

## **R.K. Narayan - A Concept Storyteller**

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### **Abstract**

R. K. Narayan is a prolific Indian writer who took up English as his medium of communication. His writing style is a close representation of the pre and post-colonial period in India. Being raised by a grandmother, he adopted an excellent imagination power without overlooking the unfavourable surroundings. His writings explicitly reflect his achievement and struggle and everything that most of the common people can go through. Amidst everything, there is a society that plays a big role in life. You cannot deny society no matter how hard your life turns into, and the writer depicted every minute thing in society. Perhaps, Narayan was a writer who never criticized the colonizers, and he presented his thought with appropriate reasoning. In his personal life, he was very close to his family, and his wife Rajam played a significant role in his life. Her sudden death led the author to an emotional turmoil, and he wrote 'The English teacher.' He faced obstacles of astrological differences that were prevalent in the society, and in his writing, there were numerous mentions of superstitions. The research paper is going to discuss the literary works of R. K. Narayan and the influence behind his work.

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## **Introduction**

R.K. Narayan, the name gave birth to a unique storytelling technique, and we can call it concept storytelling. The man took up English as his writing language to describe the socio-economic situation of Indian and pervasive cultural norms in society. His storytelling technique is embellished with the improvisation of the theatrical aspect. The literary works he conceived were not a mere source of entertainment but a means of education and a seamless instilling of moral values. The article is going to discuss R.K. Narayan's literary works and how his life is intertwined with his writing.

## **A Brief Insight of R.K. Narayan - Life And Career**

R. K. Narayan was born to a school headmaster on 10th October 1906 in Madras. He has eight siblings, and one of his younger brothers named R. K. Laxman later became an eminent cartoonist; who created 'Common Man.' Since child Narayan was exposed to Sanskrit, Arithmetic, Indian Mythology, and Indian Classical Music. While talking about childhood memories, Narayan recalled that his family mostly conversed in English, and probably this is the reason he found his comfort in the language and later became his medium of expression.

As his father's job demanded frequent transfers, a bigger part of Narayan's childhood spent at his maternal grandmother's house. Little Narayan was very fond of, and this is the reason his childhood friends were a peacock and a monkey. His grandmother gave his primary education, and later, he enrolled in a school in Madras. Since childhood, he was an avid

reader of some famous author's literary works like Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, and many more. When he moved to Mysore to attend high school, he quenched his thirst for reading from his college library and father's as well. Besides reading, he started writing as well.

After completing formal education, he took up the job of a teacher, but the dissatisfaction in the job environment lead him writing. Albeit, the road was never smooth for him, be it professional life or personal. He took up the job of a reporter at 'The Justice.' The paper was associated with advocating the rights to the non-Brahmins. The job gave him the exposure to several people and introduced to various societal issues that he was unaware of. During that time, he was able to publish his first novel 'Swami and Friends,' which was ridiculed and rejected many times earlier. After that, in subsequent years, R. K. Narayan got a good hold to his ground and pursued his passion for writing.

### **Critical Review of R.K Narayan Literary Works**

Having being born in British India, the representation of the colonial period and caste discrimination are prominent in the author's works. 'The Guide' is the novel where we can find such elements that the author had been exposed to. On the other hand, Narayan's first novel 'Swami and Friends' deals with a set of humor, and the novel is often referred to as his semi-autobiography. Some of the author's works also give a hint of Vedic thoughts, and we find such element in 'the Guide,' 'The Dark Room,' 'The English Teacher,' 'A Tiger for Malgudi,' 'The Vendor of Sweet' and also in 'Swami and Friends.' Being exposed to Indian Mythology, his works alluded to mythical aspects.

The in-depth psychoanalysis of his fictional characters gives us a journey of immense transformation from an immature young man to a successful entrepreneur. His work is an integral part of his practical experiences, and perhaps, this is the reason we find pragmatic humor, ridicule to societal vice, irony to what is divine, and constant conflict between good and evil under the veil of satire. While analyzing his works, it is evident that they were written in different stages of life, and there is a strong influence of a rapidly changing society.

### **A Detailed Discussion on R.K. Narayan's Literary Works**

#### **Swami and Friends**

R. K. Narayan finished writing *Swami and Friends* in 1930, but it was mercilessly ridiculed by his uncle and was rejected by several publishers. Young Narayan created a fiction that revolves around a town called Malgudi. He depicted the town as free of any imposition of colonial rule, yet it talks about the socio-political changes of the pre and post-independence era. The theme of the novel is the growing up of a ten-year-old boy named Swami with his friends. Through the character, the author depicted a spontaneous and impulsive childhood. Besides that, there you will find an explicit portrayal of the uprising of rebellions against British Raj. The authors also incorporated elements that colonial India adapted from her colonialist- Cricket and Western education. Narayan belonged to a family that believed every government is vile, and this is the reason he believed both the colonized and the colonizer could live in harmony. And that ideology is vivid in his first novel.

#### **The Bachelor of Arts**

'The Bachelor of Arts,' is also set in Malgudi. Here in the novel, the readers experience the journey of an adolescent towards adulthood. The central character of the story is Chandran, and the plot is set in the late colonial era. The transition of the central character goes through several ups and downs. The author makes the character fall in love and makes his heartbroken, makes him roam around streets with an empty stomach, introduces him to the divinity, and again brings him back to the pragmatic life. The story tells about a journey of a boy that can be resembled anyone who read it.

Even having an immense belief in supreme power, the author never denies the desire of life, and this is the reason his characters fall in love even after being rejected. His characters come back to the harsh society no matter how much they face dejection.

### **The English Teacher**

The last part of the trilogy is 'The English Teacher' that is written in 1945. The novel is referred to as his autobiography that deals with an intensely emotional journey. The protagonist of the novel is Krishna, who is an English teacher. The story tells how mundane life can turn into a perfect means of self-development. The central character became responsible towards life when the admission of his wife their only child. The story can be summarized as a perfect weave of humor and tragedy. It is also about finding optimism in regular life and a broader meaning in a regular job. The author never evicted his character from society and never overlooked the elements that are prevalent in society as well as in Indian culture. And that is the reason we find a strong sense of spiritualism in his works.

The characters in Narayan's work have gone through spiritualism at least once, and that is a very important part of the development of a story.

### **The Dark Room**

If you want to know the unspoken part of Indian culture, then R. K. Narayan can take you through the part that always remained in the dark. His novel 'The Dark Room' talks about the much-avoided part of Indian society. The author put light on a subject that was never discussed in the 20th century's colonized India. The central theme of the novel is domestic disharmony and the women being the victim of unequal marriage.

### **Malgudi Days**

At the time when he is almost got cut from any connection to England due to World War II, he managed to publish an anthology of short stories- Malgudi Days. It is a collection of 32 short stories that again revolve around several elements of Indian society and culture and not to forget the people. Even though the stories are faintly similar at a first read, but the stories are vastly unique from each other. There is an immaculate description of South Indian village, and he described the societal taboo without putting any glitter to it.

### **Cinematic Adaption of R. K. Narayan's Literary Works**

Due to set in Indian society and talks about Indian culture, his novel was adapted on the big screen. R. K. Narayan's novel 'The Guide' was adapted in Bollywood as 'Guide' starring DevAnand and Waheeda Rehman. The film won Filmfare Award in several categories, and not only that, but also the representation moved a large number of people.

On the other hand, the 90s kid cannot get over with 'Malgudi Days.' It is a daily soap contained 54 episodes, and the series started to air on Doordarshan, and now it is also aired on Hotstar. Most of the viewers of the series were children, and it has become one of the cherished childhood memories that one can recall. At first, 39 episodes were aired on Doordarshan, later 15 episodes were shot in 2006 to revive the glory of the 90s TV series. The episodes became very close to the children of that time because it was curated very efficiently. It was a very close representation of childhood that most of the viewers could relate at that time.

### **Writing Style of R. K. Narayan**

The best part of Narayan's writing style is he wrote for common people. He took up English as it was the most comfortable way to express his thought and also it can be reached to a large number of people. His simplistic writing style attracted a large number of readers, and the more interestingly people could see a picture of society in his seamless writing. He focused on the intricacies of Indian society, brilliantly incorporated in his fiction. He wrote for the people, and the readers found the characters are dealing with similar emotions as they are and facing similar obstacles as they do. Despite writing in a foreign language, Narayan never left his mother tongue and formed some dialogues with a hint of Tamil accent, and that added absolute humor to his writing.

### **Specific Aspects of R. K. Narayan's Literary Works**

The author found his catharsis in writing, and this is the reason whenever life hit him hard, he took up the pen. As it is told earlier that during his childhood, he was exposed to several things from arithmetic to Indian mythology; later, we saw the influence of everything he read or taught. His efficiency in writing lies with his brilliant technique to incorporate those elements while conceiving a story and its characters. He never evicted himself from the hardship of the society, and so he never did with his characters. There is a strong presence of poverty-ridden village, societal taboos, emotional turmoil, death, epidemic, discrimination, astrology, etc. You will also find optimism, love, responsibility, spiritual journey, education, and many more that can provide strength to fight back against any hard reality. His fictional works never deviated from reality, yet push the readers to imagine the end.

**Reference links**

[https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/149630/8/08\\_chapter%202.pdf](https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/149630/8/08_chapter%202.pdf)

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