually and intellectually. In this world, none is more vital, important, real and enduring than those human relationships of home and family. Love and marriage, the joys of parenthood and family ties, are the bases of all that is

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R.Baby Gowri

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best in life the supreme happiness. Besides the traditional relationship, the lover-beloved relationship has become an important feature of human relationship. Such a relationship can be between two unmarried man and woman or between married man and woman.

R.K. Narayan is duly regarded as one of the harbingers of a new age in Indian English Fiction. He took it far from the immature, imitative, romantic and nationalistic narrative of early phase and gave it a firm native footing and brought it close to socio-cultural life of the people. Narayan is primarily preoccupied with man's filling of the life-role entrusted to him by tradition and environment.

Comedies of Characters and Comedies of Situations

The novels of R. K. Narayan comedies of characters as well as comedies of situations. The characters are all drawn from middle class, and Narayan creates comedies by imaginatively recreating their oddities and eccentricities. He is extremely successful at character drawing in his novels. His characters are life-like and have been drawn from the middle or lower middle class of society. Narayan openly tackles the problems in family relationships and has beautifully portrayed its emotional tangles.

Simplicity and Gentle Humour

Narayan's novels are characterized by Chekhovian simplicity and gentle humour. He told of simple folks trying to live their simple lives in a changing world. The characters in these novels were very ordinary, down to earth Indians trying to blend tradition with modernization, often resulting in tragic-comic situations. His writing style was simple, unpretentious and Witty with a unique flavor as if he were writing in a native tongue. Many of Narayan's works are rooted in everyday life, though he was not shy of invoking Hindu tales or traditional Indian folklore to emphasize a point. His easy going outlook in life has sometimes been criticized, though in general he is viewed as an accomplished, sensitive and reasonably prolific writer.

Easy to Read

Narayan's stories are incredibly easy to read because of their simplicity. He almost

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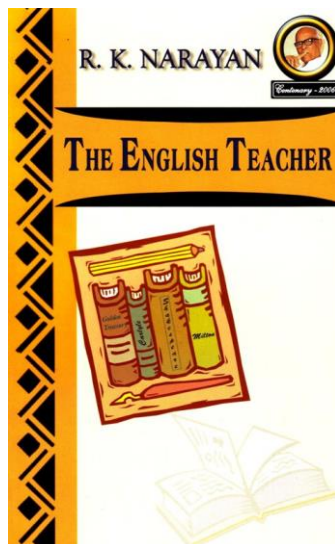
always wrote about India in some way and usually put cultural influences about Indian life in his works. Though Narayan's writing have been extremely popular amongst readers, the Literary classes never really warmed up to him. Narayan adequately reflects the various human relationships including the image of woman and man-woman relationships.

R. K. Narayan's central characters in his novels show is everything that occurs in the development of human relationships. His heroes are aware of the social and political changes, but they do not take sides not do they commit themselves to any ideology. Narayan has created all sorts of the human relationships in which he depicts his strong sense of tradition which he respects too much. It is important to note that Narayan is a conservative Indian both in thought and spirit in the presentation of human relationship.

Indian Setting

In all the novels of Narayan, one can find the Indian setting like depiction of school life and college life, family relationships, traditions and religious customs, superstitious, humour, irony etc.

The Husband and Wife Relationship in *The English Teacher*



The relationship between the husband and wife is carried through Narayan's world of values in his next novel *The English Teacher* also The novel *The English*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

R.Baby Gowri

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Teacher narrates about a simple, stylish ordinary living man Krishnan who lives with small dreams and limited expectations. It says how much he loves his family and care. This story revolves around a very soft spoken, kind hearted and sensitive lead character, typical orthodox village lady, one eccentric character in atypical village environment. The lead character narrates his story (Krishnan) about his different phases of life. All the characters are very natural and you can believe them. We have used this word *believe* because this story is all about belief and faith. How a person starts believing the supernatural things and slowly gets involved into it.

Sublimity

As contrasted with *The Dark Room*, where the relationship between Krishna and Susila in *The English Teacher* achieves the point of sublimity. Proper understanding of each-other, self-respect for each-other, and the frank communication between them are the marked features of the relationship between Krishna and Susila in *The English Teacher*. In *The English Teacher* R. K. Narayan has beautifully projected the role of love and death as inevitable agents in the formation of a successful husband-wife relationship. In the relationship between Krishna and Susila, love and romance are successfully resolved and future of the relationship depends upon fate and chance. The sublimity of the relationship between Krishna and Susila lies in Krishna's acceptance of Susila's death in a natural manner. Krishna accepts the reality of human existence in the form of death.

Vivid and Fascinating

Narayan's portrayal of Krishna – Susila relationship is vivid and fascinating. They make themselves a unique pair because there is no question of individuality, pride and ego in their relationship. The strength of their relationship lies in their sublime nature which inspires them to face one of the bitterest realities of human existence. It is because of mutual devotion for each-other and proper understanding for each-other that the relationship between Krishna and Susila that

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R.Baby Gowri

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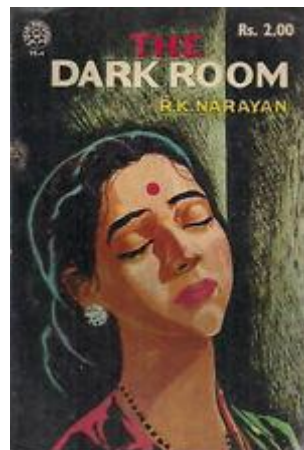
their relationship attains the high of sublimity. R. K. Narayan has presented the importance of husband-wife relationship by observing the daily affairs of both the husband and the wife. Unlike Ramani, Krishna is a devoted husband. In this novel, we find that owing to his true love of his wife, even death is not capable of separating Krishna from his wife Susila. After a brief period, Krishna has entered into direct communion with the spirit of his wife and this rejuvenates him and he reconciles with life again.

Separation and Loneliness

The husband-wife relationship presented in **The English Teacher** clearly reveals that the separation and loneliness are the two natural agents of human relationships. Every human being to fight against them.

The presentation of relationship between Krishna and Susila is the basis of the novelists' new philosophic understanding of life as well as death.

The Dark Room



R. K. Narayan *The Dark Room* concentrates on the problems in the relationships among the family members. *The Dark Room* is one of the rare R. K. Narayan novels, which deals with social consciousness.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

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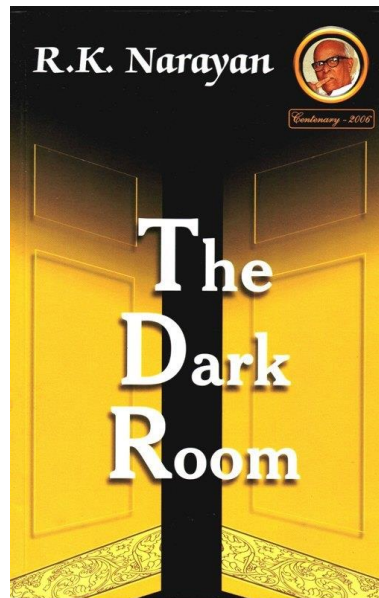
Family Relationships in R.K.Narayan's Novels A Study of *The English Teacher* and *The Dark Room*

Savitri and Ramani

In *The Dark Room*, Narayan has presented the husband-wife relationships in a somber manner.

The novel is an account of marriage from the wife's point of view in which the image that has been projected is that of an Indian woman as a victim. Savitri is a middle-class woman who is not well-educated and who is loaded with the immense weight her multifaceted duties as the wife and the mother. In this novel, Narayan is very critical in presenting the relationship between a devoted and submissive wife and a cruel husband. Savitri is an outstanding representative of wifely devotion cited in the Indian myths and legends, but Ramani is very cynical and domineering. The happiness or unhappiness, and the quiet or disquiet of the house depends purely on his mood.

Emotion and Sentiments



Ramani does not respect the emotion and sentiments of his devoted and submissive wife. Ramani's relationship with Shanta Bai compels Savitri goes directly against the classical and traditional rule. She asserts individuality independent of her husband. Savitri revolts against her husband's brutality and cruelty in bold manner. Savitri does not remain in her devotional and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

R.Baby Gowri

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submissive temper throughout the novel. The inner-self of Savitri becomes conscious and rebellious about her social as well as economic independence. But at the same time she is aware of the sublime nature of the husband-wife relationship.

No Interference of the Third Woman

It is the reason that she never wants to marry once again although she wants economic independence. In presenting the husband-wife relationship in *The Dark Room*, R.K.Narayan has presented that there is no interference of the third woman. Savitri's devotion and submissiveness are challenged by Ramani's callousness and his illicit relationship with Shanta Bai. The husband-wife relationship treated in Indian tradition is of sublime nature. Savitri's return to her husband's home cannot be called her submissiveness. Nostalgic for her children makes her realize the futility of her attempt to escape from them.

A Harbinger of New Age

R.K.Narayan is duly regarded as one of the harbingers of a new age in English Fiction. He took it far from the immature, imitative, romantic and nationalistic narrative of early phase and gave it a firm native footing and brought it close to socio-cultural life of the people. Narayan is primarily preoccupied with man's filling of the life role entrusted to him by tradition and environment.

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Role of Love and Death

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R.Baby Gowri

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Narrative Techniques

The narrative techniques centre around the unique devices by R.K.Narayan. He is remarkable not only for his outstanding and grand qualities of humour, descriptive beauty and characterization, but also for his simple and easy language and unaffected and elegant prose style. His characters mostly belong to India's life wisdom and ignorance, profusion and poverty, joys and sorrows.

Narayan's writing style is simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. The portrayal of life of Narayan's fictional world is engagingly realistic. It blends both the tragic and the comic aspects of life. Even though unlike them, the plots and characters in his novels are not annihilated the technique of the stream of consciousness retards the full free flow of his stories. The reader finds in his novels the backward and forward movement of the events. The novels of R.K. Narayan are a unique mix of myth and reality. Both have been so deafly fused together that they seem to coalesce as in actual life. His

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R.Baby Gowri

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realism is psychological and sociological. By the use of myths and fables, Narayan penetrates the core of Indian mind and reveals it with all its bewildering contradictions, superstitions and traditions.

Hindu Myths and Legends

Narayan weaves his themes around Hindu myths and legends and vivifies Indian Social reality. Narayan has an extraordinary power of presenting the multiple facts of life. Though not a critic of society, he is certainly a keen observer of life and manners. Narayan creates his comedy by employing all the effective devices of the humorist both traditional and innovative. Narayan has made his language highly comprehensible with the touch of Indianness. In the simplicity of the dialogues and first person narration, Narayan sets an adequate mirror of reality. It can be said that in his use of language Narayan is simple, readable and without any purple patches. He has a kind of humour strange in English Writing.

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