

SPOUSAL SOLACE IN R K NARAYAN'S "THE ENGLISH TEACHER"

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Abstract

This paper explores the beautiful theme of marital bliss in the masterpiece autobiographical novel of R.K.Narayan's the English teacher and his own experiences of love, wedding and family. His novels are characterized by simplicity and gentle humour set up in the familiar locale of Malgudi ways. His fiction forms a wide canvas with a myriad projection of marriage as the central point of life. This article aims at portraying Narayan's treatment of love at its best form that is platonic and he explores the unknown realms of human nature and behavior which delved deep into the psyche of man-woman relationship. Marriage otherwise is a gamble and tug of war for Indians but for Narayan it is more than a blessing as he was able to achieve the essence of spiritual ecstasy through his marriage only .

Keywords: Marital bliss, malgudi, psychology, realms, marriage, platonic, ecstasy

Marital bliss in RK Narayan

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight:
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament."
It went for thirty lines ending:
"And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light."

These are the lyrics of a poem composed by Krishna for his beloved wife Sushila and sang it as his wedding anthem throughout the novel the English teacher 1945 and he sings this from his heart. Krishna is the protagonist in The English Teacher which is a nostalgic narrative novel woven around the life of Krishna, an English Teacher. R. K. Narayan is considered as one of the pioneering spearheads of early Indian literature in English. He has made India approachable to the people irrespective of the boundaries of regions and races and gave unfamiliar people an opportunity to get glimpse of Indian culture and sensibilities via his writings.

This novel, dedicated to Narayan's wife Rajam is not only autographical but also impressive in its intensity of feeling. In 1933, Narayan saw his would be wife Rajam who was a 15 year old girl, and fell deeply in love with her at first sight . They managed to get married despite many astrological and economical barriers. Rajam died of typhoid in 1939 and left a three year old daughter Hema for Narayan to take care of. Her death caused a great blow in his life and he was left despondent and disoriented for a long period of time. He never remarried in his life. Narayan was gloomy and discontented and this led him to find solace in spirituality .Narayan refined his spiritual knowledge and meditation and was able to set up communication with his deceased wife from across the other world. He tells this to the actress Greta Garbo about his communication with his dead wife which he receives initially through a medium but later he developed his mind adequately to communicate with her spiritually himself, and link up the rift between life and death. Although Narayan being a very modest and humble man never makes a propaganda out of this sublime achievement of acquiring this rarest ability of talking with his dead wife and eventually this remains under cover for the public .Narayan has validated again the fact that true love is unconditional he sees through the mind's eye his wife Rajam .The difference in their realms doesn't matter at all what matters is deep bonds of love between them.

Rajam was actually no match with him on worldly parameters neither physically nor mentally. When Narayan fell in love with this 15 years old girl he was 22 at that time and moreover he was shorter than her by couples of inches. In 1934 he was married, but his wife, Rajam, died of typhoid in 1939. Unfortunately his marital life was of very short span of 6 years but it was so blissfully contented that he never ever urged to get remarried .He lived peacefully playing the dual role of mother as well as father to her only world that was his daughter Hema. I believe he never felt lonely or lack of companionship at any point of time throughout his long life span of 94 years because he was deeply connected to the soul of his wife who guided him and always played the role of friend ,lover and critic .His true soul mate Rajam always fulfilled his craving of companionship and love.

Hence this is the story which is remembrances of his life reflected in the experiences of Krishna, an English teacher, and his quest for inner peace and self-development. It is the expedition of Krishna from being an usual teacher to the axis of his family and to an illuminated being. R. K. Narayan is one of the scholars of Indian writing in English who has depicted everlasting family units and their concerns in the society so effectively in his novels. His comic way of storytelling appeals every one.

The English Teacher is principally a dreadful story. We can't remain aloof and detach with the pleasures and sorrows of its characters. I am so much impressed by the unconditional love of Shushila's husband Krishna that I feel envious at times with the undivided care and attention he gives to his wife I am blown away by the change of the

forms of his love from corporeal to platonic but what never changes is his unconditional love with his wife. I am sure every girl would want such dedicated loyal husband like Krishnan whose faithfulness become stronger with the passage of time and remained unaffected even with the death of his wife .My belief confirms that his fidelity was above from the bondage of flesh and worldly pleasures. There are the events which share the pathos of the tragic unexpected end of the romantic ecstasy. The style of the novel is suitably emotional. The poetic respite is observed in the loving care, the nurturing of dreams, the graceful behaviour , the sweet and mesmerizing moments of romance, the young child's innocence and the familiar household matters The young, vibrant , zealous and charming Susila is a true portrayal of Indian womanliness . During this life and also in afterlife Susila would continue to be with Krishnan. Krishnan being young teacher of English is very much influenced by Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. "She was a phantom of delight" is the poem which he composes in appreciation to portray the persona of young but spiritual Susila. He is in the period of mirth, almost in paradise when beauty and Innocence come together to display Susila's beauty of mind and spirit. Krishnan, and Susila is the couple that is centrally placed in the novel and the short duration of time span is from their marriage, the birth of their daughter Leela, the search for new house and the typhoid will culminates in Susila's death.

The true love between the two carries on after the death of his wife too as it is the most supreme incorporeal amalgamation in life now and life beyond death. Love, solicitude , responsiveness , high morality ,fidelity and spiritual perspective are the characteristics of their dispositions . The rhythm of love, death and reunion are crucial to the relationship between Krishnan and Susila, in The English Teacher. They were just not the husband and wife pair, but also the romantic pair of the beloved and the lover too. Susila dies in the peak of her youth, about four years after their marriage and just in one year after she arrives to Malgudi. Death is viewed as a transformation of life. Krishnan finds that there is no partition between himself and his dead wife. "The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved." .It is at this point that Krishnan undertakes to establish communication with his deceased wife. The transcendental union of Krishnan and Susila is what Krishnan feels, a moment of rare, entrenched joy, a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death.

The death of Susila teaches Krishna one of the painful lessons of the unavoidable truth of loneliness. The grandeur of the relationship between Susila reclines in Krishna's consenting of Susila's death as Almighty's wish. Krishna accepts the truth of human existence in the conformation of death. Krishna is mindful of the reality of the human subsistence. Krishna then wants to set up a true kind of togetherness with his wife at every facet, whether it is physical or spiritual. That is why Krishna is able to feel his wife even after her passing away to the other side. Narayan's description of Krishna-Susila connection is vivid and beguiling. They make themselves a unique pair because there is no place of

singularity, contempt and conceit in their relationship. The vigor of their bond lies in their awe-inspiring nature which stimulates them to encounter one of the cruelest realities of human existence. Being so learned and having deep understanding of Plato, Shelley and others, Krishna has a platonic notion of love which he reflects it in his relationship with Susila. He is a devoted husband and she is a malleable and unfeigned wife, and they make a perfect pair of fusing their personalities into one which is free from the bondage of idiosyncratic biases and blemishes, they epitomize a flawless joyful union in this life as well as in the life after death. She wins the heart of her husband by her hand on wisdom and expertise in domestic skills of managing house hold so well.

Reciprocal devotion for each other makes the relations between Krishna and Susila accomplish the height of supreme bliss. Owing to true love for his wife, even death is not capable of separating Krishna from Susila. After the most painful period of agitating and learning how to gain solace amidst such restlessness Krishna entered into direct communication with the spirit of Sushila who breathes new life into him and he makes peace with life again. The spiritual communion between him and his wife channelizes his being and they experience strange spiritual love as expressed in Susila's words;

“When I think of you or your of me I'm at your side. Music directly transports us when I think of a garment it is on me. In our world, there is such a fine response for thought. When I come to you I prepare myself every time as befits the occasion. I come to meet you and dress myself as befits the occasion.” (Narayan, 1945: 149)

Krishna understands that separation and isolation are the two commonplace negotiators of human relations. Every person is miserable before these agents and it is in vain for us to rebel against them. It is only by frescoing harmony with it that man can achieve solace, mirth and contentment in life. There is no run away from loneliness and separation. This law of life cannot be steer clear of, an acute inevitable loneliness is the only fact of life. Everything else is an illusion this truth is the basis of the Narayan's new spiritual comprehension of life and after life. The passionate and platonic relationship between Krishna and Susila imparts an intense understanding into the phenomena of existence and unleashes new perceptions and spectacles about the truth of human relationship. The requited loving relationship elevates them on the other worldly plane. The fusion of two spirits, the union of innocence, chastity. True and selfless love is experienced by both Krishna and his wife Susila. Love between them is not lost neither it fades away. It now becomes a 'spiritual union of the two. The spiritual union is the highest accomplishment .Death can make us hapless and hopeless and devastate even the strongest of us especially when the love between two people is so strong. The book proved a cathartic learning for Narayan and his character, Krishna and it is well worth learning for readers too to figure out how they both attained spiritual competence to defeat depression and hopelessness .This

spiritual awakening will bring life transformation. It promises life after death and changes our definite on of death which is not a loss but changing of state or passing over to another side. though the pain of separation is unbearable and yield to agonizing loneliness but if one learns and develop insights of the loved one not as dead but changed not spinet form and dwelling into another dimension or realm which is just a thought away then this void of absence can be filled up to certain extent. Doubtlessly we all have to shed the costume you call body and meet and merge into our loved ones already standing and waiting for us over the horizon what matters is time of departure.

Thus we witness the metaphysical experiences that R K Narayan had tend which he reveals through Krishna .There is so much of emphasis on companionship, shows how that bond between them was built on a strong foundation of mutual love. I feel it is only the purity of this beautiful relationship that made her reach out to him even after her death.

The strength of the bond that Krishna and Susila shared is very effectively brought out. They share every single detail of their lives, they talk a lot. Krishna gives equal treatment to his wife in these pre independence era where spouse was always considered inferior and not less than a door mat .but Krishna being a learned professor believes in equality of sexes and treat her with equal importance .The way he reads out English poems to her, she laughing so much on hearing a few verses in which a lover talks to his lady love, how Krishna insists on they writing a letter to each other on alternate days when she is at her parents' place, Krishna preserving all the letters – all mirror the relationship that Narayan actually had with his wife Rajam. Susila, during these sittings, assures Krishna that she is with him all the time and that she is watching him and their child all the time. She talks about music, meditation and says she is just transported to another plane where Time, Space and the physical body do not exist. She tells him that she is indeed happy and asks him not to think of her with grief. First all this happens through a medium, one friend of Krishna. Slowly, through these sittings, Susila ensures that Krishna concentrates on his self-development and gradually he is able to communicate to her directly without any medium.

The ease and integrity of the main characters (Krishna and Susila) and their affection for each other is the key which made this novel so illuminating for me. The novel ends on a beautiful message when Krishna is able to sense Susila's presence and they both are together at a "moment of rare, immutable joy – a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death".

Krishnan's ordeal of suffering brings him to the understanding of the basic reality about existence. He reflects. "Wife, child, brother, parents, friends... We come together only

to go apart again. It is one continuous move away from them. The law of life can't be avoided. The law comes into being the moment we disconnect ourselves from our mother's womb. All hardships and afflictions in life is because of our venture to seize this law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. This fact must be recognized. A deep absolute isolation is the only reality of life. All else is false. It sounds like the oration of a tragic hero. Krishnan, after enacting this assigned role on the wearisome plane of subsistence feels the striving within. "It was a search of a harmonious existence. I find I can't attain it unless I withdraw from the adult world and adult work into the world of children.

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