

SYNOPSISTHE THEMES OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN R.K.NARAYAN'SNOVELS

The present dissertation aims at a critical evaluation of treatment of the themes of love and marriage in R.K. Narayan's novels. One cannot ignore <sup>the fact that a</sup> large number of novels have dealt with these themes ever since the appearance of fiction in Indian writing in English.

A detailed assessment of the seven novels of R.K.Narayan, viz. The Bachelor of Arts (1937), The Dark Room (1938), The English Teacher (1945), Waiting for the Mahatma, (1955), The Guide, ( 1958 ), The Vendor of Sweets, (1967) and The Painter of Signs (1976), with reference to the themes of love and marriage is undertaken. Only these seven novels have been chosen for the detailed assessment partly because it is only in these seven novels we find the themes of love and marriage fully dealt with, and partly because of the scope and limitation of the dissertation.

Chapter- I contains a brief survey of the development of Indo-Anglian fiction in English. It also throws light on the different themes handled by the Indian novelists in English like K.S.Venkataramani, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Manohar Malgonkar.

Broadly speaking the following themes emerge from the study of a cross-section of Indian novelists in English, they are ~~The~~ Independence or Gandhian movement, social reform, East-West encounter. Section-III of the first chapter deals with life and achievement of R.K.Narayan. Section-III takes a brief survey of Indo-Anglian novels dealing with the themes of love and marriage especially the major novels of Raja Rao namely The Serpent and the Rope ( 1960), The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), and Manohar Malgonkar's. The Princess (1963) and A Bend in the Ganges (1964). It is found that like Raja Rao and unlike R.K. Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar also deals with the themes of love and marriage from a male point-of-view.

Chapter-II deals with the basic concepts of love and marriage. It explains the Western concept as well as Indian concept of love. It also discusses the Western as well as Indian or Hindu concept of marriage.

Chapter-III contains the discussion of the theme of 'romantic love' in the two novels viz., Waiting for the Mahatma (1955), and The Painter of Signs (1976). In Waiting for the Mahatma, Bharati's devotion to Gandhian way of life is confronted with Sriram's devotion and longing for Bharati. There is an ironical humour in the treatment of this love-affair. Sriram's love for Bharati is no doubt true and

sincere which transforms him into a patriot. But since Narayan's strategy to blend the epic with the trivial is foredoomed, the theme of premarital love cannot be taken very seriously. In The Painter of Signs Raman's love for Daisy is a kind of sexual attraction as he is attracted towards her physical beauty. Raman's intense desire to marry her can be compared with Sriram's longing for Bharati in Waiting for the Mahatma. Bharati's devotion for Mahatma Gandhi becomes an obstacle for Sriram; in the same way Daisy's missionary zeal for family planning programme comes in the Raman's way to marry her. Finally, Raman is restored back to his old routine life.

Chapter- IV This chapter deals with the theme of 'love out of wedlock' in the novels The Dark Room and The Guide. In The Dark Room, Ramani falls in love with Shantabai, a probationer in his office, when his wife Savitri hears of this, she tries to revolt against him. This situation gives rise to two kinds of deviations from the normal course of a married life. The romantic love-affair between Ramani and Shantabai fails to make both the lovers happy as Ramani cannot stop worrying about his own family and his children. In both cases, that is Savitri's running away from home and coming back and her husband's love affair and its failure— the 'Normal' is restored. In The Guide Narayan looks at the whole

situation from Rosie's point-of view. Rosie is deceived by the gullible language of Raju who uses her to serve his own evil intention. The result is that Rosie loses the possibility of domestic happiness as well as her dancing career. The novel depicts the failure of illicit love--love outside marriage which is inherent in the situation. It is a kind of deviation from normal way of traditional Indian life, Rosie's tragedy proves that there are unmistakable dangers lurking outside the married set-up.

Chapter-V It deals with the themes of love and marriage as 'fulfilment'. In The Bachelor of Arts Narayan shows that romantic love' is not favoured by traditional Indian society. He also shows that marriage is a predestined inevitability in the traditional Hindu society. The development of the theme of romantic love between Chandran and Malathi is suggestive of the fashionable, fanciful nature of love. Finally, he marries the girl chosen by his parents. He conforms to the customary married life of a middle-class Hindu. The curve of normality is completed. The English Teacher celebrates love after marriage. A kind of perfect harmony exists between the husband and wife. It is a classic example of love developed after marriage. The novel shows that the normal thing is love-in-marriage which is more satisfying, longer lasting, even spiritually more satisfying. In The Sweet Vendor, the married

life of Jagan and his wife serves as a sharp contrast to the uncertain and irregular life led by Mali and Grace. Here Narayan seems to support Indian traditional married life. If mali and Jagan are taken as symbols of the old and the new order, or the East and the West — Jagan's life seems to be more successful.

Chapter-VI Conclusion : The treatment of the themes of love and marriage makes Narayan a significant novelist. In his novels, an Indian means a Hindu; and so the hero in his novel is never considered apart from his family and the Hindu society. Narayan seems to look upon love as a romantic idea borrowed from the Western World. The concept of romantic love is more individualistic which alienates individuals from the society. The traditional, arranged marriage is more conducive to domestic peace and harmony. 'Love-in-marriage' or 'wedded-love' is a norm which finds compromise, adjustment and peace in a joint family. Narayan's authenticity as an Indian writer is the main reason of his popularity in the West. It is in his treatment of the themes of love and marriage that Narayan asserts this 'Indianess' more than his handling of any other theme. This aspect of his novels distinguishes him from the other Indian novelists in English.