

R. K. NARAYAN- A PIONEER OF INDIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

Rasipuram Krishna swami Iyer Narayan swami, a well-known Indian author of twentieth century. He was best known for his fictional writing which dealt with the town of Malgudi. He used simple theme dealing with the day to day activities and life of an Indian. R.K.Narayan was born in a Brahmin family. His father was a school headmaster. Due to his father's frequent transfers, he used to live with his grandmother. His grandmother called him 'Kunjappa'. He learnt arithmetic, myth, music, Sanskrit from his grandmother. He was graduated and worked as a school teacher for a while. He turned his focus on writing and started his contribution to Indian literature. Narayan started his career as an article writer for newspapers and magazines. He became a reporter for 'The Justice'. He wrote his first book 'Swami and Friends' in 1935. 'Bachelor of Arts' dealt with the experiences of an adolescent turning into an adult. His other novels, 'The English Teacher', 'Mr.Sampath', 'Waiting for the Mahatma', manifest him as a literary genius. Narayan wrote many short stories, memoirs and translated Hindu epics. His books were turned into films. He received 'Sahitya Akademi Award' for 'The Guide' and 'Filmfare Award' for the best storyline. He was awarded the 'Padma Bhushan' in 1964 and 'Padma Vibhushan' in 2001. He was bestowed with honorary doctorates by many universities. He was awarded 'A.C.Benson' medal by the Royal Society of Literature in 1980. Narayan's contribution to literature has been remarkable in India and abroad. He provided his western readers with Hindu existential perspective. His works dealt with the uniqueness of human relationships and their emotions in the lives of rural people. He described the clatter between the urban existences with that of ancient. Narayan was a prolific writer who used humour, simple diction and good characterization in his writings

Keywords: Fiction, Memoir, Humour, Myth

R. K. Narayan (1906-2001)

Rasipuram Krishna swami Narayan swami, popularly known as R.K.Narayan. He was an Indian writer, who gained a lot of fame with his novels.

His Life:

R.K. Narayan was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. His father was a school headmaster. He spent his childhood with his grandmother. He attended school and at home, he was often imparted arithmetic, Sanskrit, music, mythology, by his grandmother. He was called by his nickname 'Kunjappa'. After his schooling, he had spent most of his time in

reading and writing. He gained his bachelor's degree from Maharaja College of Mysore. He worked as a school teacher for some time. Later, he devoted himself to writing. R.K. Narayan completed his education in 1930. He worked as a school teacher but his interest in writing, paved a way for him to become a great writer. His first novel, 'Swami and Friends' (1935) dealt with the adventures of the school boys. His second novel, 'Bachelor of Arts' (1939), marked his reputation in England.

Best Novels: 'The English Teacher' (1945), 'Waiting for the Mahatma' (1955), 'The Guide' (1958), 'The Man – Eater of Malgudi' (1961), 'The Vendor of Sweets' (1967), 'A Tiger for Malgudi' (1983) gained his reputation as a prolific writer. He wrote fiction and non-fiction works. He wrote memoirs.

Notable Short stories: 'Lawley Road' (1956), 'A Horse and Two Goats' (1970), 'Under The Banyan Tree and Other Stories' (1985), 'The Grandmother's Tale' (1993). Published shortened modern prose versions of Indian Epics: 'The Ramayana' (1972), 'The Mahabharata' (1978)

Narayan, known as the Indo-English writer. His conception of an imaginary south Indian town of Malgudi proved to have realistic touch. Nearly, dozen novels and many short stories were set in Malgudi. His books were published in the United States, under the title 'Grateful to life and death' and 'The Financial Expert'. His works were recognized in the west. Michigan state university press published his works for the first time in 1953. His novels were also adapted for movies.

Theme:

Narayan had a realistic approach towards his characterization. He preferred a typical Indian setting, like an imaginary town of Malgudi. He portrayed Indian society with a simple plot, originality in life style and essence of reality. In his long literary career, he published fourteen novels, two hundred short stories, a memoir, travel books and plays.

His Interests:

Narayan had a great interest to focus on myth, tradition, modernity, culture and reality in his writings. He dealt with the status of women in a society. He wrote articles for newspapers and magazines. He worked as a reporter for 'The Justice'. He instituted his own publishing house,

'Indian Thought Publications', which is still in operation, today. He had been validated to be a versatile writer and a remarkable figure in the literary genre.

Awards and Honors:

Narayan received 'The Sahitya Akademi Award' for 'The Guide' in 1958 and when it was made a movie, he was honored with 'Filmfare Award', for its best storyline. He was awarded with 'The Padma Bhushan', in 1964. He was conferred honorary doctorates by 'The University of Leeds', in 1967, 'Delhi University', in 1973 and 'University of Mysore' in 1976. 'The British Royal Society of Literature', awarded him 'A .C. Benson Medal', in 1980. He was an honorary member of 'American Academy of Arts and Letters', in 1982. He received 'The Padma Vibhushan Award', in 2001. In 2016, his house in Mysore was turned into a museum.

His Works:

Novels

- The Dark Room (1938)
- Mr. Sampath (1948)
- Waiting for the Mahatma (1955)
- The Man- Eater of Malgudi (1961)
- Talkative Man (1986)

Non Fiction

- My Dateless Diary (1960)
- My Days (1973)
- The Emerald Route (1980)

Mythology

- Gods, Demon and others (1964)
- The Ramayana (1972)
- The Mahabharata (1978)

Short Stories

- Malgudi Days (1942)
- Lawley Road and other stories (1956)
- A Horse and Two Goats (1970)
- The Grandmother's Tale and selected stories (1994)

Narayan's contribution to literature has provided the western readers, to know the essence of Hindu existential perspective. He is regarded as one among the three leading Indian fiction writers, along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. He is considered as one of the greatest novelist, India had ever produced.

References

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