

PAPER III

THE ENGLISH TEACHER

M.A.4TH SEM

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Of all the novels of R.K. Narayan, The English Teacher is most spiritual and most romantic love in the novel is scared, true and constant; it is less physical and more spiritual. It is constant because it is scared and spiritual. The love of Krishna and Susila is no less intense than that of Farhad and Shiri and of Romeo and Juliet. Yet there are no voluptuous eruptions, no volcanic passions. All is serene and calm.

The English Teacher is structurally tight. It expresses in simple, lucid and limpid English the constant eternal love, its ecstasy and grief and its ultimate blessings. Tightly woven to expresses humorously, even ironically the social evils and superstitious rampant in Indian society. Let us now examine the different aspects of the novel.

(1)**Plot-** Narayan has divided the plot of The English Teacher into two parts. The first part deals with the idyllic, serene, ecstatic married life of Krishna and his wife Susila, and the second his pangs of grief, the communication with his wife and the ultimate blessedness. The second part also deals with the miserable married life of the headmaster and his wife. There is a lot of action and drama in the headmaster's episodes. But for the love of his daughter Krishna must have put an end to his life. When he communicates with his wife successfully, he feels rapturous, and sings merrily. When he communicates with his wife

unsuccessfully, he feels like having fallen into an abyss without any ladder to come out. Ultimately, unable to suffer any longer the separation from his wife.

There is in the plot a lot of reflection of the stream of consciousness technique. When Krishna is pacing towards the station to receive his wife and child, he reflects:

“Must shout as soon as the train stops. ‘Be careful with the baby’.”

He becomes nostalgic when he remembers his brother:

“All my affection for my brother returned. Good fellow.”

The story moves backward and forward, like the pendulum of the clock when Krishna becomes nostalgic. But when he reflects, the story stands still like a clock which is out of order. Whatever may be the case, all is organized in a well-ordered pattern.

(2)Characterization- The characters of Narayan are not pale but vigorous. Not only the major characters like Velan in The Guide, the Police Inspector in The Financial Expert and Singaram, The Headmaster and the Headmaster’s wife are life-like. Singaram the mere peon is so full of vigour and vitality that he can blackmail Krishna.

Narayan creates three dimensional characters. Like King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Darcy and Elizabeth, he has created dynamic characters like Raju, Krishna, the Headmaster and the Headmaster’s wife. These characters are not at the end what they were in the beginning. They change utterly; they are almost transformed. Raju the cheat in The Guide ends by becoming a Sanyasi. Jagan the materialist in The Vendor of Sweets almost

becomes a sage, and Krishna in The English Teacher, who is a social man, becomes so spiritual that he communicates with the soul of his wife. The Headmaster, who leads a miserable life with his sharp-tongued wife, renounces the grahastha ashram and takes Sanyas. The Headmaster's wife, who is rude, rough and misbehaves with her husband, is almost a different woman at the end. She visits her husband's school atleast three times a day and almost implores him to accept her food

“His wife and children visited him often, atleast thrice in a day..... His wife, a greatly chastened person, now often implored him to let her bring him his food.”

(3)**Themes-** There are in The English Teacher, many themes like love, life of heaven, communication, child psychology, social issues, superstition and nature. The most important theme, however, is love. Love is related differently. There is Krishna's love for Susila, his wife, and Leela his daughter. There is Susila's love for Krishna and the child. There is the love of the grandparents for the child Granny's love for Susila and the child, and the child's love for the parents and the grandparents. The love of Krishna for his wife, Susila, however, towers above the love of other relations. The English Teacher is, essentially, a love story.

(4) The English teacher as tragedy-The English Teacher is a heart-rending, soul-stirring tragedy. it is not inevitable and convincing. The readers feel indignant at the death of the sprightly heroine. They feel that typhoid is no longer a fatal disease. With so much care and nursing she received, and the proper treatment she could have been cured. They sometimes rage against the complacent, irresponsible and foolish doctor who had been

treating Susila for malaria whereas she had been suffering from typhoid. Sometimes they rage against the author himself. They feel that as Hardy killed Tess, he killed Susila. He killed her because he had to kill her. He killed her because he was writing his own life, his autobiography.

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