

## **Re-Writing the Traditional Romantic Feelings in Modern Vision in the Novels of R.K.Narayan- A Critical Study**

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**Abstract:** *As the Ancient theory is informed with a strong Indian sensibility, the need for reviving it and applying it to Indian works in English especially novels is greater. Of course there cannot be a dogmatic approach in the application of an old theory to a modern work of literature. The terms of reference taken very broadly are valid even for modern literature. An attempt is made in this article to apply the theory of emotion, (Rasa) to some novels of R.K. Narayan. Though the critics on Narayan have in the course of their analysis and evaluation of his novels mentioned here and there the psychological element in his works, no full length study has been made to identify emotions in the light of Indian Rasa theory, analyse them and evaluate their artistic effect. This thesis attempts to supply that lacuna by analyzing four major novels of Narayan from the point of view of the Indian theory of emotion. Applying an age old theory to a modern work in an alien language entails certain modifications to be made to the theory. But as Narayan is a more traditional Indian writer than the others, the theory is by and large found suitable to an analysis of his novels. Without making a violent departure from the norms laid down by the theory, this article aims at looking at some Narayan novels from this point of view.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional feelings, Rasa, love, sorrow, wrathful, theory, tradition, culture.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

R.K. Narayan, a creative artist in fiction for over four decades, draws his strength from an inexhaustible source – Indianness. He is the most essentially and comprehensively Indian of the Indo Anglian novelists.”<sup>1</sup> Narayan’s novels have a strong story line and his characters are clearly delineated. Placed in situations which are well developed in the novels, they exhibit a wide range of feelings through which it is not difficult to identify the main emotion. The traditional method of storytelling that Narayan follows in his fiction makes his novels more Indian than Western, though the novel itself is a Western form of literature, in that like all Indian stories it has a beginning, a middle and an end. Of course, his characters are not idealized, but one can still find in them the interplay of emotions out of which the predominant emotions could be identified and worked out.

But while analyzing Narayan’s novels from the Rasa point of view the traditional method of working out only the friendly emotions has been followed. But as the traditional theory permits an alignment of inimical Rasas through the intervention of a catalytic emotion, like, for example, the emotion of the Wonderful (Adbhuta). The analysis has taken recourse to the traditional theory of reconciling the opposites (Virudha) through an intermediary emotion. Without deviating very much from the traditional mode, and by sticking to it by and large Narayan’s novels have been analyzed from the Rasa point of view.

One of the principles by which the true Erotic emotion is to be distinguished from the shadowy is that if the woman desired by man is somebody else’s wife, the love of that man for that woman is not true Srngara but the simulacrum of love sentiment. Another instance is where the love is not reciprocated and the third where the love is for a lowly woman. In The Guide Raju loves Rosie who; is a dancing girl, who does not reciprocate his love and who is Marco’s wife. As pointed out earlier the shadowy love emotion which can all be traced in Raju’s desire for Rosie.

As a self styled guide Raju has been guiding people to the tourist spots in Malgudi. It is his blood to be a guide wherever he is and in whatever he does. So his affair with Rosie though one sided marks

another side of his guiding disposition. At a time when she is drifting without a proper sense of direction to exhibit her talent as a dancer, Raju enters her life as her lover and starts guiding her form out of a moribund existence to a thrilling life of glare, publicity and renown. The instinct to guide others is an instinct for self – effacement, putting the others above oneself. By his own confession towards the end of the novel there is something of a Karma Yogi in Raju. This dormant emotion surfaces slowly and gets manifest when by a quirk of fate Raju is thrown into jail. Even the act of forgery which lands him in jail is done with a view to preserving Rosie nee Nalini for art so that Marco may not again consign her into oblivion. Once he has all the time to himself to ruminate over his life, the latent yogic instinct in him starts asserting itself. But it requires greater impetus to manifest itself completely and this final push forward is supplied by the saintliness thrust upon him by the people of Mangala. The factors that contribute to the generation of the Quiet emotion are worked out sometimes through hints and sometimes directly by Narayan in the last few pages of the Novel. In fact there is more of suggestion (dhvani) than statement (vacya) in the words and actions of Raju on the twelfth day of his fasting, culminating in the excellent suggestion of his final action, the body is sagging and the spirit soaring.

And there is an uneasy fluctuation in the love between Sriram and Bharati in Waiting for the Mahatma. In both, there is separation followed by union. But while in there is The English Teacher there is pattern of union, separation and reunion, in Waiting for the Mahatma separation predominates over union in the first part of the novel and the actual union with Bharati totally participation in it comes towards the end of the novel and even there it is only hinted at. The uneasiness of Sriram in not being able to find the exact response that he is looking for in Bharati makes for an interesting situation of separation (Vipralamba). It takes a considerable amount of time for Sriram to know that Bharati is responding to his love and even then he is not quite sure that he will receive encouragement from her. This ding-dong battles between his desires and the fulfillment being postponed makes Sriram a typical lover in separation. The majority of the forms of separation as per the Indian traditional theory like separation desiring union (Abhilasha Vipralamba), caused by exile (Pravasa Vipralamba) and by curse (Sapa Vipralamba) can be observed in Sriram's fluctuating fortunes.

The love of Bharati for India is greater than her love for Sriram. Normally there should have been a conflict in her mind between these two alternatives. But in the novel there is no such clash because for Bharati love for Sriram can come only after her love of India is fulfilled. That necessitates the introduction of a character who can embody that principle of the Nation. Hence the presence of Mahatma Gandhi. Once Gandhi is introduced as a character in the novel, not marginally but centrally important to the theme, it becomes necessary for a critic to trace the emotion embodied in the Mahatma. But Narayan has not made of Gandhi, either. As a matter of fact Gandhiji as a character mixes unobtrusively into the plot of the novel not as a fictional character but as one who is known to all of his contemporaries in real life.

In Waiting for The Mahatma, we get absorbed in the situation. We see Sriram hearing Gandhiji's speech:

'But', Mahatmaji was saying, "If I have  
the slightest suspicion that your heart  
is not pure or that there is no bitterness  
there, I'd rather have the British  
stay on. It's the lesser of two evils."  
"Sriram thought, 'Oh revered Mahatmaji,  
have no doubt my heart is pure and without  
bitterness. How can I have any bitterness  
in my heart for a creature who looks  
so divine?'"(p.20)

Here the emotional experience of the character is so different from the reader that the reader knows what Gandhiji is talking about and when he sees Sriram's misinterpretations of Gandhi's speech, he experiences the Sthayin Hasa, whereas the naïve Sriram experiences a kind of Rati. It is the technique

of R.K. Narayan to let the reader get better of the hero. So as for Abhinavagupta would be a better suitable term for the novels of R.K. Narayan.

In The English Teacher the translation from the comic to the Erotic has been excellently worked out by Narayan. Krishnan's bachelor life offers a great deal of scope for comic situations. The traditional Comic sentiment is a coin, admitting of two kinds of humour, one aimed at one's own self (Atmasta), and the other ridiculing the others (Parasta). Krishnan's comments on his won job as an English teacher and his awkwardness while looking for a house belong to the first variety. His remarks on Gajapathy, the house owners, the houses he inspects to fix up one for himself and the unhygienic and insufficient condition of the Hostel Bathrooms are the second type of humour. In some places, the distinction between the two is so thin that by a fine combination of the two the relish of the Comic (Hasya rasa) is enhanced.

In this happy-go-luck young man a change is brought by his wife Susila. Susila-Krishnan love affair has all the ingredients of an ideal classical love affair. It will not be too much if it is said that Krishnan and Susila are cast in the mould of the ideal pair of lovers found in the Indian epics. While tracing the blossoming, growth and development of love through the married life of Krishnan and Susila, it has been observed that this emotion has taken such strong roots in both that it proves stronger after Susila's death. Narayan elevates love from the mundane physical plane to the mental and spiritual plane, thereby establishing the transcendental quality of love. Strange as it may seem, even when Narayan is portraying love in spiritual terms all the elements of the Erotic emotion are operative at that level. Love is not love if there is no separation is a testing period to assess the durability, the perseverance and the strength of love. That is why it is said that love attains fruition only in the re-union after separation. Separation may be caused by several factors and in this novel Susila's death separation Krishnan from Susila. That the love of Krishnan for Susila and that of Susila for Krishnan persevere despite death intervening is suggestive of the strength of their love and the oneness of their minds.

While Krishnan and Susila are an ideal pair of lovers with love expressed and reciprocated equally and strongly by both the parties, there is an uneasy fluctuation in the love between Sriram and Bharati in Waiting for the Mahatma. In both, there is separation followed by union.

While using the Rasa theory in the interpretation of some novels of R.K. Narayan some modifications have been found necessary. While applying the theory to Narayan, we have to describe Raju's, Krishnan's and Sriram's pangs of separation (Viraha) in greater detail in traditional terms. In the case of Sriram and Raju they pursue their women more vigorously than their women desire them. The other novels of Narayan also treat some dominant emotion or the other, like for example in The Dark Room, The Vendor of Sweets, and The Financial Expert, we can trace the Parental Feeling (Vatsalya), and Savitri looks forward to a life of sympathy, affection and understanding with her husband. While in The Painter of Signs and The Bachelor of Arts the simulacrum of the sentiment of love could be worked out.

Rasa theory and if psychology is the basis of characterisation Rasa theory has a universal value and its application to Narayan is fully warranted.

A traditional mind and a modern vision combine in Narayan to give to his work an authenticity and uniqueness in the Indo Anglian fiction: "Every creative artist is at heart a visionary, and every creative vision has its roots in culture, tradition and values of life. They constitute frame of reference to which he has to keep returning continually for sustenance and inspiration. Without it he cannot make a creative and abiding contribution.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

There has been a revival of interest in ancient Indian Critical theories among the Indian Critics in English. Indian poetics has a long history, an almost uninterrupted history, when the first stated theories were revised modified expanded and extended. Like the other sciences (sastras) poetics also has been scrutinised under the microscope of logical arguments and a great deal of metaphysical discussion has also entered into it. Terms were coined and defined, contradictions in definitions and applications were observed and attempts were made to correct the positions. Such a long history implies certain resilience in the basic theories. One such theory is the theory of emotive suggestion (Rasadhvani). This theory looks into the two most important elements of literature, one is the content

and the other expression. That emotion is at the core of poetry cannot be denied. How does the poet show that emotion in words? Emotion cannot be expressed; it can only be suggested or represented. The medium of suggestion is the word, and that of representation is a symbol or image or character. But even the symbol or image or character can communicate its meaning through words. What is embedded in a word, the intense emotional experience has to be explored in depth by the reader so as to understand the full implication of what the writer is trying to say. As Bharata says.<sup>1</sup>

“No meaning proceeds from speech without  
any kind of sentiment.”

Therefore the reader must possess a strong sensibility similar to that of a poet to be able to perceive the multiple levels at which a word operates in a poetic context so as to understand as well as enjoy the sentiment sought to be conveyed through the words. So emotions, their communication through words by the poet in a work of literature, and the capacity of the reader to respond emotionally as well as intellectually to that work of art, have all constituted the terms of reference in the ancient Indian critical theory. Idealistic representation may have given place to realism. But emotions that are basic to human experience and behaviour are always to be found, without which no literature is worth its name. The names of the emotions and their elements any change of they may have taken new forms. But the psychological element in literature being constant, the theory which considers this element cannot be dead. What is needed is to take the theory in its broad frame work and apply it to not only the Indian works but also western specimens of literature.

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