

## **Familial Crisis in the Novels of R. K. Narayan**

**Dr. Ashish Gupta**

Head, Deptt. Of English  
Govt. Girls College, Betul

**Sushma Deshmukh**

Research Scholar,  
Barkatulla University,  
Bhopal, India

### **Abstract**

R. K. Narayan is an award winning author of more than a dozen novels and short stories, instead of these he is popularly known for his *Malgudi Days*. He was born on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1906 in Madras British India (now Chennai Tamil Nadu, India). His full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami. The life of R.K Narayan is reflected in all his works. The life of middle class Indian society is the focus of his most of the novels; and each main character goes through a crisis and transformation of some sort, may be it is an identity or spiritual one. It is important to note that R. K. Narayan wrote solely on his own experiences as a middle class Brahmin of fairly high caste-a privileged position that was not the norm of India.

**Keywords-** Indian society, Crisis, Caste, Privileged, Identity, Spiritual

Crisis is a term meaning “a testing time” or an emergency event. There are lots of crises which affect the people and their lives. There are various types of “familial crises” including the most obvious- alcohol and drug abuse, family violence of the mental physical and sexual varieties, divorce and widowhood. Sometimes quarrels within family members such as in-between brother-brother, brother-sister, sister-sister, parents-children, mother -children and in laws etc lead to crises. There are two main reasons of familial crises, one is normal stressor and second is abnormal stressor. Getting married, unemployment, having babies, living and adjusting in a new group etc come in normal stressor. Famine, war, natural disaster, murder, assault, incest, economic collapse and so on come in abnormal stressor.

Narayan is a delineator of the matrix of family relationships in all its complex network of ramifications. All the artistic qualities of Narayan are used by him in the portrayal of female characters in his novels against the back- drop of an urban middle-class which is

**Familial Crisis in the Novels of R. K. Narayan**

**BY**

Dr. Ashish Gupta & Sushma Deshmukh

characteristically tradition-ridden and male-dominated. Hence, woman is relegated to second position to man in social hierarchy. Woman no longer, remains a decorative, depersonalized commodity owned by man. She is equal or rival in all walks of life. She becomes complementary and supplementary to male counter-part in the successful execution of big and small activities and undertakings.

Familial crises in the novels of R. K. Narayan centers around the relations between man-woman, husband and wife, mother and daughter, parents and children, son and father etc. even though woman is blamed for the crises. His novel shows that each and every character faces some crises because not a single character in his novels lives an ideal life. The affection of love or pre marital love and sex is seen in some of his novels such as, in the novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* we find the love affair of Malathi and Chandran is an optical communion than of real courtship. The failure of vocal courtship with the girl whom he loves so much reveals the traditional conservative outlook of the Indian middle class society on sex relationships. The failure to marry Malathi is a turning point in Chandran's life. In a mood of frustration, he leaves Malgudi and reaches Madras to live with his uncle. He reaches Mylapore and in a flick of thought gets his head shaved off by a barber sitting at the steps of the temple. Donned in ochre-coloured clothes, he takes to the life of sanyasi and spends his days in aimless wanderings. Here the author underscores the fraud of his renunciation as a weak, self-deluding and cowardly escape from facing harsh reality of life. This is merely an affection of a teen age which brought disturbance in the life of Chandran and his family. The pre-marital relationship or sensual pleasure is shown in the novels, *The Man Eater of Malgudi* and *The Vendor of Sweets* in the former novel we find that the taxidermist Vasu, brings a dancing woman Rangi up the printers private stairs. Rangi is a source of frequent controversies and quarrels plaguing the residents of the locality. In the later novel we find that Mali met Grace at a football match in Michigan. On their arrival at Malgudi, Mali introduces her as his wife to Jagan, his father. "This is Grace. We are married. Grace, my dad." (*The Vendor of Sweets* page 58)

Later on the disclosure of Grace to Jagan that they are not formally married Jagan was fully shocked, and she added that Mali had promised her to marry in the Indian way on their return to Malgudi. Grace receives a jolting shock at the hand of man (Mali), whom she trusted to the extent of her thoughts. The promise of marrying her remains unfulfilled to the end. To add to her woe, she is virtually thrown out unsheltered by the same person. She merely told Jagan, "Mo has no more use for me." (*The Vendor of Sweets* page 134)

This is not a physical but financial exploitation of Grace by Mali, and in the opinion of Jagan it was a sin which can't be excused. Jagan is not able to pardon the guilt of Grace-Mali association. The revelation of Grace-Mali unholy relationship hastens his departure or 'Vanprastha'. He decides not to go back to his house which is irretrievably tainted. In the novel, *The Painter of Signs* the cause of lustful love is depicted between Daisy and Raman. Raman wants to marry Daisy but she refuses. This is sardonic bittersweet tale of love in

#### **Familial Crisis in the Novels of R. K. Narayan**

**BY**

Dr. Ashish Gupta & Sushma Deshmukh

modern India. Husband and wife relationship or nuptial relationship is seen in the novels *The Dark Room*, *The English Teacher* and *The Guide*.

In the novel, *The Dark Room* the institution of marriage is examined mainly from the point of view of a woman who is presented as a victim of it. Savitri in the role of a wife is depicted as a victim of tyrannical and egoistical husband, Ramani. Ramani appears as an autocratic husband and father. He insists Babu to go to school while he was in fever. Savitri tries to intercede on behalf of the child he rebukes her with insult. He finds fault with preparation of food without any reason and she bears insults silently. She retires and sulks in the dingy dark room of the house. Her children Babu, Sumati and Kamala feel disgusted and scared of her sulking with her face to the wall. Her personal feelings and individuality receive no consideration. She has to dance on his moods however irrational they may be. Savitri shows remarkable patience and puts up with her husband's tantrums and slights till the time his nuptial bonafides are not suspect.

The novel *The Guide* also mingles with both modern and traditional aspects regarding love, sex and marriage which are keenly depicted in it. The married life of Marco and Rosie was not satisfactory, though both of them were artist. One is a writer and another is a dancer, they lack the mutual understanding. The passionate love between husband and wife is missing and for that reason both of them lived separately. The affection of love shows the traditional view of life, but the separation shows the modernity. She expects physical and emotional satisfaction from her husband and the responsibility of a husband is immense here. Marco was always on tour but provided all facility to Rosie, she was leading a reputed life in an orthodox Indian society being a daughter of Devdasi, a dancer. Her interest in dance always irritates Marco and he expects from her to appreciate him on his new research. Liberalism acts here and Rosie with a passionate ambition of being a dancer cross the bound of married life and become a puppet of Raju. Later on knowing the treachery of Raju she confessed her guilt to her husband and promised to start a new beginning of their life but here Marco on knowing her extra relationship with Raju left her alone at the Malgudi station to face her fate. The disloyalty of a wife is unbearable to man hence he was unable to satisfied her but still expects to be loyal to him in all aspects.

The wife and husband relationship between Susila and Krishnan is seen in *The English Teacher*. It is emotionally too deep. They enjoy the thrills of romantic love making in their married life. As a passing phase of their married life, their domestic harmony is temporarily threatened by an occasional quarrel. Susila acts with restraint when Krishnan feels highly upset to find that his wife has disposed the old dilapidated clock which he has preserved since his students days in the college. Their quarrels are like a storm in a tea-cup. Extra marital relationship is seen in the novels *The Dark Room* and *The Guide*. The rebel in Savitri burst out when she come to know her husband Ramani's amorous relations with Shanta Bai who has been employed as an insurance agent in Ramani's office Engladia Insurance Company brings storm in Savitir's life. Her doubts become certain when Gangu,

#### **Familial Crisis in the Novels of R. K. Narayan**

**BY**

Dr. Ashish Gupta & Sushma Deshmukh

her neighbour, discloses her that many stories are getting afloat about her husband. Savitri's cup of patience is totally filled up she feels piqued at it and raves against the helpless condition of a woman in the male-dominated milieu of the Indian society. A woman's possession is her body only. All else belongs to the male person like a husband, a father and a son. She bursts out, "What possession can woman call her own except her body? Everything else she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's." (*The Dark Room*: 88)

Hence, Savitri removes all her ornaments and throws them at the feet of Ramani because she doesn't want to take away with her anything belongs to him. The rebel in her asserts and she leaves the home at mid-night. "You are not having me and her at the same time, understand? I go out of this house this minute." (*The Dark Room* page 86)

Desertion of the husband's house is an overthrowing of the age-old, inherited burden of tradition which binds a woman to home and denies her freedom to get released from her husband's hold however unjust he may be. Savitri's pathetic, rudderless condition gets further intensified by her obsessive thoughts about her children. She returns to the family circle of her children. She finds through her own experience and effort that a woman's place is only by her husband's and children side. Besides her wifely role, Savitri is presented as a kindly, affectionate and considerate mother. She nurses her children with full dutifulness. In the novel *The Guide* the extra marital relationship between Rosie and Raju destroyed the married life of Rosie. Rosie feels boredom in the company of her husband Marco as he is busy in writing or studying or deciphering paintings and carvings on the walls of caves and temples. So, there is, thus, a complete dissimilarity of interest between the wife and the husband. The result is that they often quarrel. She sulks. This sweet-sour relationship is described by Rosie to Raju. All these events lead to the calamitous rupture of wife-husband relationship between Rosie and Raju. Rosie's staying away from her husband coupled with her dissatisfaction in her married life comes handy to shrewd, cunning and crooked Raju. Rosie caught into his amorous snares and turned infidel to her husband. One of her visits to the Peak House, in emotional stress consequent upon Marco's persistent interrogation, she breaks down and makes a self-confession of her extra-marital relations with Raju. It exposes Raju's exploitative and self-seeking intentions vis-à-vis Rosie's innate simple-mindedness and credulousness which prove an undoing factor for her. Raju exploits her to the maximum. Financial crisis is seen in the novel, *The Financial Expert* Margaya's spoiled child throws his account book down a drain, and cuts short his career as a financier.

Summing up, it must be pointed out that the subtleties of Hindu way of life elude in R. K. Narayan's characters. Thus close to the conclusion the family relations in R. K. Narayan's novels depend upon time, situation and the temperament of the characters sometimes happy or at other sour, but show the vigor and vitality of full-blooded life in it. The postulate comes Mr. Sampath and Vasu in *The Man Eater of Malgudi* whose entry for their variant reasons brings about a tornado-like tumultuous commotion in the normal familial relationships of the Malgudians who come in contact with them.

#### **Familial Crisis in the Novels of R. K. Narayan**

**BY**

Dr. Ashish Gupta & Sushma Deshmukh

### Works Cited

1. Narayan, R.K. *The Vendor of Sweets*. Chennai: Indian Thought Publication, 2013.
2. Narayan, R.K. *The Dark Room*. Chennai: Indian Thought Publication, 2013.
3. Narayan, R.K. *Bachelor of Arts*. Chennai: Indian Thought Publication, 2013.
4. Narayan, R.K. *The Guide*. Chennai: Indian Thought Publication, 2013.
5. Gaur, K. K. *A Study of His Female Characters in R. K. Narayan*. New Delhi: S. S. Publisher, 2016.