



R.K. Narayan as a Regional Novelist

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Abstract : RK Narayan was best story teller in Indian tradition of storytelling. His purpose always confined to entertaining his audience, by an interesting story. He never preaches or moralize anything in his works. He analysed human feelings, emotions, motives, but did not probed into the subconscious and the unconscious mind, as was the case with the modern novelists. RK Narayan took up Universal themes, with theme coinciding with its representation in specific region, immediately understandable and lived. This does not imply a deterritorialization or homogenization of local traditions. On the contrary, it suggests an immersion into known, local, native real space, thereby attaining the universal, only through local or regional. While focusing on one region, he stressed and created fictive regional spaces, preoccupied with the ordinary man and a system of life that belong to the local dimensions. In this way:

- A) We get the Portrait of a Freeman in a condition that is captive in an extremely specific regional space.
B) The readers appreciate the literary value of his novels rather than focusing on collecting information about a certain culture.

Such a representation of reality, gave RK Narayan an opportunity to broaden the dimensions of realism and in fact, it highlighted his aesthetic way of regional dichotomy. This form of regionalism, as depicted in his works give him a Universal appeal and the readers easily penetrate into the region being described and accessed by the substances rituals culture it contained. It is through this regional approach that he attains the universal.

Keywords: Dichotomy, Regionalism, Accessed, Immersion, Homogenization, Conscious and Subconscious.

Introduction

The regional novel is a Genre of fiction that is set in a recognisable region. It describe the features distinguishing the life, social relations, customs, language, dialect or other aspects of culture of that area and people. The writer gives a detailed description of the region that is usually a rural place. Characters are then taken up and shown as being well habited in such a region. The characterization in this way, bring its readers close to realism and readers connect with them. The author so colors the region, with specific regional aspects including: real characterization, easygoing dialects, its customs and its portrayal, with accuracy showing the historical and topological instances of the village, as if it reflects the authors close association to it.

Lakshmi Holmstrom provides an illustration of the concept of storytelling:

"The traditional story telling included commented recitation of classical texts and in the south, the dance drama and the harikatha exposition of myth with sermons and music. All the stories presented in the traditional idealized view of timeless Hindu society."...1

Narayan did not follow this narrative pattern slavishly; he had developed a unique narrative style with the cosmic mode.

RK Narayan was one of these regional novelists, who had high creative sense. In his regional stories, the functional locale is Malgudi and Narayan always use the brilliant realistic touches in the portrayal of this South Indian town, making his readers actually look for it in the India's map. Malgudi provides the setting for almost all of his novels and short stories.

"With this book, Narayan created Malgudi, A town that creatively produced the social sphere of the country; while it ignored the limits imposed by the colonial rule, it also grew with the various Socio political changes of British and post independent India". ..(2)

Various critics have attempted to identify the original of this mythical town, like for example, Iyengar who says, that it might be 'Lalgudi' on the river Cauvery and yadavagiri in Mysore and not 'Malgudi'. Other critics opine that Malgudi is a town in Coimbatore, having land mass a river on one side, forests on other, the Missionary School and College and all the extension mentioned in the novels. Whatever the critics say none arrived to a definite answer to its geographical location and the simple reason is that Narayan has not drawn any map of Framework for his Malgudi as writers like Faulkner and Thomas Hardy had in their Minds for the regions. Like Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner Narayan is able to achieve this localisation mastery of place and Malgudi Narayana imaginative town become a living presence searched all over India.

Malgudi is unrivalled as a setting in Indian English literature. Ratna Rao Shekar states that-

"It was Narayan who started it all, the applause and the appreciation for the India's world view."...3

Rao expanded what he meant, by 'the Indian worldview' indicating that Narayan's





India, encapsulated the middle class, Hindu life in South India, the traits with which he enters his character and his themes universal. Malgudi is inhabited generally by affable characters whose idiosyncrasies provide much of the comedy.

Narayan's Town - is a picture of Indian society or town. Narayan Malgudi is a microcosm of India. It grows and develops, expands and changes and is full of humanity. It portrays various facets of Malgudi's Indian society as the ideals of womanhood, and the role played by tradition and Customs, the Clash of values, the conflict between tradition and modernism, the part played by faith, religion, superstition, caste and class. The emphasis is given on family, concept of education and the power of myths and epics. Womanhood images from social and cultural scenario, pictured as ideal duly performing the roles of a 'mother' and 'wife'. Wives and mothers are submissive and completely devoted to their families and husbands.

As education is an important notice in the early Malgudi novels, the Socio Political milieu impacted on English education in India, as critic Lakshmi Holmstrol highlights in *Lunga Franca*, in India, before English was introduced.

“Before coming of English, there were two kinds of schools in India: Sanskrit Institutions attended mainly by Brahmin boys and teaching classical law, literature and the scriptures with their Muslim counterparts which taught Islamic classics Arabic and Persian; the schools where non Brahmins -were taught in the regional languages.” 4

According to the historian and critic M K Naik, “The arrival of the British in 17th century, rejuvenate at the warning Indian spirit and led to the birth of internalia Indian English literature”.... 5

‘The Hindu concept visualizes the world as 'Maya' or 'lila' and in the cosmic scheme a man is reduced to a mere nonentity. Man is here safely placed in cosmic hierarchy with relations extending not only to his fellow man but also to the nature and God, not only, in the time and space, but also beyond time and space’

In Malgudi the Institution of marriage is viewed with the utmost sacredness. Intelligence in the form of moral digression is never tolerated by the pious, religious minded, custom-observing people. Narayan was a writer with full of commitment to certain spiritual and religious values and ideas with which the Indians are normally familiar.

The religious ethos as like their deep devotion in manifestation in pujas, the religious festivals, the pilgrimages and also in great influences of myths, hold their lives sustaining and inspiring them. Discussing the novel, 'The man eater of Malgudi' for the mythical content MK Narayana observes-

"A writer, who not only ask some fundamental questions about good and evil and their roles in human life, but also finds his own answers to them. Furthermore, in doing so, he grafts a realistic narration of modern South Indian life, is an ancient Hindu myth, thus ensuring that his questionings and solutions are firmly rooted in our own cultural ethos"...6

Comparison with different regional writers-

RK Narayan writing has been compared to William Faulkner where both writers can find themselves to a region. Narayan invented a small South Indian city Malgudi a literary microcosm that was along the similar lines of Faulkner's fictional town Yoknapatawpha country. Narayan style been compared to Guy De Maupassant, as both have an ability to compress the narrative without losing out the vital elements of the story.

R K Narayan's friends and mentor, like Graham Greene and N Ram the publisher of *The Hindu* talk with him and help him to become more familiar to English speaking audience abroad.

"English author became Narayan Mentor and closing until his death in April 1991 at the age of 86."...7

Talking about his mentor Graham Greene, further he said,

"How can I right about Graham, now. We have known each other for so long and a friendship is so private." ...8

Ratna Rao Shekhar, a journalist salutes the return of 'the muse of Malgudi' and pays tribute to him in an article, commenting on the long lasting friendship of Greene and Narayan. Rai further declared that

"Both the writers ought to have been honoured with the Nobel Prize of literature."...9

Another comparison is made between Narayan and Jane Austen. Jane Austen to be and explicitly regional novelist, and she convey a sense of place and a clear view of the narrow segment of society with which she was concerned. Her novels portray places societies in the early years of 19th century.

RK Narayan's the leading Indian Literary Writer

RK Narayan was born in Chennai in 1906, in a working class of a South Indian family. He was one such writer, who made India accessible to the people in foreign countries with a wide window to peep into Indian culture and sensibilities. He will had a modest and simple style of narration as compared to the greatest American author William Faulkner, will always be remembered for the invention of 'Malgudi', a semi-urban fictional town in Southern India where most of his stories are set. The major accolades for his literary work are-



- Sahitya Academy Award 1958
- Padma Bhushan award 1964
- AC Benson Medal by Royal Society of literature 1980
- Honorary Membership of the American Academy of Arts and literature
- Padma Vibhushan 2001

Major contribution to literature

'Swami and Friends', his work was rejected by many publishers, when published, it created a sensation with the creation of an excellent fictional town of 'Malgudi'.

His second novel 'The bachelor of arts' was published in 1937, based on his experience at college. Graham Greene published the book and guided him on writing methodology so as to target the English speaking audience.

'The darkroom', his third novel, dealt with the theme of emotional abuse within marriage. It was received warmly by both readers and critics. His fourth book 'The English Teacher' was more of an autobiographical novel than his prior novels.

His other novels included, 'Mr Sampath' 1949, 'The financial expert' 1951 and 'Waiting for the Mahatma' 1955, 'The guide' 1956, 'The man eater of Malgudi' and his first mythological book, 'Gods, demons and others' in 1964.

Others-

- The vendor of sweets 1967
- Translation of Kamba Ramayanam, into English. (As a promise to his dying uncle)
- The emerald route 1980
- Malgudi Days 1982
- Under The Banyan tree and other stories 1983
- A Tiger for Malgudi 1983
- A talkative man
- A writer's nightmare

Conclusion

RK Narayan regarded as one of the three leading, English language Indian fiction writers, along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. A writer of 14 novels, hundred short stories and a memoir to travel books and innumerable essays and to place a focused on concerns and motives of exile and return, education, woman and her status in society, myths and the ancient Indian, past tradition and modernity. Malgudi and its culture, appearance and reality the Indian family have been Narayan consistent concerns. In this respect RK Narayan resembles Jane Austen, who to in her short career painted in varying colours small Canvas of quintessential England life and manners. With range of works of Austen's or Narayan's may be small, their depths places them in ranks of the truly great novelist of the times.

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