

# **Portrayal of Women Characters in R. K. Narayan's Select Novels**

A. Sarah Hepzibah

(17PEN015)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for Women, Coimbatore-641 043.

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

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***Chapter-I***  
***Introduction***

## **Chapter-I**

### **Introduction**

Literature is the most important among all the written works. Literature has been a reflection of the human society over centuries. It has been a powerful tool in kindling the human thoughts and emotions. It gives an opportunity to understand and experience different cultures and customs that exist in a society. It provides an opportunity to indulge in the life and lifestyles of people; and helps to sneak into the life of people, their social setup, value system, culture, creed, nature, behaviour, attitude and life conditions. Literature is universal in nature.

Indian literature has its origin from the Indian culture. Indian literature is both single as well as pluralistic. A survey of the panoramic history of Indian literature, from the early times to the present, reveals a running thread of continuity against the background of regional and cultural diversity. The rise of Indian Writing in English is at the onset, to be located historically. Indian writers have been causative to Indian writing in English and the Indian writers have used English to represent Indian culture and spirit.

Fiction is a universally accepted genre and enjoyed in terms of reading and writing in the recent times. It is an easiest and compelling medium as it connects readers personally and emotionally touching the hearts and minds of the people around the globe. Indian sensibility is profoundly reflected in Indian English fiction. Novels depict the social, political and personal realities of a place and period with clarity and details are not found in works of history. Prof. M. K. Naik in the book *Dimensions of Indian English Literature*, remarks that, "...one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is

prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West” (99).

Indian writers in English have contributed to modern English literature. English has been introduced by the British in the Indian educational system and it is understood in which not only the language but also the life-style and culture is imposed. India is a land of diversity with many languages, religions, races, and cultures. This multiplicity has given the writers an enormous liberty to deal with various themes. Indian thought process and Indian way of living is popularized through the writings by the Indian English Novelists. The socio-economic, political, cultural, religious side of India is portrayed in the novels of Indian writers. The true colour of life of India is reflected in Indian English writing.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) marks the real beginning of Indian English novel writing followed by *Anand Math* in 1882. His novels are foot prints for the emerging writers of that time. The other novelists are Rajalakshmi Devi who wrote *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt whose first novel is *Binaca* (1878) and Kali Krishna Lahari who wrote *Roshanara* (1881). These writers have made great contribution for the development of Indian English Literature. The other novels published in the nineteenth century are *The Bay of Bengal* (1866) by Krishna Punt, *The Indolence* (1878) by Anand Prasad Dutt, *The Young Zamindar* (1883) by Shoshee Chunder Dutt, *Hirimba's Wedding* (1884) by Trailokya Das, *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife* (1894) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) by Krupabai Satthianandan, *Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale* (1888) and *Lt. Suresh Biswas: His Life and Adventures* (1900) by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and *The Girl and Her Tutor* (1891) by Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya.

The twentieth century novels revolve around the themes – social, political, historical and religious. The contribution of Rabindranath Tagore to the field of literature is note-worthy. His notable novels are *The Wreck* (1910), *Gora* (1910) and *The Home and the World* (1916). Through these novels, Tagore has conjured up the vision of a modern India. The novels of Sohrabji Cornelia's *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1902) and *Between the Twilight* (1908), Balkrishna's *The Love of Kusum* (1910), Sir Joginder Singh's *Nasreen* (1915), gives a deep insight into theme of social inequality, exploitation of women and the attitude of politicians in the contemporary period. The English translation of the novels of Romesh Chunder Dutt titled *The Lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra*(1909) talks about the family life in India and elaborates on the theme of history and social reforms.

Historical romance has made a fairly early appearance in the phase of Indian Fiction in English. Prominent examples are Mirza Moorad Alee Beg's *Lalun the Beragun* or *The Battle of Panipat* (1884), T. Ramakrishna's *Padmini* (1903) and *A Dive for Death* (1911), Jogendra Singh's *Nur Jahani: The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909) and Svarna Kumari Ghoshal's *The Fatal Garland* (1975). The historical periods covered vary from Tamil times to Maratha History; while the locale ranges from the South to the North to fifteenth century Bengal.

The greatest inspiration for the writers of the twentieth century is the prevailing social, political and economic conditions of the society. It is a period of great transition on the social and political front. There has been a need for reformation and establishment of a new social practices and this is reflected in the novels that were produced during the

present century. The freedom movement and fundamentals of common man's life have also been the themes of the novels during this time.

The three prominent novelists who were called as the 'trio' of Indian English Literature are Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan. The literary outputs of the 'trio' have given a new meaning and direction to Indian English Literature. William Walsh in the book *R. K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation*, remarks that, "If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as Metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist" (6). These three novelists have established their fictional work among the best in the history of Indian English Literature. Though they are contemporaries to each other, yet each one has their own distinct style of literary expression holding a distinctive charm. The writers have secured the future of Indian writing in English by turning their writings into a solidified material project that has international acclaim.

Raja Rao is an eminent Indian literary figure whose autobiographical novel *Kanthapura* (1938) expresses the problems of Indians caught between the past and the present, the East and the West. The Sahitya Akademy winning novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) is a semi- autobiographical novel which deals with the quest for spiritual awakening and also reflects upon the writer's experiences in the quest. The novel *The Cat and the Shakespeare* (1965) deal with Indian philosophy and western ideas. The wide range of the works of Raja Rao is significant contribution to Indian English Literature as well as the world literature. Raja Rao is awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988 for his writings of literature.

The writing career of Mulk Raj Anand starts with the writing of his first novel *Untouchable* (1935). This is a unique work by Mulk Raj Anand because the protagonist of the novel is not born in a rich family or the privileged like the conventional Indian works. The structure of the novel is drawn from the stream of consciousness technique used by James Joyce in his work *Ulysses* (1922). The important quarter that affected his writing is the idea of socialistic society as propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. *Coolie* (1936) is the most acclaimed novel of Mulk Raj Anand where he describes Munoo, the protagonist who struggles due to poverty. The novels like *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1939), adds to the reputation of Mulk Raj Anand as a literary writer. The other novels of his writings are *The Big Heart* (1945), *Seven Summers* (1951), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), and *The Road* (1961).

R.K. Narayan is another eminent figure in the 'trio' who has an everlasting significance in Indian English literature. He is regarded as one of the best Indian writers of English fiction. His exquisite use of the language, his ability to fuse character and action, his steady perception of life, his authentic portrayal of Indians, his relentless search for a moral centre, and his utilization of Indian myths and legends, are all features of his art that have helped in making him a recognized and established man of letters.

R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) whose full name is Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami is the son of the couple Mr. Krishnaswamy Iyer, a school headmaster and Mrs. Gnanambal, a housewife. He is from the orthodox Brahmin family who has spent his life in the city of Mysore in South India. He has composed fiction in English which embodies the rich Indian heritage and culture and the history of English Language.

R.K. Narayan has initially worked as teacher and reporter but later pursued the career in writing because of the passion to become an eminent writer.

All the novels of R.K. Narayan are set in the imaginary town *Malgudi* which is the creation of him. As Thomas Hardy's novels are called Wessex novels, R.K. Narayan's novels are called as Malgudi novels. The imaginary town Malgudi upholds tradition and custom which are deeply rooted in the thought process of the people who abide to their customs and beliefs by creating an identity for themselves. Narayan portrays the sorrows, joys and ironies in the lives of the various types of people who live and die in Malgudi. Narayan's portrayal of the life of people in Malgudi is the urban-middle class setting of South India. He achieves universality through his imaginary town Malgudi, which is concerned with supreme power of humanity.

The list of the novels of R.K. Narayan in the chronological order is, *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1946), *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986) and *The World of Nagaraj* (1990). His first novel *Swami and Friends* has been published in England. The novels of R.K. Narayan published during 1935-1990 assess the significance of Indian world view. The depiction of Indian-middle class society in the comic-ironic mode in these novels is the specialty of Narayan's writing. Graham Greene is the best friend of R.K. Narayan who has helped him in all possible ways to publish his works when he had tough times publishing his works on his own.

R. K. Narayan being an Indian has written his novels entirely based on Indian culture. He stresses on domestic relationships which occupy the main place in his novels. His narration of story in his fiction is based upon Indian conventions, customs and traditions. He has also given importance to Indian region and myths in his writings. In most of the novels he has portrayed the importance of Indian Gods and Goddess. He is a man who is deeply rooted in the soils of India. He gives a vivid and pure picture of Indian society in his novels and his works are free from Western civilization and society.

The themes of both tradition and modernity prevailing side-by-side in India is reflected in the novels of R. K. Narayanan. In India, the conflict between tradition and modernity is a part of reality and will continue to be so for long. Indian culture is a blend of traditional values and the modern spirit. Modernity in India has not replaced tradition largely or decisively. Indian tradition is ancient and so modern Indian society cannot completely break itself from the long-standing tradition. Indian society continues to live in two worlds, the traditional and the modern, at the same time.

The themes of parental love, academic disillusionment, harmony, in family relationship and Hindu astrology are dealt in the novel *Swami and Friends*. This novel focused on the plight of students; punishments of caning in the classroom, and the associated shame. The novel *The Bachelor of Arts* deals with the theme of a rebellious adolescent transitioning to a rather well-adjusted adult. In this novel the concept of horoscope – matching in Hindu marriages and the emotional toll it levies on the bride and groom is portrayed. *The Dark Room* is a novel about domestic disharmony, showcasing the man as the oppressor and the woman as the victim within marriage. Narayan in this

novel addresses the concept of wife putting up with her husband's antics and attitudes. These three novels highlight the problem with certain socially accepted practices.

The theme of family relationship and friendship is spread over in all the novels of R. K. Narayan. He presents these themes with subtlety and profundity and does not deal with the problems superficially. He emphasises on mutual bond between parents and their children and portrays the relationship within the family realistically and vividly. His themes pertaining to human relationships have deep ideas, concepts and ideologies of life.

The novel *The English Teacher* contains some autobiographical elements. This novel along with *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts* is considered a trilogy. It portrays the orthodox and modern concepts of marriage and the deterioration of marital harmony. The treatment of the themes of religious faith, Hinduism and Gandhian ideology are presented in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Guide*. *A Tiger for Malgudi* is about Raja, an innovative talking tiger and the novel combines Hindu mysticism with human absurdity through the tiger's soliloquy. The tiger finds that the world of humans is too brutish and baffling until it comes across a saint, who teaches the tiger about the philosophy of life. The effect of materialism is highlighted in the novel *The Financial Expert*. In the novel *Mr. Sampath*, the characters Srinivas and Sampath desire to achieve fame and fortune and this is explored in the novel. The conflict between tradition and modernity is explored in the novels *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs* and *The World of Nagaraj*.

R.K. Narayan employs realistic portrayal of characters in his novels. The novels of Narayan suggest that life is a journey in quest of self-identity or emancipation from the

miseries of life, which gets reflected in his characters. Narayan's characters are the true children of Malgudi. He presents a considerable section of Indian society striving to live its daily life in definite historical situation. He portrays a variety of characters covering the whole span of life. His vision is essentially moral, for the problems he sets himself to resolve in his novel are largely ethical. His fiction presents some kind of transcendental wisdom and it is widely accepted notion that his writing is mild and pleasant. Narayan through his works conveys the cultural nuances of India to both Indians and Western readers.

R.K. Narayan's discovery of Indian mind with all its comic undertone and ironical approach is an authentic account of the way of life of a people having a rich tradition of mythology and religion but fallen into superstition, prone to believe in the supernatural interference in day-to-day life. His writing is lucid yet predictable in pattern, its chief characteristic being modest which works excellently at reflecting any ultimate seriousness of theme and purpose that may be attributed to his text. K. R. S. Iyengar in the book *Indian Writing in English* remarks about Narayan's artistic excellence as,

He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instruments, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection.

There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself.(47)

Narayan exposes the ills of the society and probes them too, and his aim is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make the readers realize the social evils and ills. He is a

merchant of human metaphors and an artist with milk of human kindness flowing full in his heart. His fiction in its totality is an extensive metaphor on man at the centre of society.

The portrayal of the image of women in Indian English Literature is based on the ancient Indian culture. The status of women in the Indian culture is highly respected from the Vedic times. The Upanishads emphasise that men and women are equal participants of knowledge. In India, a 'woman' is considered to be the torch bearer of life and she is presented as 'Shakthi' who is worshipped even in Indian mythology. It is believed that God resides in the place where a woman is worshipped. This vision of women reflects the rich cultural heritage of India. From the ancient times women are highly esteemed for the roles played by them in the family as well as in the society.

The woman characters in the novels of Narayan uphold the Indian tradition and they are a role model for the future generation of women. Narayan has also portrayed Western women characters in his novels who either adapt themselves to the Indian tradition and its way of living or they attempt to change the people according to the western way of life. When the characters try to move the people from Indian tradition, conflict arises and eventually Narayan ends up proving that Indian tradition is the best as it contains values and gives a purposeful meaning to life.

Though women have been highly esteemed, the society as a whole was a patriarchal society and so women are to be dependent on the men throughout their lives. Gender roles are determined not by sexual characteristics but by culture which has its roots in the patriarchy. Thus, a woman is expected to be an obedient daughter, faithful

wife and devoted mother. Indian religion considers womanhood equal to divinity and women enjoy a position of respect and reverence.

Discrimination against women in the male dominated society in all walks of life doesnot allow them to play their role effectively. But in India men and women enjoy equal rights and privileges in the society. Education in a woman's life is a key that has made a significant impact in the society because of which the voices of women are heard in every strata of the society. Education has made women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers. It has made women to build new social order. The Educational system is the institution which counter acts the deep foundations of inequality of the sexes that are built in the minds of men and women through the socialisation process. It must make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to replace the traditional values system, based on inequality, by the new value system which accepts equality of the sexes.

In a patriarchal society, religion condemns women to slavery from their birth. Society has restricted the development of a woman's personality. A man tries to suppress a woman's talents. It is a pity that the society does not realise that it is not a woman alone, but the entire human race that will suffer on account of oppression of women. Women are steeped in ignorance. Women have to cultivate a rational outlook, to ascent to the height of knowledge and will.

Women are the ones who dedicate their life to superstition, blind faith, traditional ideas and customs for the prosperity of their family and the society. Their freedom is negated in the name of religion, honour, family welfare and social prestige. They are pushed into a situation where they are made to give up their freedom willingly. A

woman's actions and activities are circumscribed by certain restriction and prohibitions. Women are the ones who are capable of doing outstanding acts or exhibit extraordinary intelligence for which she is praised of having 'superhuman powers'.

The novels of R.K. Narayan offer an interesting and fascinating study of women. Narayan has dealt with the position of and role of women in family and society. He has painted multiple facets of a woman's personality in his novels. His women characters exhibit characteristic attitude to life, arising out of certain deeply cherished Indian social values. He gives supreme importance to chastity in marital relations. He seems to be against pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, as the traditional Indian society does not accept these ideas.

The novelist grasps the psychological essence of his women characters. He has explored and analysed the emotional world of women with admirable insight. He understands the sufferings and inner conflict of women. His women characters struggle to free themselves from the traditional roles imposed on them by society and family but ultimately they show their faith in traditional family values. He portrays the sufferings of South Indian middle class housewives who find themselves confined to the cramped environment of unhappy married life that imposes on them the demands of being obedient and submissive.

The protagonist of the novel *The Guide* is Raju. He belongs to a middle-class family and after the death of his father it becomes a prime duty that Raju has to take care of his family financially. Raju's other is a traditional Indian woman who takes care of him after her husband's death and she is a positive woman in the novel who loves everyone. Raju takes up the job as a guide to the railway tourists as he is always

fascinated by train travels. He is popularly known by the tourists as 'Railway Raju'. In his journey as a guide, he meets a couple, Marco and Rosie and finds that Marco is a man who is interested in acrobatics and Rosie is interested in dance. Rosie is married to Marco not because they love each other but because of his social status as she belongs to a lower caste. The marital life of Marco and Rosie is not successful because Marco is more concerned about the passions in his life as he is a very honest scholar and does not show much love and care towards his wife. He also hates his wife as a dancer and he looks down upon her as she is not as educated as Marco. At a point in life Rosie leaves her husband and attains a great recognition as a dancer. She becomes a woman of independent mind and thinking. When Raju comes to know that Rosie has left her husband, he develops love towards her and later on when they join together, Raju's interest in Rosie is reduced just to the material comforts. She is a successful money-making dancer and Raju is a man whose desires are materialistic sees Rosie as a money generating object. He even goes to the extent of committing forgery to have the money of Rosie and is sent to jail. These acts of Raju push Rosie to even more grief and she leaves to live as an independent woman.

The novel *The Vendor of Sweets* deals with the life of a sweet vendor Jagan, who is a successful business owner. His only hope of living is for his son Mali, who does not have any affection for his father. He goes to America by abandoning his studies at his native Malgudi to become a writer. He is of the idea that he can live a luxurious life by following the western way of living. He plans to establish a business in Malgudi and so returns to his native with a girl named Grace, with the idea of marrying her. When Grace comes to Mali's house, she takes up the role of an ideal wife and a dutiful daughter-in-

law without the sacred marital knot. Grace perfectly accustoms herself to the Indian orthodox way of living and Jagan comes in terms to accept Grace, a western born girl as his daughter-in-law but there is a shock that awaitshim. When Jagan comes to know that Mali and Grace are not connected by the sacred marital knot, Jagan is pushed to anxiety that his son has gone against the traditions and customs of his native culture.

The novel *The Painter of Signs* is about the life of a sign-board painter named Raman who is from an orthodox family. He resides with his aunt, as he has lost his parents when he was still a young child. Raman is appreciated for the work of painting sign boards for Daisy, who is in charge of the Family Planning Mission. She is a social worker, who propagates about the family planning, but her ideas is not much heard by the people in the village as family planning is something against their customs and tradition. Raman develops love towards Daisy in the course of time but does not express his feelings to her. Daisy, though she likes to marry Raman, insists in living relationship which is not an accepted norm of living in his culture. She also feels that she will get trapped in marital life which will be an hindrance to do her social works.

Birth of a child brings happiness in the life of a woman and she is the one who is bestowed with the blessing of giving life to a new human being. Daisy, being a woman does not want to have an identity as an ideal wife and mother, instead she wants to create identity for herself by going against the norms of the traditional womanhood. She wants to be a modern woman but that does not give her a successful identity as she is looked down upon in the society as a child-killer when she propagates about family planning. Though her mission is life is about serving the society, the idea of family planning makes

her to be seen as an alien woman who does not have a tender heart and her social service does not bear any fruitful impact on the society.

Narayan has portrayed meek and submissive women in the character of Margayya's wife, Meena in the novel *The Financial Expert* and Savitri in the novel *The Dark Room*. He has created vibrant and radical characters like Grace, Daisy and Rosie in his novels *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs*, *The Guide* respectively. These heroines are not the models whose experiences are meant to be emulated. Shanta Krishnaswamy in the book *Glimpses of Women in India*, states about the heroines in the novels of R.K. Narayan that,

She is unique in that she is able to cast aside all culturally imposed feelings of guilt and shame on womanhood and sex. Narayan, however, in depriving her of personal fulfilment in marriage and domesticity, warns us about the excesses of rampant feminism which would lead to a destructive and deathlike androgynous blurring of the two sexes. (49)

The study of the early and later novels of R.K. Narayan shows that women are educated and coming out of their traditional domestic roles. These women are conscious of their individuality and career. From the silently suffering house wife Savitri (*The Dark Room*) to a vivacious exuberantly youthful dancer Rosie (*The Guide*), to Bharathi, a true follower of Gandhiji (*Waiting for Mahatma*), to Daisy, a population control officer in *The Painter of Signs*, show the rise of individuality in women.

The women characters like Savitri (*The Dark Room*) and Susila (*The English Teacher*) are traditional, obedient, loving, gentle, modest and loyal to their husbands. They regard their husbands to be their god. They never question the command of their

husbands, whether it is right or wrong. They know only to obey and they think that in the welfare of their husbands lies their salvation. They are expert managers of household affairs and as they grow old, they become more independent and assertive and Raju's mother in *The Guide* is one such female character. On the other hand some women characters are unconventional, unorthodox and to some extent modernized. They are beautiful and fascinating and they do not care for the traditional norms of virtue, chastity and loyalty. Rosie in *The Guide* and Rangi in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* are representatives of unconventional women characters.

The aim of the thesis is to show how women characters are depicted in the novels of R.K. Narayan. The title of the thesis is "Portrayal of Women Characters in R.K. Narayan's Select Works". Chapter I 'Introduction' give an insight into Indian Writing in English and Indian English Fiction – an overview, the life and works of R.K. Narayan and about the role of women in Indian culture. Chapter II entitled 'Rosie: The Dancer' expresses the life of Rosie who is a public dancer. As she is from a low caste she is married to a man because of his social status but her marriage life is unsuccessful. She gains reputation as a public stage dancer and creates an identity for herself in the society. Chapter III entitled 'Grace: A Woman of Indian Culture' deals with the life of the western born Grace who adapts herself to the Indian culture which gives her a new hope and teaches her about the true meaning of life. Chapter IV entitled 'Daisy: The Social Worker' portrays the life of Daisy as a woman who wants to create an identity as a 'modern woman'; born and brought up in Indian culture her acts are such that she does everything by going against the norms and customs of the native culture. Chapter V 'Conclusion' deals with how women are cherished for the multiple roles played by them

in the family as well as in the society. India is a country that gives respect to its women as the country itself is called *Mathrubhumi* which means 'Motherland'.

The delineation of women characters in the novels of R. K. Narayan present a great portrait-gallery of women. Though all the women characters belong to the same imaginary town Malgudi, but they are different from each other. All the women characters are different individuals with different merits and demerits of their own. The women characters differ among themselves in terms of thoughts, beliefs, habits, upbringing, ambitions and conduct. Narayan has depicted both traditional and modern women characters in his novels. The inter-weaving of this diversity makes the novels a complex work of art and thereby the writer has reflected the different aspects of human nature and human life.

*Chapter-II*  
*Rosie: The Dancer*

## Chapter-II

### Rosie: The Dancer

The novel *The Guide* (1958) revolves around the life of the protagonist, Raju. He resides with his mother at his native, Malgudi. He is popularly known as 'Railway Raju' because he serves as a tourist guide to the people who visit Malgudi as a tourist place. He has a business partner named Gaffur, because he is a taxi driver and the amount paid by the tourists is shared equally between them. The role of Raju's mother is that of a conventional Indian woman. She is highly orthodox, a loving wife and a caring mother in the family. After the death of her husband, she single-handedly raises Raju. She raises her child teaching him all the richness and culture of the Indian tradition.

Raju's mother is not happy with her son taking up the role of a tourist guide. She fears that her son will not continue the business left by her husband and look after the shop at the railway station in Malgudi. She feels that her son will violate the business and will not be successful in life. She is worried that her son's life will not be successful as a tourist guide. But Raju does not listen to the words of his mother. He has started showing less interest in the business and fails to maintain proper records of the shop but is very sincere in his job as a guide. He feels proud of his job as guide as he says that, "I learned while I taught and earned while I learned, and the whole thing has been most enjoyable" (65-66).

The life of Raju takes a turn when he meets the couple Marco and Rosie who comes to Malgudi as tourists. Raju becomes the guide to this couple. Marco is an explorer and his visit to Malgudi is regarding his research work that he is pursuing. Rosie represents a modern woman in a conventional Indian society who strives to be an

independent woman in the society. Though her name 'Rosie' may not sound Indian but, she is from an Indian family who wears saree and has long hair. She is a *Bharat Natyam* artist, belonging to a *devdhashi* family. Her mother and grandmother are street dancing artists. She is also a well-educated girl who has completed her post-graduation in Economics. She has a passion for the art of dancing and wishes to become a universally recognized *Bharat Natyam* artist.

Rosie does not belong to a rich family and marries Marco because of his rich status and is bound to him by the marital knot. She is not able to showcase her dancing talent and become a successful dancer because her husband does not approve her as a dancing artist. She is not able to convince her husband and being a married woman it is the duty of a wife to abide to the words of her husband. She performs her duty as a loyal wife and accompanies her husband to all the places wherever he visits regarding his research work.

The marriage life of Rosie is not a happy one because her husband does not show any care towards his wife as he is a sincere and hardworking researcher. Being a woman, Rosie expects her husband to be supportive and encouraging but her expectations are not meted out by her husband. When they visit Malgudi, Raju falls in love with Rosie at the first sight in spite of being known that she is a married girl. Rosie also develops a kind of liking towards Raju when he starts to compliment her with his pleasing words as, "Because life is so blank without your presence"(75). Raju's love for Rosie is intense and he even changes his life style to please Rosie as she is a modern woman. This shows how the love for a woman blinds a man.

On his journey with the couple, Raju makes use of the time he gets to spend with Rosie. He develops conversations to know about Rosie and he finds out that the marital knot of the couple is not successful. He finds that, Rosie is not happy with her husband because he is always immersed in his work and does not spend time with his beloved wife. Raju's tries to make use of this opportunity to make Rosie fall for him. His pleasing words do have an effect on Rosie. This happens because she does not receive the right kind of love and care from her husband. Raju's character is taking a turn because of his lust for Rosie.

The presence of Rosie in Raju's life brings in a detachment in the mother-son relationship. Raju has totally forgotten about his mother and also about the business of his shop in the railway station. He has failed to keep account of his shop and he does not know about the profit or loss in his business. He has become a man of love and has forgotten to fulfill his duties as a son and the bread earner of the family. When his mother questions him of his activities he argues against his mother. Raju's mother feels that her son has become a self-centered person who is concerned about only his happiness and not that of his mother.

The visit to Malgudi brings in a friction between the couple as Marco and Rosie have started to quarrel with each other because Rosie complains that Marco is not caring for her. After a month of the visit to Malgudi, Marco abandons Rosie and she is left on her own with no one to take care of her. She comes to Raju's house like a refugee and seeks help from Raju. Raju questions her in surprise asking her, "Rosie why didn't you say you were coming? Come in, come in. Why stand there?" (145). He introduces Rosie to his mother and tells her that she has been left by her husband.

Raju's mother is not happy to see Rosie at her door step asking for help because she does not like her act of leaving her husband. She is even more annoyed when she comes to know that she is a dancer. She knows that Rosie is an educated woman and so makes her remark,

Good, good, brave girl. Then you lack nothing in the world. You are not like us uneducated women. You will get on anywhere. You can ask for your railway ticket, call a policeman if somebody worries you, and keep your money. What are you going to do? Are you going to join government service and earn? Brave girl. (147).

In the ancient times, women have been denied education and instead have been married off in the early ages. Raju's mother is astonished to know that a girl who belongs to street dancer's family is educated.

The concern of Raju's mother towards Rosie is like a mother caring for her daughter. She says to Raju that she cannot stay long in that house because Rosie is an unknown person to the family as she is not their blood relation, as that, "This cannot go on long, Raju – you must put an end to it" (158). The words of Raju's mother expresses the fear in her that in Indian culture one cannot have an unknown woman stay in a family where the son is yet to be married. Raju's mother is totally unhappy and she cannot accept Raju and Rosie going out in the morning and returning home untimely at night. The words of Raju's mother express her anger towards their act as she says that, "You can't have a dancing-girl in your house. Every morning with all that dancing and everything going on! What is the home coming to?" (158). Raju's mother is not able to make Raju realize that what he is doing with Rosie is not right and that his life will be a mess if he

goes after the dancing woman; but Raju is not ready to lend ears to the words of his mother. Raju hides the fact from his mother that Rosie is a married girl.

There happens a fight between Raju and his mother when his mother comes to know that Rosie is a married woman. In Indian culture whatever happens or whatever difficulties comes in life a woman is not supposed to leave and move out from her husband. His mother pounces in anger as she remarks that, “Why can’t she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these modern girls imagine. No husband worth the name was ever conquered by powder and lipstick alone. You know, your father more than once...” (160).

Being an orthodox woman Raju’s mother is very unhappy about the acts of her son and feels bad for giving birth to a childlike Raju. When Raju is not ready to send Rosie out of the house, his mother decides to leave the house with her brother to her mother’s home.

Raja’s is annoyed with Raju’s decision of living with Rosie. He is frustrated and shouts at Rosie as,

You are not of our family? Are you of our clan? ... No. Are you of our caste? No. Our class? No. Do we know you? No. Do you belong to this house? No. In that case, why are you here? After all, you are a dancing-girl. We do not admit them in our families understand? You seem to be a good, sensible girl. You should not walk into a house like this and stay on. Did anyone invite you? No. Even if you are invited you should go on staying where you belong and not too long here. You cannot stay like this in our house. It is very inconvenient... (174-175)

The words of the uncle express that he strictly follows his orthodox culture. In India, the caste system plays a major role and Raju's uncle is not able to tolerate the presence of Rosie who is from a different class and caste. He explodes at Raju for allowing Rosie to stay in a purely conventional family, making it inconvenient for them to live in that house. The anger of Raju's uncle further intensifies when Rosie addresses Raju's mother as her mother. Raju's uncle laments in anger saying that, "She has reached the stage of addressing you as Mother. Next she will be calling me Uncle-in-law, I suppose" (179). He shouts at his sister for letting Rosie to take liberty in calling her as Mother and trying to develop a relationship with the family.

Raju fights with his uncle and his mother saying, "Mother, she is not going anywhere" (177). He is very stubborn in his decision of not sending Rosie out of his house. Raju has not raised his voice and fought with his mother or elders in the family, but now because he wants to live with the girl of his choice he does everything by shouting at his elders. This act of Raju, makes his mother frustrated and angry with him at the same time. In India, parents love their children to a great extent but the children fail to reciprocate the love and care shown by their parents and children in return.

Rosie is very upset with Raju's mother's decision in leaving her house. She feels that these confusions and chaos within the family members are because of her presence. She pleads with Raju's mother not to leave the house as she says to Raju that, "Your mother needn't quit really. This house is of hers for her lifetime... She would have stayed on till the end..." (179). Raju does not have any feelings for the decision taken by his mother to leave the house but Rosie feels sad.

In the meantime, Raju makes arrangements in his home by making ready one part of the house for dance practice by Rosie. Raju also hides another fact from his mother that his shop in the railway station has been closed because he has not paid the dues for the shop over a period of time. When Raju has made himself busy spending his time for Rosie he is not in thought that he owns a shop. A person named Sait comes home to collect the due money from Raju. But, Raju is not able to repay his dues and so he mortgages his house to Sait. Sait is not willing to accept the house for the repay of the dues and he angrily says to Raju that, “How can I blame a woman for what you are? ... Why don’t you look after tourists again?” (167).

In the confused state in Raju’s life, he has made a plan to earn money by using the art of Rosie by making her a dancer and booking her for programmes, functions and festivals conducted in and around South India. Raju plans that with a little amount of money to start with his new plan, he can become rich and he views Rosie as a golden duck who will fetch him golden eggs and make him richer day by day. He says about Rosie that, “She is a gold-mine... If I had money to start her with – oh!” (167). He views the art of dancing as a business and comments that, “You know *Bharat Natyam* is really the greatest art business today. There is such a craze for it that people will pay anything to see the best...” (168). He asks Gaffur to help him with some capital money and for that Gaffur replies that, “Send her away and try to get back to ordinary, real life. Don’t talk all this art business. It’s not for us...” (168). But Raju again fails to lend ears to the words of Gaffur. Whenever Gaffur advises and tries to save Raju, he escapes from his advice and this becomes a major reason for his downfall towards the end.

Raju changes the name of Rosie to 'Nalini' because she will be a public personality now. He feels that name will not suit her profession in the Indian society and so changes her name. After marriage, in Indian culture, the new bride is given a new name by her husband's family in order to make her a daughter to the in-law's family. This is a kind gesture to make sure that the bride is not made to feel an outsider instead a daughter to the new family. Raju's act of name change shows that he wants to be authoritative over Rosie.

Raju's plan of making Rosie a successful dancer and earning money from her performances has fetched Raju a great status in the society. After his mother has gone out of the house and when Raju earns lump sum amount of money, he repays his old debts and sells his ancestral house without the concern of his mother and buys a new house like a bungalow. He does all these only because of the love he has for Rosie. The ideas of Raju make Rosie a renowned dancer and she becomes popular quickly. Raju takes full authority of her program schedules and he sets a rule that Rosie has to start her performance on the stage only when Raju gives his permission and she has to stop her dance once he signals that it is enough for that show. This shows how by his male dominance, he has made Rosie a golden puppet to gain financial freedom.

Though Raju and Rosie have started living together, they do not get married. They live in the same house, travel together and do other things together. This kind of living is not an acceptable form of living in Indian culture. But as Raju has become a rich man, there is no one to question him. His mother has also left him because she knows that by living with her son, the life of sanctity will be lost and she will be made answerable to the wrong doings of her son.

Though, Marco has been a closed chapter in the life of Rosie, she has not got rid of the thoughts and times spent with him. Raju feels that Rosie has totally forgotten about Marco and he is happy that Rosie is only for him. But there is a shock that waits for Raju, when he receives the book published by Marco and in that book Marco has complimented Raju in his book titled *The Cultural History of South India*, stating that, “the author is obliged to acknowledge his debt to Sri. Raju of Malgudi Railway Station for his help” (204). Raju tries to hide this book from Rosie and tells his secretary to maintain this secret but unfortunately he tells about the book to Rosie.

Rosie quarrels with Raju for not informing him of the book he received which was written by Marco, her husband. Rosie is so happy for Marco and she tells Raju that, “Even now I’ll probably be bored. But anything happening to him is bound to interest me. I’m pleased he has made a name now, although I don’t know what it is all about” (207). Raju is not able to accept the words of Rosie and he feels irritated when Rosie praises her husband to a great extent. This attitude of Rosie shows that she has a quality of a good Indian wife who is bound to the happiness for the success of her husband. Though there may be many misunderstandings between husband and wife, and they may not even live together, but the fact that Marco has gained recognition and has become successful has made Rosie feel proud of her husband. Rosie praises Marco when Raju speaks ill of him and for which she says that, “I do, and I deserved nothing less. Any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done” (208). Raju is taken aback by these words of Rosie.

After the argument between Raju and Rosie, when they reach a concluding point, another great problem arises. Marco sends a legal document to Rosie for her signature in order to release some old jewels of hers that has been mortgaged by both Rosie and Marco. Raju sees that document along with lawyer's letter in a parcel that lay on his desk. Raju reads the letter, and comes to know that the box belongs to Rosie and it holds jewelry worth many thousands.

Raju cleverly plans to take hold of the box and so hides everything from Rosie and signs the document instead of Rosie. He involves himself in an act of forgery, forges the signature of Rosie which he is quite used to by signing contracts for dance events instead of Rosie. He sends the documents back by post and all these are done secretly. The greed for money and status in life has made Raju a bad personality but in the society he is not projected so. The acts of Raju show that people who are arrogant and greedy towards wealth in life will go to any extent in life to capture that wealth. There is a proverb which states that, 'Health is Wealth' but for Raju it is the other way round as he thinks that 'Wealth is Health'.

Marco receives the post which Raju has sent and he finds out that Raju has forged the signature of Rosie. He files a complaint against Raju in the police station and Raju is caught for his illegal acts. Rosie is shocked to hear this act of Raju and she loses the trust she has had for him all these days. Raju is put to a shameful situation in his life by his own misbehaviours. Raju who puffs with pride when he became a rich and successful man is now in danger because of the greed for wealth and his pride. Raju is left abandoned because there is no one to save him at this moment. The love he has had for Rosie has also seems to be a false one because he has used her only for her money and

nothing else. Rosie has entered the life of Raju as a refugee but he has totally deceived her for his personal happiness and financial freedom. The life in prison is waiting for Raju to teach him a good lesson in life.

The prison life gives Raju a chance to realize the mistakes that he has done by going after a woman for wealth and status in life. He regrets for not taking care of his mother and leaving her abandoned to move out the house to live in her mother's home. He feels that if he would have lend ears to the words of his mother and his friend Gaffur who have always been thinking of the good welfare of his life, he would not have been in prison and his life would not have become shameful. But Raju utilizes the life of prison to transform himself into a good human being.

After spending several months in jail as a punishment to his act of forgery, Raju comes out of the life of in the prison. He is ashamed to live in the village because he feels that people might talk about his ill-acts and about his life in prison. In order to make himself free from these worrying situations, he moves out of the village and lives in an isolated place near a forest temple. In this place, Raju gets acquainted with a person named Velan, who views Raju to be a saint or fortune-teller. Velan is so engrossed that he becomes a blind and ardent follower of Raju. The words of Raju becomes *mantra* to Velan and he follows whatever advise is given to him by Raju as a solution to his problems.

The minor woman character in this novel is Velan's sister whose life becomes prosperous because of the guidance of Raju who makes her understand about life. From that moment on, the people who reside in the village near the forest temple believe that Raju is be a saint and a fortune-teller and by serving him, he will bring all the goodness

to the people in the society. In India, it is believed that the saints or fortune-tellers bring hope in the people's life by the astronomical predictions and that gives a ray of hope to the people. Velan prostrates himself before Raju as he is the guru to him and for which Raju says, "I'll not permit anyone to do this. God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us if we attempt to usurp His rights" (17). Though Raju is not a saint or a fortune-teller, he is not able to convince the people that he is only a normal person and he does not hold any supernatural powers as people think of him.

Raju spends his life reciting sermons and giving discourses on God to the people of the village. In the space that is available in the temple, he asks the school master of the village to make use of the place as a classroom to the children in the village to provide them with education. He also involves himself teaching the children about the stories from the great Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Raju has been in a tragic state of life because of his pride and now he is sanctifying his life by involving himself in spirituality and teaching people about philosophies of life from the epics.

The character of Raju's mother in this novel is portrayed as the conventional woman who strictly follows the traditional culture. She fulfills her duty as a good wife and loving mother but she is not recognized for her role played in the family. Her son Raju, leaves her abandoned because of the love he has had for Rosie. 'Mother Worship' is an ancient practice in India and children are bound to the words of their mother from birth to death. But in this novel, Raju does not pay heed to the words of his mother and faces the downfall of his life for that. She even tells Raju that a life of a woman will be sanctified only if she lives with her husband as she says that, "Why can't she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these modern

girls imagine...”(160). Raju is put into a situation where he has to decide whether to send Rosie or his mother out of the house but he remains silent and because of that his mother decides to move out of the house. Being a son, he should have stood by his mother’s side and should have taken care of her but his love for Rosie makes him go numb to the love of his mother.

The act of Raju, leaving his mother abandoned is not an appreciable one. It is the responsibility of the children to take care of their parents but in the modern society the children leave their parents at old-age homes or do not take care of them properly because of their self-centered attitude. Raju’s mother decides to leave the house because her son is not in a position to listen to her or take care of her needs in life. She thinks that by living away from her son, she can lead a sanctified life. The plight of Raju’s mother intensifies when he decides to live with Rosie and so takes that decision to go to her mother’s home.

In Indian culture, living together policy is not at all accepted in the society because people think that the life of a woman is to be worshipped for her womanhood and only the marital bond only will fulfill that. Marital bond brings sacredness in the life of woman but living out of marital bond is considered ill against the society in Indian culture. When Raju’s mother tries to tell him that living with a married woman is a curse but he does away with the words of his mother and because of which he suffers in life by going to prison.

Rosie’s character is portrayed that of an educated, married modern woman who is passionate about the art of dancing. She is married to Marco because of her low financial and family background and remains faithful to her husband until she develops a

relationship with Raju. Though she likes Raju, she does not indulge in him with the marital knot. Later on, when she finds that Raju has cheated her of her wealth feels bad to leave him. Though the connection between Marco and Rosie as husband and wife is broken, she does not forget the fact that she is a wife to Marco.

When Rosie hears about the success of her husband in publishing his research as a book, she feels immense happiness that her husband has attained world-wide recognition. Though Rosie has become a universally recognized dancing artist because of the initiatives of Raju, she is ready to give up her position if her husband is ready to accept her once again as his wife. She regrets for cheating upon her husband and at heart, she still remains a faithful Indian wife to her husband, Marco. She feels that “As a good man he may not mind, but is it not a wife’s duty to guard and help her husband, whatever the way in which he deals with her?” (124). Rosie even undergoes name change from ‘Rosie’ to ‘Nalini’ by Raju. The changing of name by Raju shows his power over Rosie but though he does everything to be superior to her she does not accept to live with him by breaking her marital knot with her husband. This quality of Rosie also expresses that she is loyal to the sacred knot tied by her husband.

Though Rosie is educated and lives a modern life, she does not give up her identity as an Indian woman. She always wears saree, plaits her long hair with flowers and holds all the marriage makers like *mangal sutra* and red-*kumkum* in her forehead. The name Rosie may indicate that she is a foreign-girl and may not suit the names of Indian women but her attire portrays that she belongs to the culture of India. When she spends her time in Raju’s house with his mother, even then she behaves like a good

Indian daughter by addressing Raju's mother as she addresses her own mother. These are some qualities of Rosie that express that she is a woman of Indian culture.

Rosie and Raju's mother stand in contrast to each other because Raju's mother is a conventional, uneducated woman whereas Rosie is a modern, educated girl. The greatness of Raju's mother lies in the fact that she takes care of Rosie as her own daughter and fears for the safety of her life when she comes to know that she has been abandoned by her husband. She even teaches Rosie about the house-hold chores and advises her about the role of a woman in binding a family. Rosie is indebted to the words of Raju's mother that she follows whatever has been said and views Raju's mother as her own mother. Raju has failed to recognize his own mother but Rosie who is not of blood relation to Raju's family holds great respect and love for his mother. This shows that in Indian culture, elders hold great respect in the family as well as in the society.

In this novel, Narayan has presented the importance of art and rich heritage in India. The portrayal of the importance of *Bharat Natyam* is because it is oldest classical form of dance in India. It has been performed in the temples during festive occasions and it is custom followed from the ancient times. This shows that the novelist has tried to present his country that it is rich in art. The portrayal of places like 'Mempi Hills', the cave-paintings, temples and forests show that India is a land of rich heritage and is also known for its architecture. To quote the words of William Walsh,

Narayan's fastidious art, blending exact realism, poetic myth, sadness, perception and gaiety, is without precedent in literature in English...It is but unsentimental, mocking but uncynical, profoundly Indian but

distinctively individual. It fascinates by reason of the authenticity and attractiveness of its Indian setting. (169)

This shows that Narayan has portrayed exotic picture of India.

In this novel, Narayan has highlighted upon the themes of mother-son relationship between Raju and his mother, marital relationship between Marco and Rosie, living together relationship between Raju and Rosie, the life of salvation, and the life in prison which has led to the life as a saint in the case of Raju. The guide Raju who was in a position to lead people in the right path has ended his life in a tragic way because of his self-decision by choosing the wrong path in life because of the greed for money and his love for Rosie.

Narayan grasps the psychological essence of his women characters. He has a deep understanding of human psychology and this provides his woman characters a reality and vitality. He has explored and analyzed the emotional world of women with admirable insight. He understands the sufferings and the inner conflict of women. His women characters struggle to free themselves from the traditional roles imposed on them by society and family but ultimately show their faith in traditional family values.

A woman plays a major role in Indian culture. The writer does not encourage the Western views of women in Indian culture, although he registers changes in the fabric of the society. He often questions the thwarting taboos and orthodox beliefs that reduce a woman to a plaything of a man, but as an upholder of traditional values, he develops the movements within the traditions of Malgudi society. Women play traditional role and try to seek their identity by upholding their tradition. A woman is respected and sanctified in

the Indian society because she plays an exemplary role by not giving up her traditional identity in the family as well as in the society.

***Chapter-III***

***Grace: A Woman of Indian Culture***

## Chapter-III

### Grace: A Woman of Indian Culture

The novel *The Vendor of Sweets* deals with the life of the protagonist Jagan, who is a sixty year old widower, a successful sweet vendor and a Gandhian follower. After the death of his wife, his son, Mali who is still a small child is very much in need of his mother. The son grows without the pampering of his mother and the father cannot match the position of a 'mother' in a person's life. As Mali grows, he believes that his father is responsible for the death of his mother because his father failed to give treatment as he believed in natural cure. This develops an impenetrable barrier between the father and son, as Mali strongly believes that it is his father who is the main reason for his mother's death.

There develops a kind of silence between the father and the son and they seldom talk to each other or share their feelings. Even after living together for twenty years, Jagan knows very little about his son and this gap is due to the absence of the mother in the family. Silence reigns the house where the two of them live. The presence of a woman in a family is more important because she is the one who binds the family together.

Jagan feels that his son should not feel the solitude or being left alone because of the death of his mother. He tries in every possible way to build a healthy relationship with his son but his son distances himself from his father. Jagan involves himself passionately to fulfill the desires of his son; but the lack of communication between them which is developed because of the death of the mother, fails to build a good father-son relationship. Mali spends most of the time outside the house or he keeps himself shut in

his room when he is at home. Jagan and Mali share their feelings with their cousin, who is a mutual friend to both of them.

There arises a conflict between the father and the son because Mali reveals that he is going to discontinue his studies to go abroad. Mali's decision is communicated to Jagan through his cousin who says that, "New things are coming your way; your son wants to go to America. Didn't I hint to you long ago that it was coming?" (47). This decision of Mali puts Jagan in panic and says, "Strange notions these boys get nowadays!" (48).

Jagan feels weird of Mali's idea of pursuing studies abroad and he says, "But I am surprised that he still thinks he can learn the art of writing from an American school!" (50).

Jagan is neither able to change the mind of his son and his son is not in a position to lend his ears to the thoughts of his father. Mali asks his father for money to go abroad but Jagan does not provide him with the money. So Mali steals the money from his father and sets everything required to make his move to America. The absence of the mother in this family is a great negative factor because the son goes to the extent of stealing from his own house to fulfill his desires. Though Jagan is not happy for the decision of his son, but when he comes to know from his cousin that his son has reached America, he puffs with pride telling everyone that, "My son is in America..." (52).

The life of Mali in America changes him in all walks of his life where he goes to the extent that his actions are totally against the norms of his tradition and culture. From his letters from America, Jagan comes to know that he has started eating non-vegetarian food especially beef. Mali's letter says that, "I've taken to eating beef; and I don't think

I'm any the worse for it. Steak is something quite tasty and juicy..." (57-58). Jagan feels very bad for the actions of his son and he realizes the absence of his wife in molding his son according to the traditional culture. This shows how the absence of a woman in the family destroys the future generation and the role of the father cannot fully bring in the control of their children as a mother does.

Mali informs his father of his return from America. On the day that Mali arrives, Jagan and his cousin who go to receive him is shocked to see Mali being accompanied by a foreign girl along with him. After reaching home, Mali introduces the girl named Grace, as his wife saying, "This is Grace. We are married. Grace, my dad" (59). This makes Jagan feel bad about the behaviour of his son. At this point of time, he really imagines the plight that if his wife would have been alive, his son would not have taken such decisions in life. The act of Mali makes Jagan feel that the mother's absence in his life has made him take decisions of his own without even asking the consent of the father who is alive only for the life of his son.

The role of parents in selecting a life partner is essential in India, but after going to America Mali has totally ignored his own culture. Jagan is reminded of his childhood and how honest and obedient he was to his parents. He feels that his mother has shaped him in such a way that she has taught him the values of life. But in the case of his son, the place of the mother is a great void which cannot be replaced by Jagan and he feels that this is the reason that his son has moved out of the native culture in all walks of his life. The acts of Mali cannot be blamed to a greater extent because a mother is the teacher to their children and Mali does not know who a mother is because he has lost his mother as soon as he is born.

Jagan is worried about the decision of his son regarding the selection of his life partner because the society will start questioning the father for the acts of his son. He feels shy and wonders how he will be able to convince the people who will question him because of the acts of his son. Each and every moment of his life, Jagan misses the presence of his wife who is the pillar of his family and regrets that such situations could have been avoided had his wife been alive. Jagan has begun to avoid people.

In India, marriages are done with the consent of the parents and elders in a family. Arranged marriage systems are the accepted norm of marriage in India. Marriages in India take place only with the approval of the elders in the family. This is the custom followed from the ancient times. In India, the marital knot connects not only two persons but the two families. Marriage is a one-time event which is glorified and sanctified with social approval. In the case of Mali, the decision of him in choosing Grace as his life-partner is not acceptable because it is not decided by the elders of his family and not even his parents. If his mother would have been alive, she would have directed him in the correct path but Jagan cannot support or oppose the decision of his son, because he always maintains a distance with his father to the matters regarding his future.

In India, the character, the caste and the appearance of the bride and bride groom, their financial status are all taken into consideration during the marriage. Grace reveals to Jagan that initially she was afraid of coming to India as she has heard about the caste system in the country. It is because of Mali's encouragement and support that she accepted to come to India. Jagan replies to her that, "Well, we don't believe in caste nowadays, you know, Gandhi fought for its abolition" (68).

Mali and Grace are not married officially but they take up the policy of living together. Jagan is not aware of the fact that Mali and Grace are not married. The father and the village people mistake Grace to be Mali's wife as they live together. Jagan cannot accept how a young woman and a man can live together without getting married because it is totally against the tradition of his culture. He feels that the reputation of his family is lost, as he says, "But I feel it is my home that is being dirtied. Mali is my son. Grace is not my daughter-in-law" (142). He cannot digest the fact that his son has contaminated the sanctity of his house and has disrespected the traditional ethos of his family. He feels that he wants to move out of the house for some time and spend his days meditating in the forest as an act of purification for the mistakes done by his son.

Jagan's marriage has been arranged by his father and in those times the bride and groom used to meet only at the time of marriage. Only after the marriage, the bride and groom face each other, but living-together relationship is practiced between Mali and Grace, which is considered a sin in India. The purity of woman is very important in Indian culture, because a woman is the replica of Goddesses. In India, before the marriage, astrology plays a vital role in the matching of the horoscope of the boy and girl. As Mali has become a westerner, he has not thought marriage to be a sacred one.

Jagan feels worried that his son has done wrong by choosing a foreign girl and not following the ancient customs. The other thing that brings anxiety to him is that, Grace is a foreign girl and it is a mistake in the native tradition to marry a girl from another country. Jagan has had the thought that he would bring a homely, traditional daughter-in-law so that the traditions and customs of the culture will continue and it will be passed on

to the forthcoming generations, but his son has totally disappointed his thoughts by bringing a foreign girl as a daughter-in-law to a strict orthodox family.

Grace tries to communicate with Jagan to build a relationship in the family but Jagan hesitates to talk to her. Jagan wants to know about Grace, her identity and her place of birth as he enquires to her that, “It is a custom in this country to inquire where one was born and bred and who is who generally, and then we go onto other things” (66). Grace is puzzled as to why Jagan asks her such questions and for which she replies, “Only the passport and income-tax people ask for such details in other countries. However, since I am also an Indian now, I might as well get used to things, and tell you something...” (67).

Though Grace is a foreign born girl, she is aware of the traditions and customs of Indian culture. She is ready to be a good wife to Mali according to the traditional norms of the Indian society. She tries to adapt herself to the Indian circumstances. Grace accepts to be the daughter-in-law of Jagan and calls him as her father. He is impressed by the way Grace readily accepts and adapts to the family and her nature makes Jagan to view her to be his daughter. She starts to take up the charge of the daughter-in-law as she starts cooking in the kitchen and by doing all the household chores.

Jagan goes to the kitchen and finds Grace working there and she tells him that, “Father, you think I mind it? I don’t. I must not forget that I’m an Indian daughter-in-law” (63). Jagan has seen his wife only in the kitchen, doing all the house-hold chores and taking care of him and his son. Jagan feels uncomfortable seeing Grace work for him in his house because he is habituated to do all his works by himself after the death of his wife. His wife usually cleans the kitchen, gets the puja room ready for his prayers and

when he finishes his prayers, the breakfast is kept ready for him to eat. After the death of his wife, there is no one like her to take care of him and the family. The traditional man Jagan finds it uncomfortable to adapt and accept a foreign girl as his daughter-in-law, even though she seems to adapt to the family style of living. Jagan is happy that Grace is trying to fill the place of his wife in the family.

Grace cleans the house and room of Jagan where she sets the bed for Jagan and makes it comfortable for him to rest whenever he is in his room. Grace tells Jagan that, "...This is the loveliest house I have ever seen in my life" (64). Jagan notices that Grace has pinned jasmine flowers in her hair. He tells Grace to remove the flower from her hair as it seemed ridiculous to him. She replies to Jagan that, "As it's a Friday, I have remembered my duties as a Hindu wife. I have also washed the doorsteps and decorated the threshold with white flour..." (90). By seeing Grace, Jagan is reminded of his marriage days and of his wife, who used to wash the doorsteps of the house daily in the mornings and decorate the house during festive days and seasons.

The actions of Grace show that she has transformed into an Indian traditional wife. Jagan is pleased by her actions and remarks that, "It's been a long time since anyone attended to these things in this house..." (90). There are lots of changes that take place inside the house of Jagan. He notices that the house is newly designed with curtains, flower vases, wall paintings and the bamboo chairs in the house are covered with coloured cushions. Though Jagan feels happy that Grace has made some changes in the house, he has a feel that his house has lost some of the ancient values it had.

Jagan being a father enquires about Mali's studies and his doings abroad. Grace tells Jagan, "Still I say that Mali should have told you. Suppose I ask him to speak about

it; it is pretty important, you know. Unless he talks to you, what can he plan, really?"

(65). Grace is surprised that Mali has not informed his father neither about his studies nor about his life plans. Jagan is dazed to hear from Grace that it is she who has written all the letters from America in the name of Mali. Narayan highlights the fact that Mali has no concern for his father. Mali is not concerned about the anxiety of his father and the letters are just a formality to him but for Jagan it is something emotional. Jagan has preserved Mali's letters as a treasure but Mali fails to consider the feelings of his father.

Grace understands the importance of the parents and feels that the children should keep their parents informed of their life plans. She admires how the parents in India show their love to their children. Mali being an Indian child fails to understand the feelings of the parents whereas, Grace being a foreign girl feels disappointed of Mali, not informing the father about his future plans. Grace understands the love and affection of the parents and the importance of family relationships from Jagan who is always concerned only about the life of his son.

The reason why Mali brings home Grace along with him is that she has to work for him to build a business by establishing a manufacturing company that produces story-writing machines. Mali has some contacts with western delegates and he wants to set up his own industry to make money and lead a luxurious life. Mali is now in need of his father's help for the capital money to be invested for his business. He uses Grace as his key to initiate his plans to his father and get money from him.

Jagan plans to hand over the sweet-business to his son so that he can lead a retired life peacefully. Mali has other plans in his life and he does not want to take the job of his father. In India, mostly father's business is passed on to the next generation to maintain

the reputation of the family and the traditional business. The passing on of the father's business does not happen in this novel, because Mali has no idea of continuing his father's business. Mali, who plans to break the tradition, is not stable in deciding as to what business he is going to take up or how to start a new one. Jagan though uneducated has made a tremendous success as a sweet vendor. Mali is educated only because of the arduous work and the love that Jagan has had for him.

Jagan has played the role of both the father and the mother in Mali's life. He has fulfilled the needs and desires of his son by sending him to America and to pursue his studies as he wished. Jagan has so much belief that his son will become a great business man like him by developing their sweet shop. Mali's reaction to his father's views shows that, he is to shatter the dreams of his father. Mali sends a message through his cousin to Jagan that he is about to start a company of his own. The cousin says that, "He wants to manufacture story-writing machines" (76). Grace also reveals that Mali is in need of Jagan's money to start the business.

Jagan is not ready to help his son or provide him with whatever amount is required to start his business. Jagan feels that, as a father he has fulfilled all the desires of his son. It is now time for his son to reciprocate his respect and care to his father by working hard. It is his duty that he must ensure a peaceful retired life to his father. Mali does not have any plans as to how to make his father's life happy instead thinks how he can make his own life happy from his father's hard earned money.

Jagan reveals to Mali that, if he takes the responsibility of running his sweet shop, he is ready to give money as he says, "Son, I'll leave you in charge of the shop, it's yours. Take it" (129). Mali does not have any idea to take up his father's business

because he values that business to be a cheap one as he says that, “You expect me to do that? I have better plans than to be a vendor of sweetmeats” (92). Mali forgets the fact that the several thousand dollars which is spent for his studies is through the earnings of his father from the sweet shop, but he is not ready to run the sweet business which supported him for his education abroad.

Mali is stubborn in his decision of starting up his own story-writing manufacturing machine company. He says, “I have learnt valuable things in the United States at a cost of several thousand dollars. Why can’t our country make use of my knowledge? And I... I... can’t...” (129). Jagan is mollified and says to his cousin that, “I was held up by Mali, poor boy. I have to give him the time he needs now and then; otherwise there is bound to be a lot of misunderstanding. His ideas turn on big figures nowadays. He seems to have learnt many things from America” (83). Jagan realises that his son will not be able to succeed without his help.

Mali starts pressuring his father to provide him with the money to start the business. Jagan is irritated to hear Mali always speak about the money and the business. He tells his son that, “Yes, but I naturally thought you would tell me again before actually going to the press, you know” (91). Jagan expects his son to discuss about his business plans because expectation is natural since it is he who is to spend his money for the business as the capital investment. Mali shouts in anger as, “I really don’t know what you mean. You expect everything to be said ten times; no wonder nothing gets done in this country” (91).

Grace too involves in the discussion and tells Jagan how magazines are printed with the help of machines in America. Grace explains to Jagan, as to how the machine

will work. She tries hard to please him so that he will extend his help in the business by providing money, which Mali requires to start the business. Grace does so, only because of the pressure that Mali imposes on her to convince his father regarding financial help. Grace asks Jagan of his opinion about the story-writing machine, for which Jagan replies, “Grace, do you know that our ancestors never even wrote the epics? They composed the epics and recited them, and the great books lived thus from generation to generation in the breath of the people” (80). It is only through these scriptures that life messages are passed on from generation to generation for a prosperous life. From the words of Jagan, Grace comes to know how the art of original writing is glorified and is considered the footprints for life in Indian tradition.

Jagan feels annoyed when it comes to using his money that he has saved by shedding his blood and sweat in his life-time. The amount of happiness that is gained through demanding work cannot be explained in words but it can be felt only through experience. Mali has easily made plans to spend his father’s money for his new business. Jagan’s heart pounds with anxiety because he feels that the investment that his son is going to make will not fetch him good returns in this country. Jagan strongly tells his decision that he is not going to lend his money for his son’s business because he feels that it not going to be used for a worthy cause.

Jagan has had the thought that his son will continue his business after coming from America and he will develop the ancestral sweet business with his new innovative ideas and they can reach an elevated position in their life. The dream castles built by Jagan and the belief that he has had for his son is totally shattered into pieces by his son.

Mali tries to break the tradition of passing on the business from one generation to another because he feels that his idea of business is superior to his ancestors.

The house of Jagan has turned upside down. The quite joy of anticipation that has been filled in the ancient house of Jagan is totally lost now. Mali is not bothered about the ancient culture. Jagan finds that Grace is not to be found in the house in the recent days. Mali informs his father that, Grace has left the house because Mali cannot establish the company without his father's money and so she does not have any work now. Jagan who is with the impression that Grace is his daughter-in-law tells Mali that, "But a wife must be with her husband, whatever happens" (131). Mali tells his father, "That was in your day..." (131).

Grace moves out of the house because she knows that Mali cannot survive on his own without the help of his father. She even does not like the acts of Mali when he starts insulting his father and demands him money for leading a luxurious life. Though at first, Jagan once refuses to accept her, he feels sad that Grace has left the house forever. When Grace attempts to transform herself to the Indian culture, he happily accepts her and that shows the value and nature of the traditional people in India. In the Indian culture, after marriage whatever difficulties come in life it should be faced by both the husband and wife and act of a wife, leaving the home is considered as something against the culture of India.

When Grace has left the home, Jagan is reminded of his life with his wife. Jagan's wife has lived with him from the darker side of his life, till he has reached a successful position by doing well in his business. His wife has been his back-bone all through his life and she has served him till her last breath. In Mali's case, Grace leaves him because

she knows that Mali cannot fulfill her needs in life because he does not have financial background. Mali shows no concern for Grace, which means he has viewed her only as an assistant, who will help him with his business and not as a life partner for life. Jagan takes care of his wife and respected her till her death, but Mali is totally the opposite of his father. Mali fails to think that Grace has tried to serve him as a wife after coming to India. He brings Grace to India, promising her that he would marry her after starting a new company. He fails to keep up his promise and also lets her go out of the house when he knows that he is not capable of protecting her by leading a good life with her.

After Grace moves out of the house, Mali's faults are endless. He is drunk while driving and is caught by the police who puts him in jail for 'drunk and drive'. Jagan comes to know from his cousin that his son is in jail. He is so much frustrated about his son's fault and he angrily says to his cousin, "Ah, foreign collaborators! Impressive word. No one in India knows about business. Always foreign! Well, accepted, sir. But the bottle? How did it get in?" (187). Consuming alcohol is a punishable mistake as it is considered a crime. Jagan is worried that his son goes to the extent of committing crimes which are legally punished. Jagan is neither be happy nor can he put up with his son who goes against law. He is in a condition that he should face all the difficulties that are created in life by his son. Mali's arrival from America has created many problems in the family as well as in the society. The peace that Jagan has had in his life is been totally disturbed by his son. The love, affection and anxiety that Jagan has had for Mali's life has turned into frustration towards him because of his misbehaviours.

Jagan feels that life in prison will teach his son some lessons as he says, "A dose of prison life is not a bad thing. It may be just what he needs now" (191). If the condition

of the child's life goes beyond the limit where the parents cannot make them bring back to the right track, then the child should suffer in life by attaining punishment to realize the significance of life. The punishment that Mali is made to undergo is to make him realize the importance of his father's words and feelings. Though Jagan directs Mali in all the right paths in his life, he creates lots of chaos in the name of bringing changes in the society.

Though Jagan is very angry and frustrated he does not fail to try for a bail with the help of his cousin. When the cousin informs him that he visited Mali in the prison, Jagan asks him, "Did you give him anything to eat? He must have been hungry" (186). The true love that a father has for his son is brought out by these words of Jagan. Though Jagan is very upset with his son's actions in life, he does not give up the love and affection he has for his son. It is disheartening to think that Mali does not reciprocate the same to his father. This attitude of Mali has made him unsuccessful because he has failed to recognise the hardships and sacrifice that his father has made for him, by sending him to pursue his education abroad and giving him a life of freedom.

Mali has not used the freedom given to him by his father in the right way. He takes advantage of the freedom given to him and has pursued unsuccessful path in his life, not considering whether it is right or wrong. Jagan is obvious that, once his son comes out of the prison, he will hand over the duties of the sweet shop to his son. Mali has no other choice other than taking up his father's business. Mali did consider his father's business as a cheap one, but if he does not take it up, he will be a loser.

Mali, who gets educated in a foreign country, creates lots of problems and anxiety to his father because of his attempt to bring in the western culture into the traditional

society. The idea of change may be good but they fail to think that it provokes lot of delinquent situations in life where at some point of time the relationships within a family itself get shattered. Mali has devastated the dreams of his father and has deserted the life of Grace.

Though Grace is out of the house, Jagan does not fail to think of her and tells his cousin, “If you meet her, tell her that if she ever wants to go back to her country, I will buy her a ticket. It’s a duty we owe her. She was a good girl” (191). Jagan shows the greatness in him and though Grace is not his daughter-in-law, he is worried of her life. His conscience pricks as he feels that it is because of his son that the girl has been made to move out of her native land, but Jagan does not fail to respect and treat her well, which shows that, in Indian culture nobody is treated with disrespect. Though a traditional man like Jagan cannot change himself to other cultures, he does not disregard the culture of Grace.

In the novel *The Vendor of Sweets*, Narayan supplies the concrete exactness of Indian life at a time and a place. The business of making sweets, the patterned habit of earning a living, the sights, sounds and especially the smells of a small Indian town, the colourful rituals of hobbies, of courtship, marriage and death, are luminously present in the novel. Jagan has been a householder and a man of affairs. The novel presents him at a turning point in his life where he is entering a new janma.

One day, Jagan meets Grace and he is shocked to hear from her that, “... we are not married. He promised he’d marry me in the Indian way, because I liked, and brought me here” (139). Grace is very eager to be married in a different culture by following new customs but her life is ruined by Mali because of his ‘becoming rich’ mentality. The life

of a girl is very important and Jagan regrets for the mistake done to a girl by his son. Mali does not even care about the feelings of Grace. Grace's dream of marrying in Indian ways is also crushed by Mali.

Speaking of Grace, the unmarried, casteless foreign girl, Jagan pronounces the final judgment that, 'She was a good girl.' One may wonder in what sense she is good, and to recall in answer to it, her attempt to be a good Hindu wife is the concern and the solicitude that she has for Jagan. Grace has made Jagan feel that she is eligible to replace the position of his wife to take care of the family. Grace has proved that, being a foreign girl, she can change herself to the new culture in order to respect the elders who are faithful followers of their ancient culture.

The two major characters of the novel, Jagan and Mali not only tend to become creatures of fantasy but also assume a symbolic character. Both the characters seem to be alienated beings. Mali's alienation is cultural. The rebelliousness already present in him is heightened by his stay in America. To this is added self-centredness, money mindedness and a get-rich-quick mentality. He not only begins to deride everything Indian, except Indian money, but also seems to become an embodiment of all that is anti-Indian in all his attitude and values. His stay with Grace symbolises cultural topsy-turvy, while his over-reaching project of producing story-writing machine on a mass scale, is an illustration of the absurd materialistic ambitions and the impersonal mechanizations of the West, which seek to capture and control the creative freedom to produce the works of art instead of allowing them to emerge freely and naturally.

In the novel, *The Vendor of Sweets* Narayan continues to explore the unorthodox male-female relationships, and brings the themes of religious faith, Hinduism and

Gandhian ideology to finality. Though in post-independent India, the Malgudi ethos changes dramatically in this novel, where the old norms based on religious faith and Gandhian philosophy recede into the background in society. Westernization, modernity and technological advances generate new codes of conduct and new lifestyles in the characters of Mali and Grace the foreigner, who experience a sense of dislocation as they struggle continually to establish a proper self-identity, within a changing society and culture. Though people change to modernity, they must return or revisit the traditional path to attain success in life.

*Chapter-IV*

*Daisy: The Social Worker*

## Chapter-IV

### Daisy: The Social Worker

The novel *The Painter of Signs* is about the protagonist Raman, who resides in his ancestral home near the banks of a river in Malgudi with his childless aunt, Laxmi. Ever since Raman became an orphan, his aunt takes care of him and pampers him from then on. The aunt-nephew relationship is such that, the aunt looks after Raman with devoted affection and love and she does not expect anything in return from him. Their relationship is a legacy to their traditional joint-family setup. His aunt is a very conventional woman, who has directed her life and attitude to conventional Hindu mores, religious duties, prescriptions of conduct and at the end of her life she wants her ashes to be dissolved in the Holy river, Ganga.

Raman's profession is sign-painting. He is a devoted hard-worker. The first sign-painting job is assigned to him by a newly graduate-lawyer who resides in his neighbourhood. The day the job is assigned to him is an auspicious day as the astrologer claims it to be; so Raman goes to buy a new board. Whenever a new work order is to be taken or any sanctified festival is to be held, it is a traditional custom in India to discuss and take the suggestion of an astrologer, so that nothing bad happens. But, Raman does not wish to take the decisions of elders or astrologers, because he is determined to establish the 'Age of Reason' in the world as he says, "I want a rational explanation for everything. Otherwise my mind refuses to accept any statement. I'm a rationalist, and I don't do anything unless I see some logic in it" (5). On the other hand, the lawyer is an orthodox person and he believes so much in astrology as he says, "I go by what my

astrologer says. Saves a lot of trouble that way” (6). This shows how astrology plays a major role in the Indian culture.

There exists a difference in the habits, practice and behaviour of the modern generation in India when compared to the old people who enjoy the traditional methods. This exists even at Raman’s home because his aunt after the lunch time gives sermons to the neighbourhood. People come to listen to his aunt’s discourse on gods, to swallow herbal remedy for diseases prepared by his aunt and to listen to her prophecies from the horoscope. As Raman does not like this, he keeps himself shut in his room by reading books. He does not stop his aunt from doing whatever she wishes.

Raman’s aunt Laxmi, narrates her life story to him and asks him to write that story as a book because he will become a successful writer by writing it. She says that, “...but if you write my story, you may throw away your brush forever. So many persons come and listen to my narrative every day!” (18). She narrates her life story as,

I was one of the several children in the house. It’s not like these days when people are afraid of children. The house was full in those days. But nothing bothered anyone in those days – as long as there was a well-stocked granary and the bronze rice-pot was on the boil. My father was a priest and officiated at birthdays, funerals, and all kinds of religious functions and brought home his fee in the form of rice and vegetables and coconut and sugar-cane. Occasionally he also brought in a cow, which, as you know, when gifted to brahmin helps a dead man’s soul to ford a difficult river in the next world. (19)

Raman is unable to believe the words of his aunt and questions her about the possibility to manage a family with so many children. Laxmi replies Raman that, “Don’t ask me all that. That’s what our shastras say, and we don’t have to question it. It is duty of the living to help the dead with proper rituals” (19). Raman is irritated about his aunt’s beliefs and wonders how ‘Age of Reason’ can be established if people blindly follow the culture in all walks of their life like his aunt.

Raman’s aunt leads a life full of duties and responsibilities being born as a woman. She tells Raman that when a girl baby is born, there comes a time when she has to leave her father’s house once she gets married. To quote her words, “One cannot forever flourish and fatten in a father’s house, especially one born woman” (20). The words of Laxmi express that how in Indian culture a woman’s life is always to hold responsibilities in the family as well as the society and she should fulfill the duties that is expected from her. Raman learns the role of a ‘woman’ in the family as well as the society from his aunt.

Raman is assigned the job of sign-painting for a Family Planning Centre. Daisy, the social worker, who is in charge of the Family Planning Centre, gives the job to Raman. He wants to make the sign-board for her work place with the message in the board as, “Family Planning Centre. Free Advice” (30). Raman is confined to paint about the slogans and pictures relating to family planning and population control. Raman is very shy to talk to other women in Malgudi, except for his aunt, because she is a motherly character in his life. But Raman readily accepts Daisy’s order because he is attracted by her in his first sight and she is the one and only woman customer to him. He is also surprised by her name as he says that, “Daisy! What a name for someone who looked so

very Indian, traditional, and gentle!” (31). But, the appearance and demeanour of Daisy belie her true character in this novel. Raman leaves his aunt abandoned at home and wanders from village to village painting sign boards as instructed by Daisy.

The rare attributes of Daisy has aroused ambivalent feelings in Raman because he has no little or no contact with such women. The life-style of Raman is confined to a fixed orbit: working on sign-boards at home, attending to business matters in town and meeting his malefriends at The Boardless Hotel. Though he is born and brought up in an orthodox family, he has bad habit that whenever he sees a woman he is struck with sexual thoughts. This is the only inferior quality in him and these distracting thoughts are a painful experience in his life. This is the reason he avoids his contact with women as he is afraid that he will end up doing harm to a woman’s life. He has made decision in life that, “He had chosen to remain a bachelor” (45) so that he can avoid women in his life. Despite his resolution, or more accurately, because of his decision, he is unable to handle a woman’s sexuality.

In the beginning of the novel there is an incident where Raman sees an evocative scene in which a girl is taking bath in the river near his house and he rationalizes his acts as, “Just my principle, and disciplining my mind against sex - obsessive sex” (16). There is a kind of fear in him where he feels that he may succumb to the undesirable thoughts because of his undisciplined mind. Because of the obsessive thoughts he has for woman and sex, he makes his mind to shield himself from the temptation he has for Daisy. He decides not to talk to any woman unless it is regarding his business. He is reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi that, “Walk with your eyes fixed on your toes during the day, and on the stars at night” (40).

The atrocities that happen to women in the society are many. There are many factors like the influence of social media, advancement in technology and in some case it is psychological disorders. In the ancient days, men were disciplined though there had been chances of committing mistakes. The men were adhered to the words of their parents and elders and the parents also did not have the necessity to talk or teach about such subjects to their children. But in the case of Raman, his aunt has imbibed all the good qualities in him because she is his sole protector of life from childhood and has taught how to lead a disciplined life. She has had the notion that no one from her family will ever create any harm to the women in the society. Another factor is that, Raman is devoid of his parents care right from childhood who are the real teachers for a child's life to teach what is good and what is bad.

Daisy asks Raman to accompany on her tour around the country village to disseminate the family planning knowledge among the village people. Raman has to paint sign boards containing messages related to family planning at the village's vantage points. It is a very busy schedule for Raman. Raman feels embarrassed when Daisy talks about family planning to the village people because in villages no one dares to take such measures. Family Planning is not practiced in India from the ancient times. In those days, the house used to be filled with children and as aunt Laxmi has told earlier a family seems good only if it is crowded with children. But Daisy is here to create more space and to reduce population explosion in the country by advocating people about family planning.

When a child is born in a family, it is considered a gift and a symbol of success as it becomes the new heir to the family. The advocacy is considered to be against the

traditional customs and culture by the people of the village who are the audience to Daisy's speech. Daisy is shocked to hear that there is a temple in the village where, if barren women come and pray for three days, they will conceive in the next thirty days.

Raman tells his aunt on his decision to marry Daisy that, "... Well, if you don't know it already, I am marrying a girl – you saw her the otherday here" (146). The aunt is shocked to hear him and replies, "That girl! What is her caste? Who is she?" (146).

Raman is not at all worried of the caste and religion as he is a man who is for the 'Age of Reason.' Caste and religion plays a vital role in matching the bride and bridegrooms, because marriages are held only within the same caste and same religion.

Raman starts to imagine of how to live a happy life with Daisy. He even plans that after he gets married to Daisy, he can send away his aunt from the house so that there will be no problems between him and Daisy. He desperately wants to establish union with her, at least verbally. Raman's aunt has taken care of him in a great manner ever since his childhood, but his idea of sending her away out of the house is not an appreciable one. This idea of Raman shows that the modern generations feel that their elders are barriers to their married life.

The aunt wants to know about Daisy and tells Raman that, "I have been hearing all sorts of stories about the girl. Did she run away from her parents?" (153). Daisy reveals to Raman about her childhood days and he comes to know that she hails from an orthodox joint family. She has moved out of the house when her parents and family members have decided on a marriage proposal for her, and she reveals that, "... I had damaged the family reputation" (133). Raman is puzzled to hear the story of Daisy and he does not know what to make of her life.

The aunt is annoyed with Raman and she decides to go on a pilgrimage to Badrinath, Haridwar and the Himalayas, with her neighbourhood friends. She has some savings in her post office account for her journey and for the remaining expenses she asks Raman. Raman wants to know about her return and for which his aunt replies,

It is like this my boy. At my age, with few years left, people do not generally want to return. A visit to Kasi is the end. I may live for ten days or ten years or twenty, it is immaterial how long one lives after this stage. It is the ambition of everyone of my generation to conclude this existence at Kasi, to be finally dissolved in the Ganges. That is the most auspicious end to one's life. (152)

The aunt is worried of Raman's choice as she asks him, "Isn't she a Christian or something – a name which is..." (147). Raman in reply to his aunt tells, "Who is she immaterial. She is going to be my wife, that's all need to be known. Nothing more than the name of a flower, that's all. Daisy is a flower. It's a flower grown in America, England and so forth" (147). Inter-caste or inter-religious marriage is considered as something against the traditional customs and culture. The aunt in surprise asks Raman, "A Christian! How can you bring in a Christian..." (147). Raman loses his patience with his aunt and says that, "I only know that her name is Daisy. I have not thought of asking whether she is a Christian or what. Never occurred to me to ask, that's all. I'll ask you not to bother about it. She is a human being just like you or me, that's all. I like her very much. I am sure you will also love her. Please be nice to us" (147).

Daisy's job is a challenging one because she has to educate the urban as well as the rural people about family planning. She has a single-minded purpose that her intense

social commitment is to tackle the family planning programme. From Daisy's actions he comes to know that she is a multifaceted personality. She is very keen about her career which is portrayed in the novel as,

At every place, she had the same routine. She had perfect timetable between her arrival and departure. Settled down at the local school or on the veranda of a hospitable home or hut or in the shade of a tree. Sent Raman out to select a wall for their inscription, met the local official or the village headman and with his help collected data and statistics, called for the register of births and deaths, and took notes in her diary. Summoned an audience of men, women, and children under the big tree, and spoke to them quietly, firmly, with conviction. Explained to them the process of birth and its control. (59)

Daisy, being a woman is not shy or hesitant to talk about sex education to the large crowd of village people comprising men, women and children. She explains all the aspects of family planning and the people wonder and are surprised about how a woman gives speech on such subjects very boldly. From her speech Raman thinks Daisy to be a unusual and unnatural woman as he feels that, "...she was not really a lover of children and viewed them perhaps as symbols of defeat for her cause. She never patted a child or tried any baby talk" (59). Daisy views the small children in the crowd to be 'symbols of defeat for her cause' and this expresses the deficiency of womanhood in her personality; because whenever a woman sees a small child the sense of motherhood only will be aroused in her.

The family planning mission that Daisy has taken up speaks a lot about her quality as a woman who dislikes children because it will lead to population explosion. The greatest gift bestowed to women kind is that, they have the ability to give birth to a new living being in the universe. Many women in the universe suffer because they are not able to produce an infant and they feel bad that their generation will not grow. Daisy does not think about such qualities of women and she has no grudges or feelings towards it. Raman being an orphan builds a dream castle of bearing children after marrying Daisy; but it is shattered by her idea of family planning.

The attitude of Daisy towards children is to implement birth control. She does not to find a way for their living and feels that she is working for a national as she says that, “We are all working for a cause that’s of national importance...” (79). Raman thinks that Daisy knows that the village is crowded with children and so she can create an awareness to the village people to provide their children with good education, in order to make them lead a successful life though she has taken up family planning as her mission. Daisy teaches the children some good mannerisms, at the time of leaving the village. She teaches the children that, “Correct posture is important. Children must be taught all this early in life” (79). Though Raman is fascinated by her attitude and concern for the future generation kids he feels that she is trying to break the traditional notion of child-birth by propagating about family planning.

Daisy strictly wants to implement the family planning and she works like an army major, planning logistical strategies with military-like precision for what appears to be an impending combat situation:

I am planning now. You will have to come round later and finish the work as quickly as possible. When the message has sunk into their minds, I'll come again with a medical team, who'll do vasectomies and also fit up contraceptive devices. I am preparing them for it in this visit. (60)

Raman considers the ideas of Daisy who wants to deliver the messages about family planning, sex education and birth-control to the people in the villages of Malgudi as absurd. He is hardly invested with the status of a companion or the privileges of a friend. This indifference from Daisy makes him morbid and vengeful. The more he thinks of her and her aloofness, the more strongly he is possessed with salacious thoughts of molesting her. Raman looks resigned to his fate. There is a saying that, "Love is blind" (63). The love that Raman has for Daisy has made him blind and he fails to fulfill his responsibilities and the duties he has to accomplish. Love is a factor that binds as well as blinds a person and the love that Raman has for Daisy is aroused just because of infatuation.

Raman who is determined to establish the 'Age of Reason' is now tied to the bounds of love for Daisy. On their journey, Raman asks Daisy certain things to clear about his doubts on sex related issues and for which Daisy replies, "That's the reason I feel strongly that sex-education must be given from the kindergarten stage. Otherwise so much ignorance and taboo – it's led to the present state of affairs. I hope at least know that it's the easiest thing to produce a baby –" (86).

In the olden days, children of both the gender played with each other in innocence. All the children have spent their childhood days happily and equality has been restored in them. The parents or the elders in the olden times did not find any situation to

teach about sex-education to their children because they had the belief in them that their children are innocent, good human beings. In the present times, because of the influence of technology the children get to know about more things than their elders and a need has been raised where the parents are put into a situation where they are made to educate their children about sex-education in their early stage of life. Nowadays, it is difficult to find children getting together with each other and playing in the grounds happily, because the society has become strange where the parents are afraid of letting their kids out of the home even to play.

Raman's authority is diminished because Daisy ushers on family planning for rapid social change and her responsibilities also increase to a great extent. She is totally opposite to that of a conventional woman. She dispenses with her work briskly and resolutely. She is fanatic for her cause and cannot tolerate anything contrary to it. In an instance when Daisy addresses the people about family planning, Raman compares her to queen Victoria and Rani Jhansi, because she appears like a despotic queen who tries to saw off the organ of generation to stop the population growth. Population growth is taken by Daisy as a personal defeat and she never pats a child because she feels that children are a burden to the society. In her campaign she follows a steel-framed itinerary travelling by all available means and many a times on foot with all her luggage strapped to her back.

Some of the flaws in Daisy's character are revealed when, naively, she disregards moral, ethical and religious considerations which bring about an impact on family planning programmes. The mammoth task which confronts a social revolutionary like Daisy is also evident when she counters orthodoxy: "Some elders of the village asked,

“God gives us children. How can we reject His gift?” She did not contradict the thesis outright, but gently presented a scientific, rational point of view” (68).

The village people are irritated to hear Daisy’s advocacy about birth control and an old man from the crowd raises questions against Daisy as, “Our shastras say that the more children in a home, the more blessed it becomes. Do you want to dispute it?” (70). Daisy is not able to answer the question posed by the old man because she very well knows that family planning and birth control are not practiced in conventional Malgudi village. It is against the customs of the Indian culture. Daisy’s views are a disagreement to that of the shastras. The people in the village cannot accept the words of Daisy because they have not faced any difficulty in raising as many children in the family because they view their children as the gifts of God.

The priest of the village is also a part of the audience and he too is angered by the words of Daisy and joins the old man and raises questions against her. He pounces in anger as he asks that, “And yet this woman has been propagating sinful practices. I heard a report of what she said. Did she not refer to the priest of the temple? I am the priest. Has this woman anything to say now?” (71). The priest says the he can also predict the past of Daisy but Raman is afraid that this will end up in chaos and so asks Daisy to move out to avoid fight. But the priest does not leave out and he predicts Daisy’s past accurately as he tells everyone from the color of the dress she wears and so on. To quote his prediction,

It’s the colour of a particular kind of bell flower – not generally known.

It’s rare and special. So is your life. You ran away from home, without

telling anyone, when you were twelve years old. Your father and mother searched for you, poor things! After months, traced you. (72)

Daisy is shocked and shaken to hear the words of the priest. She is embarrassed and when people start questioning her, she is not able to face them or answer the questions of the priest. From the olden days it is a practice that the words and predictions of the priests, hermits and fortune tellers are guidance to lead a successful life and so people believed their words. Even today in the Indian society people believe the words of the priests and fortune tellers. Though Daisy does not have any such beliefs, she is not able to prove the prediction of the priest to be wrong.

Raman is stunned to hear about the greatness of the priest when he shares his experiences about his life in the cave temple. Raman wants to meet the priest to know more about Daisy. Though Raman wants to establish the 'Age of Reason' in Daisy's case, he wants to know the truth and he is ready to believe the words of the priest and his predictions. Raman does not like to hear the discourse of his aunt, but he is ready to lend his ears to the priest's discourse about Daisy because he loves her. The priest mistakes Daisy to be Raman's wife. Raman addresses the priest as 'an ancient rishi' (75). Raman who does not have any spiritual beliefs, goes into the temple and prays to the goddess as, "May Daisy be mine without further delay. I can't live without her" (77). The priest also mentions that a single flower fell from the goddess statue when Raman was praying, which is a promising sign for his prayers. This shows the self-centered nature of Raman, who is ready to believe in discourses and predictions of the priests or hermits; he is even ready to believe god, when it is related to his life. But on the other hand, when his aunt

used to tell him about such matters, in that situation he used to question against everything that his aunt tells even it is good and essential for his life.

Raman's image as a love-sick person is heightened on their return journey to Malgudi. Raman and Daisy go in a bullock cart to travel back to Malgudi as they did not get the bus to their return journey. When the cart-man sees Raman and Daisy, he is of the notion that they are married. The cart-man cannot see the couple quarreling as he says, "Come, come. This won't do. How can you get away from each other when God has put you in wedlock? Impossible. Where are your children? Quarrels and fights such as this are inevitable, and you should not make too much of it" (99). Though Raman feels happy inside to hear from the cart-man mentioning them as couple, he is not able to express his joy outwardly. He whispers: "Don't fear, it's only me, my sweetheart. Don't torment me" (93).

Daisy gets irritated when the cart-man calls them newly-weds. She angrily says, "We are not married. We are not husband and wife. He only works for me. I pay him his wages for working for me" (99). The words of Daisy show that she treats or thinks about Raman only as her servant and not as a lover. The act of Daisy makes the cart-man prostrate on the ground at the feet of Daisy and Raman feels very bad of Daisy's actions and tells her, "You should be ashamed of yourself. Such an elderly man to be driven to this. You should not put him to such a trial" (100).

No one will treat elders in this manner as Daisy did, even though there may be many reasons in their mind which is full of anger and frustration. The action of Daisy making an old man, prostrate before a lady of youthful age, has brought down the status of men in the society. Though there has been a fight for equality of men and women

in the society, no woman will feel that men should leave their dignity and bow before them on any circumstances.

Raman takes advantage of Daisy by calling her his wife and for which she threatens him, saying that, "Taking advantage! You will learn your lessons like others who have learnt their lessons. I'll see that you go to jail for this. I'll tell the police the first thing" (101). Raman feels dejected by these words of Daisy. Raman's voluntary involvement with Daisy has suppressed his genuine male instincts which are doomed to failure. Raman is afraid and fears that he will be punished by Daisy and so apologises to her as, "Please forget everything. I am sorry, perhaps I tried to joke and carried it too far" (102). Even in the present times, the youth commit mistakes and finally regret for their actions as Raman has done. Indians are reputed as they maintain good relationships and are genuine, but in the modern days, the young people dishonour the importance of love and relationship.

After the return to Malgudi, the people in the village start to comment on Raman as, "A sign-board painter, after all, should have known his place" (107). Raman feels sorry for all his actions and thoughts about Daisy. The people angrily remark,

After all, look at her job! She has no better business than enticing innocent fools like this Raman. Poor fellow. His elders such a respectable family. The old lady at home will kill herself now, I'm sure, for shame. All her life she has lived a religious life. Never missed a single evening's discourse at the temple. Such a person to face this disgrace! (108)

Raman's action has spoiled the reputation of his family. The aunt, who is innocent and always has a caring heart towards Raman, is made to look down, because of the infatuation and love that he has for a girl who considers him as her servant.

Raman and Daisy chooses the Gandharva type of marriage. Gandharva type of marriage is a westernized idea of living together without the traditional nuptial knot. Daisy says that, "We will begin to live under the same roof on any day we decide" (158). Daisy lays down two conditions for this marriage proposal, that is, "... they should have no children, and if by mischance one was born she would give the child away and keep herself free to pursue her social work" (158). Child bearing is the result of a fruitful marriage and a sign that a new generation is created for the family. Daisy is totally against the traditional values of life and Raman is in a dilemma as to sacrifice his marriage or his personal happiness.

Raman makes his home ready by bringing in numerous changes in his ancestral home to suit the needs of Daisy, but Daisy does not show any interest nor does she have a feeling that she is going to start a new life with Raman. She does not do any work at home but Raman does all the household chores and he cannot predict as to when she will be friendly. Like Indian woman worshipping her husband, he is ready to worship and follows her by assuring that, "I'll in no way interfere with you, live as you live, in the open or in a hut, walk barefoot in the forest paths, seek nothing, demand nothing, I will not mind any hardship if I can be with you" (178). The actions of Daisy show her arrogance and domination. In the house, both live separately and Daisy is always very busy with her social works.

Raman tries to establish a strong bond and relationship with Daisy because he feels that he will be able to transform her as an Indian wife or a woman. Daisy is totally against the idea of motherhood and womanhood because she feels that these things shackle her freedom of action. Despite Raman's pathetic and desperate appeal to her, she tells him clearly that, "Let us face the fact. Married life is not for me. I have not thought it over. It frightens me. I am not cut out for the life you imagine. I can't live except alone. It won't work" (179). Raman is abandoned by Daisy and he is not able to accept it. In the present scenario, the people who break their traditional norms are left abandoned in their life and they are in solitude where they are not able to move ahead in life.

Raman's aunt is a genuine and true character where she has established her own self-identity by not giving up her dignity and character in her life. She has lived a sanctified life by serving as a wife, aunt, care taker and a conventional woman in the family. She has not sacrificed any of the sacred values of life and has made her life pure by going on a pilgrimage and spending her last days of life spiritually. She does not even wait to see Raman marrying Daisy because she knows that he has rejected the sacredness and essence of marriage.

In the conservative and conventional milieu of Malgudi, Daisy is a contradictory character. She not only disturbs Raman's life, but also the serenity of Malgudi itself. There is no clear indication of her caste and background. She is educated and independent and lives all alone, something unthinkable in the Indian context where women do not step outside of the four walls of the house, unescorted. She looks down upon the conventional roles played by the Indian women, as a wife, mother and sister.

She evolves a new cultural pattern for herself which is totally against the traditional norms of women in Indian culture.

*Chapter-V*  
*Conclusion*

## **Chapter-V**

### **Conclusion**

The culture of India is woven with customs and traditions. Women play a major role in interweaving of customs and traditions because they play a major role in the society. They are the ones who teach the upcoming generations about their traditional culture. In Indian culture, Hinduism plays a major role and people are more orthodox when it comes to their customs and culture. Indians are proud of its culture. In this culture, elders are respected and treated with high-esteem. The people possess the quality of being honest and truthful in all walks of their life. Indian culture is has its origin right from the Vedic ages.

In the novels of R. K. Narayan, he portrays the rich Indian heritage drawing freely from culture, tradition, religion, moral and ethical codes of conduct, and his experiences of South Indian life. The imaginary town Malgudi presents an exotic picture of India and the Indianness in his writings which makes the readers empathise with his characters. Narayan explores various themes in his novels, which expresses his universal appeal in his writings. He emphasizes on the themes of marital, social and family relationships and presents how these relationships play a major role in the life of a person. Narayan's craftsmanship also enables him to interweave religious faith successfully with existential issues, such as man's search for self-identity within society and the cosmos.

Narayan in his novels portrays the inability of the conventional people in Malgudi to accustom them to acculturation and finding difficult to balance between conservative and modern life-style when Malgudi upgrades to technological and scientific advances. Raju's mother, Jegan and aunt Laxmi, the characters in the novel *The Guide*, *The Vendor*

*of Sweets and The Painter of Signs* respectively, are the upholders of orthodox customs and culture. When these characters are compelled to adjust themselves to modern life, they feel that the sanctity of their life will be lost and so they decide to spend their life in spirituality by moving out of that situation.

The character Jagan decides to live in the forest for the rest of his life by meditating; the aunt Laxmi decides to go on a pilgrimage and Raju's mother moves to her ancestral home and their acts express the traditional practices in India. This shows that the older generation are ardent and strict followers of their conventional culture and Narayan emphasizes the message that if the foot prints of the elders are followed, the life will be filled with happiness and purity. Indian culture is very traditional and Indians respect their culture and do not let it dilute at any situation.

The theme of marriage, religious faith and the conflict between orthodoxy and modernity are excellently handled by Narayan in his novels. His versatility of writing is investigated because of his skill in writing about the conventional and modern concepts of marriage, relationships, infidelity and extra-marital liaisons. He presents a kaleidoscopic view of Indian marriage. The marital relationships in the three novels *The Guide*, *The Vendor of Sweets* and *The Painter of Signs* are not according to the traditional norms of Indian marriage. In the novel *The Guide*, Raju and Rosie's relationship is an extra-marital affair, Mali and Grace in *The Vendor of Sweets* get into the living-together relationship without the traditional marital knot and Raman and Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* choose the 'Gandharva' type of marriage which is an unaccepted type of marriage in Indian culture.

The relationships between Raju and Rosie, Mali and Grace and Raman and Daisy are not successful and their relationship end in separation with each other because the relationship between them is against the customs and culture of the traditional Indian society. It is a custom in India that marriages are held with the consent and blessings of the elders in the family because it is a one-time life event that takes place in a grand manner in the Indian society. There are specific rites and rituals to be held in the event of marriage which are logical and have values behind it which helps to lead a happy life. As these norms are not followed by these three couples their relationship gets shattered in the end.

The children in all the three novels, Raju, Mali and Raman have conflict with their elders like mother, father, Jagan and aunt Laxmi, respectively, when it comes to their marital life. The elders are not able to accept the decision of their children because their decisions are against their native tradition and culture. The mother-son relationship between Raju and his mother in the novel, *The Guide* is strained because he is ready to send his mother out of the house for his happiness and for his love for Rosie. It is not a good gesture on the part of a son to send away his mother out of the house for the sake of living with his lady love. The father-son relationship between Jagan and Mali in the novel, *The Vendor of Sweets* is strained because the son adapts to modern ways of living because of his education abroad. He has totally transformed himself to a man of modernity forgetting about the norms of his native culture and also disrespects his father when he directs him in the right path in his life. The aunt-cousin relationship between Raman and Laxmi in the novel, *The Painter of Signs* is strained because Raman chooses Gandharva type of marriage to live with the woman he loves. The aunt who is strictly

orthodox cannot accept the acts of Raman and so decides to go on a pilgrimage to sanctify her life.

Raju becomes popular by establishing a name for him as 'Railway Raju'. His profession as a guide brings him tremendous success in life and his financial status also raises and he leads a happy successful life. The entry of Rosie in his life brings a turn and he spoils his reputation because of his love for her. The relationship that Raju develops with Rosie also ends in tragedy because of his greed for wealth as he plans to make money by using the art of Rosie's dancing to earn money. This shows that his love for Rosie is only for the money that is earned by her dancing and not because of true love towards her. Raju tries to be authoritative over Rosie and shows his male-dominance towards her but everything comes to an end because of his illegal act of forgery. Rosie though indulges in extra-marital relationship, does not forget about her husband and when Raju cheats upon her she tries to get back to her husband which expresses her quality of a loyal wife.

Mali plans to establish a company of manufacturing story-writing machines in Malgudi. His idea to bring in industrialization, which the father is not able to accept since he wants to establish the company in a land where cultivation is done and the livelihood of the people are disrupted as they are dependent on it. The idea of Mali is not get fulfilled because he is dependent on his father, to give him the money to build his company and his father rejects to give his hard-earned money. Finally, he has to look after his father's business because he does not have any other choice. This shows that, the young generation though get educated abroad are made to look after their father's business to maintain the reputation of the family. The modern generation tries to bring in

changes but they are made to realize the importance of their family values, and which makes them abide to it.

The aunt in the novel, *The Painter of Signs* takes Raman as an orphan child and takes care of him like her own son, provides him with good education, good life and sacrifices her whole life to look after him. Raman does not return the same, as his aunt has done for him. Raman's aunt decides to go on a pilgrimage because she cannot tolerate the loss of reputation of the family, if Raman marries Daisy. In the end, Raman regrets for choosing Daisy as his partner because she abandons him to fulfil her missions in life. Raman learns the importance of womanhood and motherhood only through his aunt and later feels sorry for disrespecting her for her values that she followed in life. Raman learns that, it is the traditional role of a woman that can bind the relationships of the family.

Raman tries to establish the 'Age of Reason' but he does not find his reasons to live a life of his own by not considering the values that his aunt tried to teach him. He lives a life of his own and finally is made to realize the values of his own customs and culture when he is made solitary by his own selection of living a fruitful life with Daisy. Raman does not have any spiritual and religious beliefs nor does he believe in horoscope but when it comes to his own life, especially in matters that he is interested in, he is ready to believe in horoscopes and fortune-tellers. This shows the self-centeredness of the modern generation who questions everything for finding reasons behind it.

The character Rosie in the novel, *The Guide* shows that she is a well-educated girl and a good dancing artist. She is forced to marry Marco because of her lower-class life and by marrying Marco she can lead a good life. The life of a girl is destined to marriage

in the Indian society but the reason for get Rosie married off cannot be accepted. Being an educated girl she could have chosen a career for herself and could have earned money for her living instead of the idea of marrying a man of status. She is a loyal and truthful wife to her husband. She fulfils her role as a responsible daughter and a dutiful wife. She achieves her passion for dance by becoming a universally recognised artist. The only mistake that she does is having an extra-marital affair with Raju, who makes her believe in him in order to the promise he makes to fulfil her dream of becoming a popular dancing artist. She regrets for indulging herself in extra-marital affair and tries to sanctify her life by again joining with her husband to serve him as his life thereafter.

The character of Grace in the novel, *The Vendor of Sweets* portrays how a foreign-born girl tries to adapt herself to the traditional Indian society. She learns the importance of the role of parents in a child's life through Jagan and she accepts him as her father because of his concern towards her. She has not experienced the pampering of her parents because in the West, when children attain a certain age, they are left to be independent in life. Grace acclimatises herself to the customs of an Indian family and plays her role as a good daughter-in-law in the house of Jagan. Because of Mali's self-centeredness and becoming rich mentality, Grace is pushed to move out of the house because he breaks his promise of marrying her. Jagan feels bad for the acts of his son for damaging a girl's life by abandoning and deserting her.

The character of Daisy in the novel *The Painter of Signs* shows that, being born as a child of an Indian joint-family, she is not ready to follow the customs of her own culture. When she propagates on family planning, she tries to build a notion that child bearing is not an essential part of life of a woman, which cannot be accepted by the

women of India. Indian women are proud to be mothers of many kids because they view their children as a blessing and the gift of god. When Raman proposes to Daisy for marriage she lays down the condition that she will not bear a child because she does not want to be bound in the ties of motherhood. Motherhood and Mother Worship are a great part of Indian culture and it is this status that sanctifies a woman. The attitude of Daisy shows that she is totally against the roles of motherhood and womanhood in India. Her character questions the conventional woman role in the Indian society, which is known for the glory of its womanhood.

In these three novels, Narayan has portrayed the ill-effects of disrespecting the elders and not following the traditional norms and customs of their culture. The characterizations in these novels are excellent because they have nailed the purpose of their roles and have brought out their essence and quality in a great manner. The importance of womanhood and motherhood are emphasized in these novels and the role of a woman in the family is given significance in these novels.

The importance of parenting and upbringing a child is also accentuated by Narayan. The love and affection between the parents and the children in the past is a boon and the children obeyed their parents in every walk of life. The father and the mother are earning members in the modern day scenario and so they do not find time to spend it with their children. This makes the children detached from their parents and they are not given guidance to follow the right path in their life by their parents. Raju's mother after the death of her husband raises Raju single-handedly by providing him with all the comforts making him forget the role of his father in his life. Jagan plays the role of both the father and mother in Mali's life and does not make Mali feel bad for the absence of

his mother. Aunt Laxmi also does not make Raman feel that he is an orphaned child. In the novels, *The Guide*, *The Vendor of Sweets* and in *The Painter of Signs*, Raju's mother, Jagan and aunt, Laxmi, respectively try to guide Raju, Mali and Raman in the right path but they do not respect their elders who render guidance to them.

Nowadays the children are not under the control of their parents. The developments in science and technology are the reasons for children to have an unhealthy relationship with the family members to be disconnected as they fail to realize the greatness of their elders. In order to make the young generation realize the value of the words of their parents and elders, Narayan excellently pictures the characters of Mali and Raman who face many oddities in life due to their indifference in practicing their tradition. The writer wants the young generation to maintain the glory of their elders.

Narayan has also articulated that the young generations are more dependent on the technology in all walks of their life. This has made them go numb wherein they have lost their creative thinking. Narayan tries to tell that life is beyond all the materialistic happiness. The innermost peace and happiness are essential for the satisfaction of living a meaningful life. His message to the young generation is that, they have to live in reality by creating their self-identity without depending on anybody in life by following the path of their elders. The young minds should capture the successful life stories of their ancestors and take them to be the life lessons for their own success.

Narayan tells the message to the young minds that, self-identity in life is more important and it should be created with values in it. The purpose of living a life in this universe should be known by each and every individual and that they should not destroy any conventional norms and create problems in the family as well as in the society.

Success should be attained in life without damaging the reputation of the family and not causing anxiety in the minds of their elders.

Raju's life as a saint portrays the message that spirituality is a path to sanctify life. The mistakes done in lifetime can be purified if one takes up the life of spirituality. Raju begins to read and tell stories to the people from great Indian epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The life in prison has taught Raju a great lesson in his life and he purifies his life by spending his times in discourses about God and teaching the village people on philosophies of life.

Narayan also highlights the messages from Hindu scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gita* which contains enormous life messages to lead a successful life. Narayan's characters Mali and Raman do not have any religious beliefs and their lives are a failure at the end for not following their traditional principles. The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches that failures are natural part of life and that they are ultimately removable. Though these two characters are educated they fail to read their religious scriptures which provide them remedies to lead a fruitful life.

Narayan in his writings gives importance to Gandhian principles. He has portrayed Gandhian principles and the essence of living a simple life which do not disturb the living and the non-living entities of the universe. The modern materialistic way of life causes damage in the world by disturbing the natural phenomena of life. Natural resources are destroyed to lead a materialistic life, but these natural resources of the universe like trees and agricultural lands are the future life jackets for the upcoming generations. The modern generation people are self-centred and they do not think of the survival of life in the long run. They do not properly plan for their future as they crave for

the luxuries in life. The messages from Hindu scriptures and Gandhian principles are highlighted in Narayan's writings so that the upcoming generations can learn the real essence of life.

The objective is to throw light upon the women characters in the select novels of R. K. Narayan. In all the three novels the name of the women characters Rosie, Grace and Daisy, reveal that they are foreign names and the quality of these women characters also have some modernity in them. Rosie and Daisy have their origin in India but Grace comes to India and becomes a girl of Indian culture. All these three women characters try to establish self-identity for themselves but because of the relationship with their male counter parts they fail to establish a strong identity for themselves. Rosie becomes a successful and recognised dancer but her success declines because of her extra-marital relationship. Daisy is a strong willed person who does not give up her identity as a social worker but fails in achieving the quality of womanhood and motherhood being a woman. Grace wants to establish herself as a woman of Indian culture but her dream is shattered because her partner who promises to marry her abandons her.

All the three women characters are unique in their quality and differ from each other in terms of culture, upbringing, marriage, career, life-style, family and social relationships. Woman is the bearer of life, she is presented as 'Shakti' and she is worshipped in Indian mythology. They say that God resides in the place where a woman is worshipped. This vision of women reflects the rich Indian cultural heritage. Hence, a woman always deserves a significant place in the hearts of everyone. She constitutes nearly half of the population of the world. There is hardly any work of art or literature where the artists have not spoken of and about women. A woman is a riddle who has

puzzled mankind over centuries. All great dramatists and novelists in all literatures of the world have presented woman in various ways. R.K. Narayan presents the women characters with no exception in this regard.

The novels of Narayan offer an interesting and fascinating study of women. There is a rich galaxy of women in his novels. He interprets their actions and notions. He presents them engaged in mental and social conflict with a mastery of an artist. He examines the mind of his women characters and traces the development of their personality with the power of his imagination and consummate knowledge of human nature which is vital and indispensable to an artist. He presents his women characters realistically without any psychological or philosophical overtone.

It is obvious that as a pure artist Narayan believes in art for art's sake but it does not mean that he is a writer without any vision of life. It simply means that there is always an intrinsic message, philosophy or morality in his novels. The novel is essentially western art form but Narayan has successfully used it to express Indian sensibility. His art is a curious blend of Western methods and Eastern notion. The Indianness of Narayan is seen in various ways of life. It is seen in his simple and traditional mode of narration.

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