

HUMOR IN THE SELECT SHORT STORIES OF R.K. NARAYAN- A STUDY

A. GODWIN

*M. Phil., Research Scholar, Department of English,
Ponnaiyah Ramajayam Institute of Science & Technology (PRIST)
Vallam, Thanjavur-613403, Tamil Nadu, India.*

Dr. Mrs. K. B. JASMINE SUTHANTHIRADEVI

*Professor of English, Ponnaiyah Ramajayam Institute of Science & Technology
(PRIST) Vallam, Thanjavur-613403, Tamil Nadu, India.*

Abstract

A study on R. K. Narayan humor in the stories "Lawley Road" and "Under the Banyan Tree" Narayan's language is for common people, for children as well as adults. He writes for all class. In his make-believe village there was no castes, no politics, no quarrelling. The people live a plain and simple life at that place. All are engrossed in their own work. This village can give a fresh feel of any South-Indian village with a fragrance of idly, dosa and jasmine flower. He became capable of giving the impression of a village that is nowhere still people think that it is very much present in the world. In this book of Narayan's creation we study on humor in the story "Lawley Road" and "Under the Banyan Tree".

Humor in "Lawley Road"

In this collection of short stories *Lawley Road* one of the stories is Lawley Road. The municipality of Malgudi decides to rename the town's streets and institutions to reflect nationhood. And thus the previous Kabir Lane was changed to Lawley Road. The name of the story book reflects the story of that part and truly unfolds the fact.

His description of changing the name of the 'Coronation Park' to 'Hamara Hindustan Park' is really enchanting. Many changes took place in the story and Narayan explained all of them in a vivid manner. His descriptions were so clear that anyone could see the scenes as films. He will be remembered through generations though he left the world in 2001. Narayan is trying to say that change brings complication, which sometimes leads to a chaotic situation. As more places are renamed all its landmarks are gone haywire. The chairman of the municipality makes a statue of Sir Frederick Lawley.

The enormous, stubbornly solid statue is hacked away at great cost and effort, and ultimately removed with the aid of dynamite, only for the chairman to realize that Frederick Lawley had in fact been a virtuous governor who had advocated for India's independence and died in the attempt to save villagers from drowning in a flood. The statue is restored in a new location, the name of which is being decided by the municipal council.

The new place is Lawley Road, earlier name of which was the Kabir Lane. The story points comically to the way a political transition can alter not only a nation's identity but also an individual's sense of order. Like any other books by Narayan, this *Lawley Road* also captivates imagination, making people smile about little wonders of life. This is an interesting book with a lucid and transparent writing style, which is the specialty of the author. The author Narayan manages to describe a simple person, his personality and his life in a small Indian town named Malgudi. After this book containing 32 short stories anyone can really identify oneself in some situations, which are both comic and retrospective.

Humor in “Under the Banyan Tree”

It was published in 1985. The stories in this book demonstrate the warmth, humor, and simplicity that made him so beloved. All these characters are Narayan's trademarks. The tales are set in and around fictional Malgudi and include a number of stories featuring the Talkative Man. This talkative man used to sit under the banyan tree and give suggestions to the villagers. The title of the book aptly depicts the scenario of the stories and the village as well.

He set the identity for himself. His characters live in a fictitious village, which was entirely his creation. He was a story writer. Some of those short stories are very easy to understand while some are very deep. Narayan used the experience of his own life tremendously in his novels and all of them are the symbol of his one or other mood.

‘Under the Banyan Tree’ is an enchanting collection of Narayan. The collection of stories includes warmly observed characters from every walk of Indian life. As for example merchants, a beggar, herdsmen, rogues, etc. All of them live as one family and they are known to each other. The character from the title story *‘Nambi’* is a unique one created by Narayan. Narayan has the mesmeric ability to fascinate his audience. This he achieves with a masterful combination of economy and rhythm, creating haunting images and a variety of settings to evoke a unique contradiction of reality and folklore. Some stories, like the title story & *‘Dodu’* are pure treasures. The characters, the situations are so real that one wonders whether the author picked them out of his own experiences.

William Heinemann, Viking Press, Penguin Books Ltd., etc published the book *‘Under the Banyan Tree’*. All the 28 stories of *‘Under the Banyan Tree’* has a clear depiction of are the realistic life style as well as very practical thoughts. The stories are really refreshing and delightful to the readers. A clear picture of a South-Indian village comes up from his write-ups. And this collection is not an exception as a whole. The Reluctant Guru is none other than the celebrated author himself, exposed to the funny naiveté of American campus crowds. On tour as a D.V.P. (Distinguished Visiting Professor), Narayan meets in shock but amused silence, a throng of people who think of India as the fabulous land of snake charmers, yoga, mysticism, philosophy, poetry and fakirs. Narayan himself becomes a guru who Visits and Professes on everything that is demanded off him, of the land of Kama-Sutra. What comes out in this refreshing essay is the blinkered view the west has of the Eastern sub-continent, especially India.

In their shallow search of mysticism, a meaning for life and a glorified faith in Orientalism, the American campuses demand of Narayan, to live up to the mystical standards he has been raised to. The campus encounter, related with innocent humor in matchless prose, opens the pace of the book of essays which clearly see Narayan at his best. The episodes following and the observations are equally witty, often hilarious. The Bharat brand of English, the defense of the habitual late-comers, the world of culture mongers, a plea for a Ministry of worry brings out of the best of Narayan's pungent and sparkling humor and his capacity to laugh in any situation.

The essays are matchless in their capacity to keep one in fits of laughter at their best and in states of amused indignation at their not-so-best states. Indian audiences would adore seeing this deluded view of the west as it evaluates the land of Maharaj has. It becomes especially funny because the Indians too foster some prejudices and mind sets against or for the Americans and in the counter beliefs, are able to laugh at themselves. And even as Narayan probes the American system for its blinded vision, he also exposes us to systems of education and administration that would put many among us to shame. In the guise of his trade mark humor, Narayan manages to give a comparative study of two different cultures and the interaction between them.

Anybody who claims to be a Narayan fan would be unfair to think of him as just a fiction writer, when he gained all his initial fame, fortune and followers from the exuberantly conjured stories. The stories are ideal to see us as the world does. Funny, warm-hearted, satirical, yet serious, Narayan presents these topical vignettes of life to anyone who claims interest.

A Grandmother's tale is a narrative story where the author narrates his grandmother's stories with utmost tenderness. With an apt title, the story thus stands apart as one of the illustrious stories, while allowing the reader to take a trip through an old India.

‘A Grandmother's Tale’ by Narayan is a written book that is easily accessible for children and adults. The story is a narrative where Narayan is writing his Grandmother's story, a look into an India where child marriage was normal and annals were still the currency. This book allows a reader to journey through an old India, which is filled with ancient and family traditions. The life style at that time was a bit difficult but however Narayan depicts it with full grace. This book is relatively short and very easy for a middle school child to read.

Told by the narrator's grandmother, the tale recounts the adventures of her mother, married at seven and then abandoned, who crosses the subcontinent to extract her husband from the hands of his new wife. Her courage is immense. But once her mission is completed, her independence vanishes. Gentle irony, wryly drawn characters, and themes at once Indian and universal mark these humane stories, which firmly establish Narayan as one of the world's prominent storytellers.

A true picture of India can be got from this story. The language is very transparent and it has been easily able to gather the interest of teens. Many of his works got awards and acclamation from different societies in India and abroad.

CONCLUSION

Narayan's main concern is not with any social documentation, but with the depiction of the comic side of life he has to provide an authentic locale in which he has to treat men and women in their various manners and moods. The device of employing the topography of Malgudi as a venue for a series of stories gives Narayan the necessary fixity of background against which he sets a 'comedy of deviation'.

Therefore, he chisels out his characters in terms of their particular individualization. Raman, kannan, Subbiah, Raju, Govind Singh, Krishna, Sankar etc. are distinctly carved out from one another by their individual traits and idiosyncrasies of character. The Malgudi experience is brought home to the reader through the individualization of its character and the detailed presentation of their environment. These contribute to the 'feel', and 'the atmosphere' of the stories. Narayan's sensibility operates on various levels of human experiences. He draws from the vast spectrum of life- from the ordinary details of daily drudgeries of a cobbler to the misery and frustration in the life of a clerk-and all these are shaped and molded by his comic touch. His stories call up to the readers, mind the varied experiences derived from the commonplace incidents of life.

Narayan creates his comedy by employing all the effective devices of the humorist-both traditional and innovative. His stories are rich in situations and incidents. There are occasional flashes of ingenious farcical situations, as well as rare touches of satire too, imparting to his comic genius a wide spectrum. We are struck by the novelty in his treatment of everyday situations and actions. Above all, the genial quality of his humor sustains our interest in the stories. This urbanity emanates from a compassionate comic sensibility. It is one of the most remarkable achievements of Narayan.

REFERENCE

- [1]. A story – Teller's World : Stories , Essays , Sketches, Mysore : Indian Thought Publications, 1989 .
- [2]. Lawley Road , Mysore : Indian Thought Publications , 1956. .
- [3]. Under the Banyan Tree and other stories, New York : Viking Press , 1985 / 1987.
- [4]. Malgudi Days (Stories from An Astroger's Day and Lawley Road Plus eight new stories) New York : Viking Press, 1982 / 1984.
- [5]. The Grandmother's Tale, Mysore : Indian Thought Publications, 1993.