

**DEPICTION OF FEMINISTIC ASPIRATION IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF  
R. K. NARAYAN**

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**Abstract**

R. K. Narayan is one of the most acclaimed, widely read and notable novelists of Indian English fiction and literature. It is widely known that he represented wide range of variety of Indian traditional women of middle class society which reflects the realistic approach of the Indian society. All novels reflect and reveal social realism of the contemporary Indian society and the predicament of Indian women, who were striving for the existence and survival of their identity to fulfill their aspirations. The main objective of the paper is to investigate and analysis the struggle to fulfill the aspiration of female characters in his novels. Also it helps to find out realistic and traditional Indian culture and traditional values among the female characters through the novels of R. K. Narayan. Indian women are the backbone of the society and family. It has a long and prestigious heritage of rich culture and tradition where Indian women are next to the God. R. K. Narayan depicts the female characters in such a way that there is an eagerness to come out from the shackles deep rooted worn out Indian beliefs and customs of Indian society to breathe freely in the free and fair atmosphere like the men, but not parting away from the traditional and cultural Indian customs and beliefs of the Indian society.

**Keywords:** Tradition, customs, beliefs, patriarchal system, Rig-Veda, Vedic Period, Matreyi, etc.

**Introduction**

R. K. Narayan's depicts the social and familial reality of the women and their predicament of women in male dominant Indian society through his novels. He displays the realistic revelation of status of Indian women, which instigate numbers of male writers and research scholars to put their own views about the traditional Indian women depicted by R. K. Narayan in his novels. To study the novels of R. K. Narayan means to study and understand the female psyche of Indian women. He presents the wide range of women characters through his fiction and depicts the social realism of the Indian women. There is varied difference between pre and post-Indian independence in feminine approach and psyche. There is a rapid and noticeable change took place in Indian society and social plight of traditional Indian women. All over the world women are emerging as a new and dynamic figure in each and every field equivalent to men. This eagerness to achieve the aspiration to be a welcomed and noticeable part of the society and family and are seen in the novels of R. K. Narayan. He deliberately and clearly depicted the social status and role of the Indian women in their family and society also. His most of the novels are remarkable for depiction of traditional Indian women who are striving and struggling for their identity as an individual

inevitable part of the family and society, and bound to the Indian culture and it is deeply rooted in their characters.

The traditional Indian women in the novels are submissive, sacrificing, caring, devoting and always be inside the threshold of the family and society, but at the same time she is striving for her identity as a woman who is the part and parcel of the society. He also depicts the struggle to get and fulfill her hidden aspiration. We all knew the position and capability of the women in Vedic period. Women were worshiped and revered by each one in the society and family in that period. But in due course of time the status and societal position of Indian women changed and moved towards misery, where men took all authority of family and society towards them and society became male dominant. Women thrown out in subsidiary position and neglected in the society and predicament of women starts from here, when the man thought that he is superior to her. R. K. Narayan is one of the best and ever read novelists who depicted the different facets of women personality through his novels. His novels represent and reflect various aspects and traits of Indian tradition and culture through female characterization. Indian tradition, cultural and moral aspects reflect through depiction of traditional Indian women. Traditional Indian women depicted by R. K. Narayan are pure Indian women with the burden of Indian-ness on their shoulders and this responsibility of traditional Indian women are not permit them easily to come into the flow of development and make an equivalence with men in the male dominant Indian society but there is hidden will to be recognize as the respectable person in the society. The traditional Indian women play varied and different roles in society such as wife, sister, mother, daughter, grandmother, mother-in-law etc.as the back bone of the family and the responsibility of each one are different from each other and Indian-ness reflect by their roles played in male dominant society.

### **Interpretation and Review of Literature**

Our social institutions that are family and society assign the role to the Indian women since their birth with great responsibility on their shoulder and it seems that this responsibility assigned by the male dominant society. And these social and familial responsibilities become the shackles or hurdle in the way of women empowerment. In Vedic period women had their inevitable place in the family and society. They were free to do according to their skills and capability including seeking education. We see their dominant and recognizable place in the society. In Rig-Vedic Indian society there were no any discriminating practice found against women. Vishwara, Ghosha, Upala, Apala, Lopamudra, Indrani and Mudgalini these females characters achieved notable fame and recognition in the society due to their social contribution. Many of them composed hymns of Rigveda. After Vedic period Maitreyi was an Indian woman philosopher in an ancient period. Gargi Vachaknov was also an ancient Indian philosopher. Sanghmitra and Viswambhara were also held in eminent position in that period. It is also very appreciating thing to know that women in the Post-Vedic period had equal rights. The position of the Indian women in the society in Vedic period was very exalted and was equality between women and men.

After ancient period to twentieth century the status of Indian women was being deteriorating by the patriarchal system. Women became the puppets in the hands of men and deprived from their birth rights. Patriarchal system did not allow women to be participated in the societal activities and purposefully kept them away from the decisive activity. Eighteenth century political thinkers and social reformers claimed and realistically released the rights of men also implied rights of women. Nineteenth century witnessed and argued that women should have been given proper place in the family and society and also got some limited rights. The world war first and second had significant impact on the thinking and perception of what woman could do. The women were encouraged and prompted to do work in the national interests. And they make their place in the society. Since then for long period the women were again confined the hearth and home. But the year 1960 became the decade of significant changes in the perception of women's status in the family and society. After this decade heralded there is second wave of feminism in the world in the form of various social reformers.

Indian traditional women are in the midst of society and family, she does not stand alone. Kanta Grover Says, 'Women have been viewed as the highest gift of God to man'. R. K. Narayan depicted women characters in such a way that they are longing to be known as human beings and noticeable part of the society equivalent to men. Women's identity is designed by her relationship with other familial and social responsibilities on her shoulders. Indian traditional woman play various roles in her life with great care but she is longing for identity and struggles mutely or openly in the novels of R. K. Narayan.

'The Bachelor of Arts'- R. K. Narayan has depicted two women- one is Susila Chandran's wife, the female protagonist of novel and second is Chandran's mother. Sisila is typical traditional Indian wife, having the strange quality other than her mother-in-law. Like other traditional Indian girl, she accepts the proposal of arranged marriage made by her parent. And after the marriage she follows the traditional rules and customs of Indian patriarchal system framed by male dominant society by being obedient wife. She is obedient, loyal, and faithful to her husband as per the norms of traditional Indian society. She is also loyal to her mother-in-law. She pays full respect to all family members. She is typical and traditional Indian wife and takes the responsibility of the family on her shoulders and changed the complete family. As the result of typical traditional Indian wife, she fully dedicated to her husband. Ideal Indian-ness and traditional Indian women's features can be viewed in her character. She is religious also since her infancy. She learnt the lesson of Indian-ness and it reflects from her character after her marriage also. It is notable and appreciating the character of Susila because she is a friend-philosopher, a companion, a servant, a nurse, and an advisor etc. to her husband and it is the real traditional Indian woman, who supports her husband. Indian tradition promotes her to be socialize, educate and support the individual of the family with due care, devotion, love and affection. She became the backbone of her family. In this situation Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru said, "To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. One she is on the move, the family moves,

the family moves and nation moves." In this significant way R. K. Narayan portrays the characters of Susila- a traditional and typical Indian woman as a backbone of her family.

Another significant character in the same novel is Chandran's unnamed mother. She is traditional, typical, orthodox, and conservative family Indian women and a mother. It is very obvious and play well the role of traditional Indian mother in framing and building up the future of her children. And this role is very important in any Indian family. The relation of mother and child in traditional Indian society is very noteworthy and noticeable and it is observed in the novel of Narayan. She is so orthodox and conservative that she observes the set of code of marriage and follows each and all Hindu religious rituals during marriage of her son as customs and tradition which are practiced in Hindu society. Her character is typical Indian mother who loves and cares her children.

R. K. Narayan's novel *The Guide* is one of the best novels in his series of his novels. Rosie is a female protagonist, she is an educated, beautiful, talented classical dancer and married to an archeologist Marco. She is independent in nature and defies the cultural tradition and societal expectation of women to fulfill her aspiration. Through her character we see her spiritual transformation. R. K. Narayan portrays the character of Rosie as an orthodox Indian woman in the attire of Indian Sarees. He delineated the concept of new woman in the role of Rosie and he reveals the new woman who struggle to fulfill her aspiration.

### **Conclusion**

R. K. Narayan's female characters to whom he depicted in early and later novels reveals the fact that women are getting educated and coming out from the shackles of rustic and outdated traditions and customs as the impact various reformatory teaching and thoughts of social reformers and novelist like Narayan from Indian continent and Western waves of women empowerment. They broke the traditional shackles which kept them under the control of male dominant patriarchal society. The women characters are very cautious about their identity as an individual in the society and family also. The waves of feminist movement flew from west and spread in India and other countries. Various social reformers and novelist like Narayan threw light on the social status of women and their flight in the society and family. Their eagerness to overcome from the outdated customs and shackles of the male dominant patriarchal system who governs and control all social activities also depicted in the novels. The passionate lover of humanity Mahatma Gandhi said, "Woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and ahimsa. A daughter's share must be equal to that of son." In the novels of R. K. Narayan it is notably observed that there is noticeable transformation of women characters who were meek passive, submissive and easy victims changed into self-reliant, educated, independent and notable identified in the society and family. Each and every character which is depicted by R. K. Narayan in his novels is realistic and traditional Indian-ness observed but at the same time she is eager to promote herself into respectable individual and identified in the society who is striving to achieve her aspirations.

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