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Concept of Money in the Novels of R.K. Narayan

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R.K. Narayan is regarded today as one of the India's best writers of English fiction. His exquisite use of the English language, his ability to fuse character and action has been perception of life, his realistic portrayal of Indians and his utilization of Indian myths and legends are some of the characteristics of his art which have made him a recognised and established men of letters. Apart from his novels, travel guide, sketches and essays, stories retold him from India's large store of myths and legends, he has written a large no. of short stories, many of which appeared in *The Hindu*, Indian thought and others papers, he is a story writer of very distinctive quality and his "Short stories are artistically as distinguished as his novels, and in any general estimate of his writings they cannot be ignored."

R.K. Narayan presents the theme of money as an important theme of his fiction. A study of its nature and scope naturally enables us to understand how money stands in relationship to the individual and society. Narayan in his novels depicts the developments of individual consciousness in the continuum of time. Time itself conditioned by tradition as displayed in a larger context in society and the spirit of change which is the result of the infiltration of specific thought and English Education. War and its aftermath, and political awakening at their home have their decisive role to play in the developments individual consciousness. Dehumanizing effects of war and complacency of the post-independence days are equally important factors affecting an individual's mind. The reasons for Narayan concern with the drama of various human conditions can be traced back to the condition of his own life. More often than not, much of what he has written is the replica felt life. To understand the mind and art of Narayan, a thorough understanding of the nature of individual's relation with regard to society and people is essential.

Narayan's little drama of middle class life is enacted Malgudi, an imaginary town in south India which is felt as a living character in his fiction. Malgudi, the fictional setting of Narayan's novels and short stories claims as a remarkable place in literature as the Wessex of Thomas Hardy or Scotland of Sir Walter Scott. "He works on the inches of ivory of Malgudi, the imagery local of his novels. Malgudi typifies Indian town growing into where pariahs, teachers, clerks, printers, policeman, etc. live their routine life".

78 We also see that in most of his novels the main characters growing from an average to an important human being and then coming back to his normal status. Like Raju of *The Guide*, Margayya of *The Financial Expert* etc. All of them share the same qualities; have the same approach towards life and at end return to normally. To quote Rajeev Taranath "From average to the extraordinary and back again to more poignant state of average this seems to be the recurrent movement in terms of interacting characters in the majority of Narayan's novels.

78 R. K. Narayan occupies a unique position among the creative writers in India. His contribution to Indo-Anglian Literature is immense. There are many gifts and distinctive qualities of Narayan which have made him one of the most popular writers of today. One of the greatest Qualities is that he is deeply steeped in customs and traditions of India. He does not ever approach English as a foreign language, but as an Indian medium which he has thoroughly used. He is the only novelist who, at same time, writes in English in the first place and entirely bases his novels on purely Indian themes and situations.

81 Narayan writes about Indian life, but his aim at the appraisal of life through the comic mode of presentation. It is this quality of being able to penetrate into the essence of things that Narayan fully possesses and so, he can express in his works the inner most depth of his native society's self. He gives some angry remarks against greedy businessmen, money lenders, extorting house owners, fake Sadhus philosophers, corrupt politicians, black-marketers, profiteers and doctors in his works. We find fine examples of social criticism in his novels like in *The Financial Expert*, *The Guide*.

In *The Financial Expert* Narayan tries to tell the people about the role of money in life and Margayya's craze for money and the ultimate results. Margayya's overwhelming passion for money constitutes the thematic basis of *The Financial Expert*. His only ambition is to amass huge fortune for himself and his son whom he had spoiled by his excessive and misguided love. Margayya adds to his wealth and property by taking to the banking business on a large scale. A quarrel with Dr. Pal, whom he learns has lured his spoiled son into the vicious life of gambling, drinking and whose keeping result in his ruin. It is Margayya who is also ready to sell books on sex for the sake of money. Margay's whole business fails as Dr. Pal exposes his secrets and excites his clients to withdraw their money from his bank. The novel concludes with a comic scene in which Margayya who has turned a proper points to his son the old knobby trunk lying in a corner and asks him to take his place under the banyan tree near the central co-operative land mortgage bank. In this novel we also come to know about mal-functioning of a large number of co-operative banks and financial organization. In fact, these organizations are nothing but abode, of corruption. He criticizes the power hungry selfish politicians who promise a vote of work for public to win their vote but in actuality do nothing. They are only concerned with making money.

In the novel *The Guide* he speaks of Raju who goes on assuring the saintly gesture from time to time. He is merely one of those countless frauds posing as Sadhus and living on the credulous people as parasites. The Raju is very much money minded. He takes to forgery and crime only for the sake of money. From the very beginning of the novel, his main aim is to amass wealth. So he turns from the shopkeeper into a tourist guide then into a businessman than a saint. At all the levels he is not able to attain total happiness. Though he gets wealth, he is not fully satisfied. It is the wealth which takes him to a very high position and again makes him fall the same way.

Narayan's chief concern in his fiction is to delineate men and women in family and society with relation to money. The source of his success as a fiction writer is that he knows the psychology of his characters very intimately. He calls himself "a realistic writer in English" and maintains his position. He chooses his characters from life around him. Many of his characters are based on models of men and women in the real life.

An individual's relationship with society is based on the "conflict between two sets of values; Supremacy of social hierarchy, and emergence of the individual." This is so because Narayan sees society tenaciously holding on the older values and following tradition in its wider application to life, while on the other hand, he sees an individual inspired by modern scientific and commercial outlook. As there is conflict between an individual and society, so also there is a conflict within the consciousness of individual himself. Buried deep in his subconscious are the wholesome links that connect him with social morality and security of tradition. In the pursuit of his material aspirations and ambitions, an individual disregards society, its conventions and customs. But in the end he returns to family traditions or to his commitment with an unusual sobriety and sanity. Margayya of *The Financial Expert* becomes a financial wizard, but ultimately returns to the old way of life, Raju of *The Guide* who acquires friendship with "men of money or influence" and feels "Vastly superior to everyone, dies as a saint in the end". Love and money are the two major attractions to the individual in Narayan's fictional world.

The relations between man and woman are based on money and sex, and do not go beyond money and physical attraction. It is totally outside marriage. There is no genuine feeling of true love in such people. They walk at the back of one another only for wealth, luxuries etc. Raju and Rosie in *The Guide*, there is no sense of sacrifice in them. The relation between businessmen is based on the motif of profit and self-interest. The businessmen resort to fraud, altruism, evasion, and such other malpractices for the sake of self-aggrandizement. So we see that Narayan's novels are concerned with various relations and problems. And most of his relations and problems are affected by the concept of money.

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