

Summary of the Minor Research Project

Entitled

R.K. Narayan's Heroines as Trail Blazers For Contemporary Feministic Movement

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By

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Identification of the Problem (Background)

A major development in modern Indian fiction has been the growth of a feminist or woman centered approach which seeks to project and interprets experience from the viewpoint of a feminine consciousness and sensibility the world differently from men and write out their different perspective. Feminism advocates the same rights to women as those enjoyed by men. It must not be imagined that feminism suddenly burst upon the Indian literary scene in recent years, rather it has grown slowly and steadily. The faint foreshadowing and premonitions of feminism become visible in the Indian fiction as early as in the 1920s and 1930s. It is however only in 1960s that Indian novelists have begun to question seriously and systematically and at times to reject outright, traditional interpretations of women's role and status in society. The first major thrust in Indian English writing came in the mid 1930s, when the tug from - R.K.Narayan, Mulkraj Anand and Raja Rao appeared on the scene.

In India, the history of feminism can be divided into three phases : the first phase that begins in the mid-eighteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out and raise voice against the social evils like Sati, the second phase begins from 1915 to Indian independence, when Mahatma Gandhi incorporated and joined the different (feministic) movements into Quit India movement which lead to the emergence of independent women's organisation, and the third phase belongs to the post-independence era that focused on fair treatment of women in different spheres-at home before and after marriage, at work place, in politics, education etc.

The historical circumstances, social and cultural values, traditions and norms in India have caused and influenced the feminists in India to develop a feminism that differs from Western feminism. For instance, the notion and idea of women as 'powerful' is accommodated into patriarchal and male-dominated culture through religion, which continues to be visible in all sections of society. This has given and provided the women with traditional "cultural spaces." Not only this, in the west the notion of 'self' lies in competitive individualism where people are described as 'form free yet everywhere in chains". In India the individual is usually regarded to be just one part of the larger social collective. The survival of individual and self depends upon cooperation and self denial for the greater good is valued.

When it comes to the writings of women by a male author, it seems unjustified. However, R.K. Narayan has shown his sensitivity to the world he lives in which has redefined a number of old norms, traditions and values. Since he could not prevent Malgudi from being blown by the winds of west, Narayan as a writer favours the right and proper in human conduct and allows freedom of thought.

We notice that R.K. Narayan portrays both the genders-male and female with equal ease. Men delight and amuse him with their peculiarities and females are never inferior to any. Narayan's women characters prove to be interesting for the study as they portray all that is best in Indian thought and character, while some manifest the western thought and still depicts the trends that are moving out of the contemporary Indian society and vice versa. In the fiction of R.K. Narayan, the concept of womanhood can be regarded as movement involving tradition versus individual talent. R.K. Narayan can be regarded as a feminist as he has sown the seeds of feministic movement of contemporary India in his novels.

The publication of The Dark Room (1938), The Guide (1956) and The Painter of Signs (1975) spans nearly forty years. Narayan's Malgudi is a mirror of social change, evolutionary trends and varying feminine perspectives in the delineation of R.K. Narayan's women characters, many of whom are depicted by R.K. Narayan as the trail blazers and crucial markers of change in a 'modernizing' world. The varying feminine perspectives can be seen in considerable variety of the woman character's attitudes reflected in the novels.

Statement of the Problem

R.K. Narayan's Heroines as Trail Blazers for Contemporary Feministic Movement.

Objectives:

The project seeks to trace how far do Narayan's heroines pave the way for contemporary feministic movement in Indian English literature. It is worthwhile to find how far do the women in the novels of R.K. Narayan reflect the status of women in a society where the group is more highly esteemed than the individual (male or female) and the male more than the female, where role expectations are highly specific and institutionalized. R.K. Narayan delineates in his novels, the Indian women of today. What Indian women are today, Narayan highlighted many years earlier in his novels. Narayan focuses on evolution of Indian woman from the old, traditional, stereotyped roles to the present day modern, vibrant, extrovert role models. The study purports to find out whether R.K. Narayan's heroines who are markers of social changes are trail blazers for contemporary feministic movement.

Research Methodology:

A research work in the absence of data becomes an imaginary story so there is a great role of facts, data and subject matter in almost all kinds of research work. Required data and subject matter for the project has been collected through the following ways:

i) **Visit to libraries:**

Libraries has been a great source of subject matters in print and electronic form. I made an extensive use of subject matter available in the libraries. A number of government libraries were visited. The central library Indore and the libraries of the Government colleges in Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur and Ratlam.

ii) **Visit to Aurbindo Ashram, Ratlam and Osho Ashram Jabalpur** has been very helpful in accumulation of subject matter related to spiritualism, Dharma, religion, position of women etc which helped in tracing the spiritual growth of Narayan's heroines.

iii) **Direct personal interview and talk with subject experts:**

Direct personal interviews and talk with the following subject experts helped me to develop my thinking.

- Dr. Usha Jain (Prof. Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Indore) who had a profound knowledge of R.K. Narayan. She had done her Ph.D. on R.K. Narayan.
- Dr. Ashok Sachdeva (Prof. Girls Degree College, Indore) a highly scholarly person who has completed a minor as well as a major project. His invaluable guidance and useful suggestions proved to be very helpful to me in the completion of my project.
- Dr. SubrathoGuha, a great scholar and a highly learned person and my Ph.D. guide who has been a source of tremendous inspiration to me throughout the course of this study.
- Interviews and discussions with Dr. PankajaAacharya, Dr. AparnaBanik, Dr. Padma Bhamra, Prof. SheelaGodwani, Dr. Manisha Joshi also proved to be very helpful.
- Interview with InduPandey, Women Empowerment Officer, Indore Zone and Maya Pandey, an eminent social worker and speaker on women empowerment, gender issues, problems and sufferings of women in Indian society.
- Talks and patient discussions with Dr. Rajendra Jain (Principal, P.M.B. Gujarati Commerce College, Indore) and Prof. Abhay Jain (P.M.B. Gujarati Commerce College) also proved very helpful and motivating during the course of my project work.

iv) **Questionnaire:**

I prepared and circulated questionnaires in several colleges to know the views and get the feedback of the academicians and students, housewives and professionals to know what they feel about R.K. Narayan's female characters, position of women and feministic movement in India. Then I made a comparison and contrast with the past and present and analysed their views and opinions.

v) **Review of Literature:**

Review of literature plays a crucial role in research. It is an account of what is already known about a particular phenomenon. I tried to go through all the available work of R.K. Narayan and his contemporary writers and critical works on feminism but due to limitation of space it is not possible to entertain all the works. So the focus of this research work is on the following important works on R.K. Narayan, Indian Anglican literature and feministic literature.

a) **Sushila Singh: Feminism, theory, criticism, analysis.**

Sushila Singh is an important feminist writer of India. She has extensively evaluated the Indian feminism which is different from the western feminism. She has also described post feminism and various theories related to feminism.

b) **Simon de Beavoir : The Second Sex**

This book is like a Bible in feministic literature. Simon de Beaviour was the first women to expose the male dominance over women. She was first women to highlight how that how women were dominated and suppressed by male.

c) **Shashi Deshpande**

Works of Shashi Deshpande and critical works of Shashi Deshpande were also reviewed. Shashi Deshpande is not contemporary to R.K. Narayan. But she became a very prominent voice of Indian women. She has tried to bring out the changing image of Indian women who is more confident and who can take things in a right way.

d) **Anita Desai**

Another important Indian feminist writer was Anita Desai who has tried to deal with the psychological trauma of Indian women which was so far not given importance and consideration by any other Indian writer.

e) **Laura Gillman: Unassimilable feminism**

Unassimilable feminism is an important book that reminds us of the ongoing need to redefine identity politics in potentially transformative ways. In this book Gillman approaches the feminist debates that she outlines fearlessly.

f) **Works on Indian writings in English**

Works on Indian writing in English has been of great importance in my study. These books give a complete history of English in India – the foremost scholars and critics of Indian writing in English, the noteworthy trends in Indo-Anglican literature including the feministic approaches, male domination, plight of women, quest for self-identity and freedom, gender discrimination, cultural clash, women empowerment etc.-

- 1) K.R. SrinivasaIyengar: Indian Writing in English.
- 2) Arvind Krishna Mehrotra: An illustrated history of Indian literature in English.
- 3) Manmohan K. Bhatnagar – Twentieth century literature in English.
- 4) Rukhsana Iftikhar: Indian Feminism.
- 5) Dr. Adi Ramesh Babu: Indian English Literature: A momento of feminist minds.
- 6) M.K. Naik: A History of Indian English Literature.

g) Critical Works and Literature on R.K.Narayan

The study would not have been possible without reviewing the critical works and literature on R.K. Narayan. The following works of R.K. Narayan were of immense help in our study. These works tell us about fictional world of R.K. Narayan, his characterization, feminine perspectives, womanhood concepts, his Indian sensibility and deep and profound relationship with society. The important works on R.K. Narayan studied and dealt under our study are as following:

- 1) Nisha Singh: Womanhood concepts in the novels of R.K. Narayan.
- 2) Ramesh Dnyate: The novels of R.K. Narayan, A typological study of characters.
- 3) S.R. Ramteke :R.K. Narayan and his social perspective.
- 4) P.S. Ramana: Message in Design – A study of R.K. Narayan’s fiction.
- 5) C.N. Srinath: R.K. Narayan – An anthology of recent criticism.
- 6) AmandeepRana : A critical study of the fictional world of R.K. Narayan.
- 7) Walsh William: R.K. Narayan - A critical appreciation.

Besides these books, a host of other critical books, journals and research papers related to the topic were referred and reviewed. Besides this, books and novels of other contemporary writers and feminist writers were also reviewed to understandthe trends, notions and thinking of these writers on the topic.

h) Collection of published as well as unpublished subject matter

i) Participation in national and international conferences.

- 1) National Research Seminar on **Widening Canvas of Literature**, ShriAtalBihari Vajpayee, Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Indore 03-04-Dec, 2015.
- 2) The International Conference - Vishisht School of Management, 10th Dec 2016.

vi) Analysis of Data

After the collection of data, it was properly analyzed and minutely scrutinized. To understand the profoundness of R.K. Naraya's heroines as they happened to be icon a class I went through the feministic theories and tried to analyze the position of women through the kaleidoscopic overview of women in Literature. The collected data on R.K. Narayan's female characters and feminism was divided into three heads: -

- 1) Heroines of early phase.
- 2) Heroines of middle phase.
- 3) Heroines of later phase.

vii) Conclusion

The final conclusion and inference on the topic was drawn and outcome of the project was achieved after evaluating the different aspects and facets of R.K. Narayan's fictional women and the contemporary feministic trends.

viii) MLA style 7th edition was thoroughly followed in the preparation of the project.

ix) The Chapter Scheme

The Chapter scheme is as follows:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Heroines of early phase.
- 3) Heroines of middle phase.
- 4) Heroines of later phase
- 5) Analytical study of the heroines of the three phases with contemporary feministic perspective.
- 6) Outcome of the study.

x) **Research Publications**

Three Research papers related to the topic were published:

- i) **"Voice of protest against discrimination in R.K. Narayan's fictional women characters"**, in IJELLH, indexed, peer reviewed and referred journal impact factor SJIF 2014-4.287 Vol. IV, Issue III, March 2016.
- ii) **"R.K. Narayan heroines as trail blazers for modern Indian women"** in ShodhJigyasa, Multi-Disciplinary research journal, Govt. Girls Degree College, Indore ISSN 2395-5902, Vol-II, April 2016.
- iii) **"Self Identity and rediscovery of self in delineation of Rosie in R.K. Narayan's The Guide"**, in paradigm shift in innovative business management Dec 2016.

A Brief Summary of the Project

Feminism emerged as an important force and wave in the western world in 1960s. Virginia Woolf, one of the most influential novelists of the twentieth century, is the first major English novelist who deals with what may now be termed as the 'Woman's question'. She is forerunner of the feminist movement that flowered in Europe and America in the seventies and eighties of the previous century. Linda Gordan thinks that feminism is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it.

The term 'feminism' was first used by the nineteenth century French dramatist Alexander Dumas. Feminism refers to the movement for women's right, which was mostly limited to politics. But later it spread all over the world making people think a new about age-old beliefs. Kate Millet with her Sexual Politics emerged as another significant feminist of the twentieth century. The women movement led to emergence of a number of feminist novelists. In America Sylvia Plath's Bell Jar raised a storm. The feminist novelists in the West have created a niche for themselves in the literature of twentieth century.

Feminism is a 'humanist' thought. The Three Guineas of Virginia Woolf's, is structured around three causes; firstly, to prevent war by helping a pacifist society; secondly, building of a women's college; and lastly, forming a society devoted and dedicated to assist and help women to enter all professions. The call and urge of contemporary feminist thinkers should become the basis for a new public morality.

The position and role of women in pre-independence India and in pre-colonial social structure reveal that the Indian feminism was different from that of west. In India, the women issues for the first time began to be addressed when the state commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. These feminist researchers gave a report that recognized the fact that the women in India were oppressed under a system of structural hierarchies and injustices. The Indian feminists of this period, were influenced by the western debates being conducted about violence, against women. However in India, the debate for support of Indian women had to be conducted and organised creatively rejecting certain ideas and notions of the west as there was a difference in the historical and social culture of India from that of west. These issues pertaining to women began to gain an international acclaim when the decade of 1975-1985 was declared the United Nations Decade for Women.

Thirties is the decade when the three founding fathers of modern Indo Anglian literature Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand published their first novels. Each according to his own philosophy, tries to convey the spirit of the Indian revolution that was going on and they present an image of India to the European readers they were writing for. Their India is torn between tradition and modernity, between a past that should no longer be and a future that was in the making. Their early novels give a comprehensive vision of a society in which women were given a definite place and this place could not be the same depending on whether the author was a convinced Fabian Socialist (Anand) or Gandhian at heart (Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan). This struggle and adjustments between tradition and modernity is further dealt and presented by Narayan in his fiction.

The earlier writers presented the traditional Sita image as an object of pity but later with the changing of time, the realistic picture of women began to appear. Gandhiji threw light on the social evils, and the status of women in Indian society. There was a great change in the position of women in the society when Gandhi called for spiritual and moral strength to the non-violent struggle for freedom. The western influence and the introduction of English education forced new values and norms of life upon women. Women started taking part in political, cultural and social movements.

Among the first generation writers, R.K.Narayan writes about Indian subjects and Indian people. His novels have been widely acclaimed and praised by the critics both in India and abroad. He has portrayed the story of life's joy and sorrows, romance and frustrations of the inhabitants of Malgudi.

All his novels are centered in and on Malgudi, a small town in South India. When Narayan thinks of Malgudi of India, it is not in terms of a political or economic entity but as a spiritual entity. The imaginary town – Malgudi has all the qualities of a society. Narayan dwells in and he depicts it with a keenly observant eye. Over the years, Malgudi experiences some swift changes, the impact of which is reflected on the traditional Indian society with its centuries old culture, customs, belief and superstitions.

Narayan's female characters are realized through a preordainedly conceived world, have an acute Karma consciousness and imbibe the pervading spirit of the cultural tradition. This is essentially a sacrosanct tradition. Rebellion against the accepted norms of their tradition appears meaningless. In fact, rebellion as such in the world of Narayan's novels is regarded more of a deviation than defiance. Savitri's traditionally realized act in **The Dark Room** does not have the endorsement of the feminists, but Savitri has the consent of those who value human concern, besides, of course, the whole Indian tradition. **The Dark Room** may be regarded as Narayan's characteristic study of rebellion.

In Bharati (**Waiting for Mahatma**), one finds a rare specimen of a rebel. Rosie's rebellion in (**The Guide**) can be seen firstly when she breaks the shackles of Devadasi clan and obtains M.A. in English and marries Marco which symbolizes Rosie's adventure and her desire for the freedom of the outer world and finally when she commits adultery, runs away with Raju for fulfilling the physical and creative cravings. But in the end, she does her dharma by saving Raju who saves her. This is Rosie's rebellion. There is a complex blending of tradition and modernity.

Daisy in **The Painter of Signs** underlines a distinct rebellion. Her first rebellion is realized when she was to be inspected as a bride and leaves her house for good. But she refuses to look back. Secondly rebellion is in her anti children and family planning campaign. Her last rebellion is when she refuses to marry Raman and leaves Malgudi as she can't leave except alone. However her rebellion is different from others as she does not return to the point of beginning. Besides them, element of rebellion can be seen in some other females also like Sushila, (**The English Teacher**), Grace (**Vendor of Sweets**) Chandran's Mother (**Bachelor of The Arts**), Raju's mother (**The Guide**), Raman's Aunt (**The Painter of Signs**), Srinivas' wife (**Mr. Sampath**), Sarasa (**Talkative Man**), Rita (**A Tiger for Malgudi**) and Nagraj's wife Sita (**The World of Nagraj**).

The rebellion of all these women may be said to be deviation from the traditional norms, forsaking her household or domestic duties. It is mainly reflected in the form of moral deviation. This rebellion against the

traditional and moral codes is result of awareness of woman's consciousness which is also reflected in novels of the time.

The awareness of the woman's consciousness as revealed in Narayan's novels establishes a new set of values in the fictive system, notably in Narayan's fiction. The typological experiences of these women have constant elements like an abrupt ending with a conscious decision. Her ending does not lead to a resolution of her problems, but the fictional shaping of a very specific kind of crisis seen through her eyes, is rewarding, for it leads to inner enrichment, a sense of exhilaration and vicarious achievement as we see her battling through harsh reality.

Besides the above mentioned features, Narayan's novels, like his contemporaries are also seen as a spectrum of the ways of dealing with the binary opposition of male versus female dominance, of woman as subject versus woman as object. All the options from girlhood through motherhood and independent life style are open to her. 'Equality' and 'liberation' are the two operative words here.

However with the passage of time, there is a change in the picture. As a result of various social and political reform movements, the struggle for independence, the influence of west and individualistic ideas have brought a considerable change in the Indian society and as well as in position of the Indian women.

The years between 1950 and 1980 have seen not only a prolific amount of writing but also a rapid decline of the values established during the independence struggle. These changes in the Indian society bring about a shift in the delineation of R.K. Narayan's women characters - from traditional, old, conventional woman to present day modern, vibrant, independent role models, the Hindu woman's adjustment to western society and civilization and readjustment to the Indians, the consequent difficulties and pain in adjustments, readjustments and accommodation to a changing environment, superimposed on a tired culture.

Gradually the seeds of rebellion are sown and this passive feminine turns into active feminine. With the shift in authorial sensibility Narayan indicates that the Indian woman who bears passivity as the badge of tribe, cannot be taken for granted anymore. He deals with the issue of woman's rebellion in a nutshell in his short story The Shelter-an estranged couple who have parted under similar circumstances as in **The Dark Room** meet accidentally for shelter from a rainstorm under a tree. Anonymous as she is, the lady here is made of sterner stuff than Savitri. She refuses to be her husband's toy to be picked up and thrown away at will. Having asked her, like Ramani, to get out of the house, he begs her now to come back. She, resolute as ever, declines his offer. Nothing can hold her to him, against her will, not even the pouring rain. She darts out in the rain, to escape to her new found life as a social worker. The problem is posed, the resolution is left to conjecture, but the seeds of women's rebellion have been sown.

Bharati is a decided improvement over the earlier meek heroines. The meek female gives place to a vibrant female like Bharati who is succeeded by Rosie, Daisy and Sarasa. They are active females, resilient figures for whom life seems open and fluid with possibilities.

But this 'modernity' of Indian woman can be seen not only in his later novels but in his early novels as well. Savitri (**The Dark Room**), who is rebellious when she leaves her house in protest against her husband's relation with Shanta Bai; Sushila (**The English Teacher**) who runs a harmonious household and happy family life with

her husband run her household economically on narrow budget. Bharati (**Waiting for Mahatma**), a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi, participates in national struggle, has high goals, wages a ceaseless battle to raise Sriram's mind, inspires him to be self -dependent and takes care of the orphans. In this respect, he is much ahead than the novelists of his time, because what we are seeing today, about Indian woman, Narayan forecasted and highlighted very early in his novels.

The Indian women exist among conditions often bordering on despair. Educational attainments, participation rates, occupational structure, private and public laws, family planning systems, technological advance and above all socio cultural attitudes are all weighted against the Indian woman. Yet as the anxious manager of home and culture, she is on a ceaseless quest for a credible meaning to life along, with her male counterpart. It would be worthwhile to find out how far do the women in the novels of R.K. Narayan one of the best novelists of his times reflect the status of women in a society where the group is more highly esteemed than the individual (male or female) and the male more than the female and where role expectations are highly specific and institutionalized. R.K. Narayan delineates in his novels the Indian women of the present. His heroines act as trail blazers for contemporary feministic movement. He presents his female characters as trend setters for contemporary feministic movement.

The topic chosen for study "**R.K. Narayan's Heroines as Trail Blazers for Contemporary Feministic Movement**" can be studied under three phases as following:

I The Early Phase

Novels

- Swami and Friends (1935)
- The Bachelor of Arts (1937)
- The Dark Room (1938)
- The English Teacher (1945)
- Mr. Sampath (1949)

II The Middle Phase

Novels

- The Financial Expert (1952)
- Waiting for Mahatma (1955)
- The Guide (1958)
- The Man Eater of Malgudi (1962)
- The Vendor of Sweets (1967)

III The Later Phase

Novels

- The painter of signs (1976)
- A Tiger for Malgudi (1983)
- Talkative Man (1986)
- The World of Nagraj (1990)

IV Analytical study of the heroines of the three phases with Contemporary Feministic Perspective.

The study of R.K. Narayan's heroines as trail blazers for contemporary feministic movement under the above mentioned heads would give a full glimpse of the Indian women from pre-independence era to the post - independence era, from tradition to modernity, where the women have become the markers of change and how the Indian Hindu society resisted and accepted these changes. The study would lead us to the final conclusion – what Indian women ought to be? Traditional or modern or both? Rebellious or submissive or both?

I) The Early Phase

The Early Phase deals with R.K. Narayan's heroines during pre -independence era. Indian struggle for independence covers almost half of the twentieth century. The unarmed superstitious and poverty stricken Indians shook off their lethargy of centuries. Malgudi in 1930's is at crossroads of Indian cultural ethos. It belongs to the pre- independence era. In these years Malgudi displays transition. This is reflected in the place and people as well. Modernity has not made much impact on the pre-independent Malgudi.

The novels of early phase were mostly produced in pre-independence period; therefore, there are more traditional women characters as compared to modern women characters. Pre-independence Indian society was largely male-dominated, orthodox society which discarded modern progressive ideas like education, women's independence etc. Women were unfortunately condemned to exist in this type of society. Women were given secondary position in this male- dominated society. Since during this period, Indian women were traditional, so in order to present a realistic characterization of his females; he portrays most of the female characters of this period as traditional women only.

Modernity has not made much impact on the pre-independent Malgudi. The progression from innocence to experience has not yet started and Malgudi is still relatively free of disrobing and corrupting influence of modernity.

The novels of early phase show that during this period, Narayan's female characters are more traditional rather than modern women characters. Narayan's women during the early phase, are mostly traditional, orthodox, conservative and stereotyped women of the pre-independent era. In the novels of early phase, Narayan tries to be realistic and gives the realistic picture of Indian women of the pre-independence era.

Contrary to this, Narayan is a believer in modernity and its individualistic ideas. But, he has to be realistic. Savitri's (**The Dark Room**) return back to home shows victory of tradition over modernity. He favours modernity and so he makes Savitri rebel. But in order to be realistic he should keep in pace with the society of his times which is deeply traditional. So he make Savitri to return back home and accept her lot as a submissive wife and a caring mother in the tradition-rooted society. Even Shanti (Mr. Sampath) the heroine of the film, by the end of the novel, decides to return back and lead a life of a widow and fulfill the duty of mother, who in the beginning, is presented as a seductive woman who lures males for her selfish end.

Thus most of the females during this period present the life of acceptance. Sometimes they rebel but finally they have to submit to the traditions, to their domestic duties and love for family and children, and because they take every suffering as an aspect of Karma.

II) **The Middle Phase**

The middle phase of Narayan's literary reputation as novelist begins with *The Financial Expert* written in 1952 and ends with **The Vendor of Sweets** in 1967. Other novels of this period are **Waiting for Mahatma** (1955), the Sahitya Akademi Award winning, **The Guide** (1958) and **The Man Eater of Malgudi** (1962). This period provides better professional productivity and personal satisfaction to Narayan. This period of Narayan's literary career belongs to the early years of the post-independence era when the nation witnessed a lot of changes in political, economic and social life which proved to be fruitful for the literary writers of the time.

Under such changed situations and circumstances in the nation and the society, R.K. Narayan by continuing the tradition of social realism, established earlier on a sound footing, portrays the various changes and problems faced by our country in pre-independence and post-independence India. The East-West encounter, the generation gap creating problems, in various family relationships viz. father vs son, mother vs son, mother-in-law vs daughter-in-law, etc. are the main focus of Narayan during the middle phase. The changes and improvements in the education system, influence of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle and the role of the various social reformers like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy etc have brought favourable changes in the Indian society, which have considerably improved the position of women in India.

The changes in the position of women in India mark a shift in author's attitude towards his female characters. He presents before us the New woman of New India – Bharati, Grace, Rosie, Brinda. The women in India are no more confined to the four walls of the house, and so are the New Women of Malgudi.

We can say that Narayan's presentation of female character during his middle phase is different from that of the early phase. In **The Financial Expert** and **The Man Eater of Malgudi**, he presents his conception of ideal conventional Indian housewives – Margayya's wife Meena and Natraj's wife. Ambika in **The Vendor of Sweets** also comes under this category. In contrast to them, Narayan presents the new modern women of India – Brinda, Bharati, Rosie and Grace. Brinda, the daughter of a rich tea-planter, is presented as a newly married daughter-in-law, who is not much interested in household work of traditional Indian housewives, but she can be ranked above all the earlier traditional women of Narayan like Savitri, for she accepts without protest or any frustration, the ill-conduct of her husband Balu and the dramatic fall in the fortunes of her parent-in-law. However, she lacks the boldness and assertiveness of the modern women.

Bharati is the new woman, who is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. She loves Sriram. However she is different from other in that she does not take the decision of her marriage herself, but leaves it on the consent of Mahatma Gandhi. Bharati takes the Indian women out from Purdah to Politics.

Narayan presents for the first time a different class of woman – the devadasi's – Rangi (**The Man Eater of Malgudi**) and Rosie (**The Guide**) who are looked down with contempt by society. Rangi, inspite of being a devadasi, exhibits cultural ethos and moral values. Like Rangi, Rosie also belongs to a family traditionally deviated to temple dancers. However, in the portrayal of Rosie, Narayan exhibits the influence of modern individualistic ideas and the influence of education and westernization. The new Narayanan heroine is bold, vibrant and assertive. These women are very conscious of their self-identity and individuality.

Narayan gives a realistic portrayal of the new modern woman of India who exhibits individualistic ideas and feeling of self-identity, whose self-respect and egotism makes them vibrant, bold and rebellious. Hence Rosie is not meek, and submissive like Savitri (**The Dark Room**) but is bold and permissive. Unable to bear the indifference of her husband as well as to fulfill her passion for dancing, she becomes rebellious. However like Savitri, she does not submit to her husband but at the end, considers everything as an aspect of Karma. She represents the Indian woman who suffers at the hands of men like Raju.

A study of the novels of the middle phase reveals that Narayan very realistically presents the inner conflicts of the women protagonists who are the markers of change. It is present, above all in the deliberate ambiguity in the portraiture of Rosie (**The Guide**) or Bharati (**Waiting for Mahatma**), Grace (**The Vendor of Sweets**) or Brinda (**The Financial Expert**), “an ambiguity which mirrors the bafflement of a traditional, largely male society, in its face to face encounter with new notions of selfhood and particularly, of womanhood.”

The novels of the middle phase portray the changes occurring in the position of women as a result of women liberation movement and individualistic ideas of the west. The resistance, struggle and inner conflict that the Indian women faces in the tradition – oriented Indian society as well as by the conservative, conventional and orthodox Indian Hindu family system are clearly manifested through the female protagonists like Bharati, Rosie and Grace presented in the middle phase of his novels. Thus in the middle phase, also, Narayan gives a realistic portrayal of the Indian society keeping in pace with the change in position of women in the Indian society.

III) **The Later Phase**

The later phase of Narayan's literary career begins with **The Painter of Signs** published in 1976, followed by **A Tiger for Malgudi** (1983) and **Talkative Man** (1986). The last novel from the pen of R.K. Narayan is **The World of Nagraj** published in 1990. This phase proved to be flourishing for Narayan's literary career. The most remarkable accomplishment of R.K. Narayan, during this phase is the publication of his autobiography **My Days**, written in 1974, before he has written **The Painter of Signs**.

This phase of Narayan's literary career marks various remarkable changes in India as well. It is the Age of Reason. The trend of the time is to be scientific and rational. The women's Liberation Movement and Women's Empowerment has brought about a considerable change in the position of woman. Independent individuality is the supreme value of life for the New Woman of India. This chapter deals mainly with the

emergence of new women in the later fiction of R.K. Narayan. The New woman is just like a butterfly coming out of her cocoon, trying hard to seek freedom from captivity. He reveals this intense desire of women to have a separate identity with the help of various characters like Rosie (**The Guide**) and Grace (**The Vendor of Sweets**) in the previous chapter and Daisy (**The Painter of Signs**), Sita (**The World of Nagraj**) and Sarasa (**Talkative Man**) in the present chapter.

The first novel of this phase, **The Painter of Signs** presents a realistic picture of India in the post-Independence era. Broadly speaking, the trend of time is to be scientific and rational: the trend very well represented by Daisy and Raman who want to establish the Age of Reason. The monster of illiteracy, population rise cannot be vanquished long after independence, and social workers like Daisy have to make great efforts to overcome it.

Daisy represents rampant active feminism. To express their creative power in a male ordained world, women like Rosie and Daisy tend to become masculine. They try to enact the masculine role to themselves. Rosie, after Raju's eclipse, is her own mistress; gone are her ambivalence and mental anguish over the breaking of traditional ties like marriage and family honour. Daisy rejects with equal ease the Hindu properties around her. Raju and Raman have come down back a long way down the evolutionary ladder; they are not like Krishnan as Margaya or even Jagan. They are weak minded men to constantly bow down to the lady's wishes, grateful for her minor favours, even in moments of intimacy and closeness.

We can say that in the characterization of Daisy, the possibilities in the active feminine are used for the good of the society. She does not brood over the fact of being on the wrong side of the sexual tracks. She travels around and lives as simply and effortlessly as an average villager eating what she gets, sleeping where she finds shelter. It is the male, here Raman, who finds it hard to cope with his environment.

Narayana depicts Sita as a modern educated Indian house wife. Her relation with Nagraj, her mother-in-law, Tim and Saroja is practical and rational. Narayan weaves many social issues around her and through her relationship with other family members.

Narayan presents different family relationships and family dissensions through medium of Sita as the central figure. Thus Narayan uses the woman protagonist (Sita) to project the image of changing society.

The last phase of Naryana's literary career marks a revolutionary change in the position of the Malgudian women. She comes out from the shackles of the four walls of the house, and enters different fields of career – Daisy – the family planning officer, Rita – the circus artist, Sarasa– the Commandant General and Saroja– the singer. Educational awareness can be noticed in both the Malgudian females as well as their parents. The meek, fearful females (wives) have now become egoistic, dominating and possessive. The traditional women have now become modern, extrovert and bold. The advent of modernity has not washed away the traditional Indian traditions and customs. Daisy the most vibrant and most remarkable of Narayan heroines, is the only exception in this regard. She is the only female character of Narayan who shows no adherence to Indian traditions or customs. The last two novels, **Talkative Man** and **The World of Nagraj** present the ideal Malgudian heroine in whom there is a blend of both tradition and modernity. In the last phase also, his delimitation of female characters is realistic as he keeps himself in pace with the changing trends in the position of women in Indian society. Narayan's female characters during this phase establish new trends in feminism.

The Indian women growing up through Savitri, Sushila, Bharati, Ambika and Rosie into Daisy and finally to modern traditional women like Sarasa and Sita, have now come of age. She is an image of social change and social revolt and knows the world for what it is. The new modern woman, fights, manages, endures, but never whines or sulks in the dark room. She is radically new role model and it is hard to contain all the elements aroused by her.

IV Analytical study of the heroines of the three phases with Contemporary Feministic

Perspective.

Narayan's fictional world, spanning seven decades, presents the evolution of Indian womanhood and Indian women as trail blazers for contemporary feministic movement. Woman in Narayan's novels, is a powerful vehicle for the exposition of the author's perceptions. The publication of 'The Dark Room (1938), The Guide (1956), and The Painter of Signs (1976) spans nearly forty years. In each of these novels, Narayan's women characters stand both for change, and for resistance to change.

Narayan vividly portrays the changes occurring in the position of Indian women during these years of his literary career. The struggle by society to accept new ways of living and being, are depicted very subtly and delicately, by a series of external contrasts and counterpoints between older and younger women, between different class values, between outsiders or newcomers and local Malgudi people. It is also presented through a series of symbols which reflect or suggest the inner conflicts and dilemma of the women protagonists themselves, who are markers of change and at the same time aware of the devastation, such a change might bring. It is present above all, in the deliberate ambiguity in the delineation of Rosie (The Guide) and Daisy (The Painter of Signs), an ambiguity which mirrors the bafflement of a traditional, largely male-dominated society, in its face-to-face encounter with new notions of selfhood, individuality and particularly of womanhood. Narayan presents the changes coming in the position of women and the resultant disillusionment, absurdities, tensions and dilemma that crept the Indian women by presenting the family relationship of middle class family.

Narayan depicts the growth of his female characters with their pulls and stresses in both the directions with ironical ambivalence. His female characters preserve basic quality of individuality despite their allegorical and representative character in certain cases. Narayan is most precise and subtle in his realization of individuality and idiosyncrasy. Their foibles and idiosyncrasies often get exaggerated, turning many of them, into grotesque figures or caricatures. Indeed, Malgudian woman grows, changes, reacts to time and circumstances, has a spirit, a soul. His characters get suffused with a touch of the fabulous and allegorical in this aspect. But he is saved from becoming an amorphous symbol as he never loses contacts with personal, professional and family responsibilities. His female characters blend visionary idealism, philosophical profundity, and practical realism.

Studying all these female characters, one can observe the changes taking place at a rapid pace in society with regard to the position of women from traditional to modern, from passive to active, the influence of the western culture, adjustment and balance between the western and Indian culture, the resultant pains and problems in making these adjustments of Indian culture to the changing environment. The Indian woman finds

herself in great confusion and dilemma, at the changing scenario, the changing social setup with new values, the scientific advancements of the world. The woman is portrayed as struggling between her instinctual desires for physical gratification and her intellectual needs for a career, prestige and esteem. In this age of reason and scientific advancement, she finds herself unable to walk with the old, traditional, conventional frame of Indian woman. She tries to assert her individuality like Rosie and Daisy and becomes rebellious. But ultimately she returns back to the sacrosanct tradition, submits to Fate and Karma.

With the change in the position of women in Indian scenario, Narayan also presents shift in his sensibility of his female characters. Like the Indian woman, the Malgudian woman would also not bear the badge of sufferance and passivity any more. She would no longer be her husband toy to be picked up or thrown away anytime at his will. Nothing can stop him or hold her, not even storm or rain. The seeds of women's rebellion have been sown to flourish in the flower of woman's independence, freedom, individuality and self-identity. Bharati (**Waiting for Mahatma**) opens the way for active feminism to be represented by rebellious heroines like Rosie and Daisy, the vibrant role models, who towers over man in later novels of Narayan. The active woman is very much aware towards her career and intellectual development which were previously confined only to man. It gradually leads to reduction in the status of male protagonist. The quest of the female protagonist may often lead to a violation of her natures, it may give her lasting peace or happiness – but most often lead to inward enlightenment.

The active feminine is presented apart males glaring provincialism and intellectual ineptness are made obvious. In the last two novels, **The Guide** and **The Painter of Signs**, she moves further along the line, until she ends up logically as different kind of being altogether – a sort of Madam Merteuil who reverse the tables, who views at life from the other side of the biological telescope.

In this two novels **The Guide** and **The Painter of Signs**, Narayan portrays the terrifying, perplexing and disturbing effects of modernity and active feminism influenced by the western liberal notions of individuality and independence through the medium of women like Rosie and Daisy. She finds herself in the dilemma of making adjustment in the tradition rooted Indian society of post-independent India which now favors modernity, independence and assertiveness of women.

This development of feminine consciousness which began with Bharati, (**Waiting for Mahatma**) continues upto the last novel **The World of Nagraj** in the presentation of Sita, Charu and Saroja. She has to discard the male-oriented cultural milieu and rebel for woman's independence, self-respect and self-identity.

The new heroines like Rosie or Daisy presents another dilemma. When the modern women achieve a dominating position and take on norms or traits of aggression and independence, their unconscious exertions drive them on to suffer as men would suffer. Being but human, masculine female or feminine male, these women suffer the weakness of the flesh, the inequity of the law. They are being drawn by their desires, both human and biological and restrained by certain rule of conduct.

The idea of being a lady undergoes a change and a transformation in Daisy. Savitri is burdened by culturally and socially imposed feelings of guilt and shame and she does not rise above them. Bharati lives and works under unusual circumstances and rises above local restrictions to the level of a national figure. Ambika sows the seeds of resistance quietly. In Rosie, we witness the confrontation between the morality of the heart and

the morality of social sin. Daisy is a phenomenon by herself. She provides a new pattern of behaviour. She points out such complicated models of change in Indian woman that we could keep cutting into her as Henry James remarks: "into the rich density of wedding cake".

Narayan's Malgudi can be said to be India itself. Through his Malgudian men and women, Narayan portray the Indian society from the pre-independent era to the post-independent era, from the traditional Indian society to the modern Indian society. Not only this, but some of the Malgudian women possess the qualities of the Indian women of today who are influenced by women's empowerment and women's liberation.

Outcome of the Study

By presenting these evolutionary trends, and varying feminine perspectives, Narayan gives us the message that in this world of "Women Empowerment" and "Women's Liberation" both tradition and modernity are necessary for the Indian woman. She should keep equanimity and balance between tradition and modernity. If modernity is the need of time, it is our age old traditions and customs on which our past lies and it is with the strength of tradition that we are what we have become and achieved today. The need is to be what Narayan presents his last heroine, Sita – a 'Rationally Traditional Woman' or a 'Traditionally Modern Woman'.

This is the era of 'Women's Empowerment' and 'Women Liberation'. What we are thinking today about Indian woman and what Indian woman is today, Narayan had thought and forecasted few decades back in his novels. He focuses on the evolution of Indian woman – from the old, traditional stereotyped roles to the present day modern, liberalized roles and their awakening consciousness and confrontation against the male dominated traditional society. Narayan's novels give glimpses of Indian woman's adjustment to the western culture and civilization, the consequent pains and adjustments resolving the conflict between tradition and modernity. Narayan's portrayal of his female characters is realistic and suggestive.

Starting from Savitri in **The Dark Room** (1938) to Sita and Saroja in **The World of Nagraj** (1990). R.K. Narayan's female characters grow stronger and justify that the emergence of the 'New Woman' is not a myth or Utopia. The new woman of R.K. Narayan has certainly emerged, leaving behind an indelible mark on the Indian psyche. However, this new malgudian woman is not imported from west but she has emerged from the age long rich treasure of Indian culture. This malgudian new woman has a strong base of Indianans and is deeply interwoven in values, traditions and ethos that are purely and fully Indian in form and content. She is bold, self-reliant, vibrant, confident and assertive. She struggles and fights for her freedom and asserts her individuality and self-identity. In this process, she not only empowers herself but also the male (man) she is associated with. But she uses this empowerment to bring positive changes not only in the male (man she is associated with) and her family but also in the society. Narayan has modern progressive idea about women and this thought and thinking is clearly and deeply manifested in his novels.

R.K. Narayan promotes and raises the position and status of women very consciously. His 'Women Lib' movement, which begins in **The Dark Room**, comes to purported fulfillment and final end in **The World of Nagraj**, encompassing a long journey from Savitri (**The Dark Room**) to Saroja and Sita (**The World of Nagraj**), via Shanti, Bharati, Rosie, Daisy, Rita and Sarasa. R.K. Narayan laments the miserable and distressing condition of the Indian women that led him to formulate his 'Women Lib' movement in his novels. Narayan does not recommend and favor life style of west for Indian women but he cannot also accept the abuse and

abomination done on women in the Malgudian patriarchal and male dominated society. Thus Narayan advocates freedom for the new emerging women of India and wants to see them, educated active and independent but within the periscope of Indian, culture, notions of 'Dharma' and 'Karma'.

Since 1980s to present, feminism emerged as a system of thought, an opinion that reorganizes the realities of the world, a positivist holistic approach to life, a step for sanity in human relationship, and this is undoubtedly the only way for preserving human existence on this planet.

R.K. Narayan also presents a realistic picture of modern Indian women, and a positivist holistic approach to life. Narayan's heroines who are the trail blazers for contemporary feministic movement gives the message to the modern women that they should be independent and free to assert their individuality and self-identity. They should be in no sense treated as inferior being in male-dominated chauvinistic society. The modern women should be educated and walk shoulder to shoulder with men. Modernity and Women Empowerment is no doubt, a need of the time, but the Indian women should use this modernity and empowerment for fruitful and positive purpose. It should not be backed up with ego or some selfish purpose but it should have a noble purpose to bring positive and fruitful changes in the males, their families and the society at large. There should be sanity in their human relationships. The Indian women should maintain the dignity, respect and high position bestowed to them by the Indian culture and Dharma.