



REALISTIC ELEMENTS REFLECTED IN R. K. NARAYAN'S *BACHELOR OF ARTS*

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ABSTRACT

*The depiction of real life situations or truth in the surrounding reflected in art is known as realism. In the mid 19th century, realism came into being in the art in European canon rejecting the Romanticism, artificiality, fantasy and exaggerated emotionalism. But in India it begins in the early 20th century, when it was going to close in the European canon. It was the rebirth of Realism in the fertile ground of Indian literary canon. Indian literary artists explored the theme very effectively in their works. Being a part of the rustic and orthodoxical society, Indian scholars depicted the truth throughout their writings. They portrayed Indian life as it is and truthfully in their fiction, which is the most popular form of writing in Non-European literary sphere. The Indian trio of the English fiction: Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao are the notable scholars for the rebirth of Realism in Indian writing in English. At the respective time Indian society was suffering from so many injustices and these writers along with many others sympathetically reacted towards these. Narayan in his most of the novels portrayed the truth in the surrounding society as in his *The bachelor of Arts* (1936). He discussed the real situations in the life of Chandran, a representative of Indian youth.*

Key-words: *Realism, Romanticism, exaggeration, orthodoxical, tradition, real life situations*

The Bachelor of Arts (1936) is one of the greatest novels by a multidimensional Indian novelist R. K. Narayan. Narayan, born in South India, is a Tamil student, moved to Mysore and learnt Kannada and English. Then studied abroad and again settled in South India. Shrinavasa Iyenger stated:



“He is of India, even of South India: he uses the English language much as we used to wear dhoties manufactured in Lancashire--but the thoughts and feelings, the stirrings of the soul... are all of the soil of India.”(Iyengar, 2012:359)

He started working as a journalist and with the help of his creative writing got much appreciation in journalism. In 1935, he published his debut novel *Swami and Friends* with the help of a renowned English writer Graham Greene, but encounter with failure. His second novel *The Bachelor Arts* came out in 1936 with the recommendation of same author and this time he got the appreciation and fame from the youth of India and also England and he became a world renowned Indian English novelist. From there his successful literary life began and he wrote ten novels and 151 short stories throughout his life.

The present paper aims to study the realistic elements portrayed by Narayan in his first successful novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*. Here he depicted the real situations in the life of an Indian youth, Chandran. Partly autobiographical work, discusses the social realities of Indian upper class society, their faith in superstition, class conflict and in that situation the mind of an Indian youth.

The novel has been divided into four parts. The first part describes the college life of the protagonist, Chandran. In this part Narayan portrays the real situations in the college life of an Indian student in the British Era. Chandran is brilliant debater in his college and so that he is praised by the History professor Ragavachar and appointed as the secretary of the College Historical Association. Being involved in this, Chandran can't score well in the final exams. He passed his BA with average marks. The second part deals with his life after college. Everyone related to him is giving advice to him about his career. He is confused of it and most of his college friends moved from Malgudi. Being lonely, Chandran visits the river bank alone to kill his time. Suddenly one day he encounters with a beautiful girl in her fourteen and falls in love. He follows her to her home, where he meets his poet friend, Mohan. From him he comes to know about girl that she is Malthi, daughter of a clerk and the most important, she is from his caste. His love for her gets strengthen and he is thinking about marrying her. Finally, gathering courage, he communicates with his father about the girl and his intention to marry her. By little obstacles from his mother he gets success in it and the two families communicate about marriage proposal. Chandran is so much enthusiastic and happy about it; but the horoscope of the two doesn't match and the pair is rejected by Malthi's father. In few days of this, Malthi's marriage is settled out by her family with another man and it causes tremendous effect on Chandran and he gets ill. After some days he gets back to recover from illness; but not from his affection towards Malthi. For a change he is sent to Madras.



The third part portrays Chandran's frustrated life after his failure in love. By reaching at Madras station, instead of meeting his cousin, who is there to receive him, he gets out of the station and goes to a hotel. There he meets Kailas, an older man with lot of bad qualities. Being with him he gets involved in mess and moves away from there. Second time he is lonely and now there he doesn't have his family also with him, he thinks about himself as he is a sanyasi. He decides to live like a sanyasi and leaves Madras traveling from village to village. He changes himself completely like a sanyasi and finally reached at Koopal village in Sainad district. The villagers meet him and name him as a real sanyasi and seeking blessings from him, they offer lot of gifts to him. That night being alone he thinks about his cheating, he is really not a sanyasi, he has everything at his home and he doesn't want to cheat the villagers and decides to go back to home and after two days he reaches Malgudi, his home.

In the last part of the novel, Narayan depicts Chandran as a grahasthi. Everyone at the house is happy with his return and he is also sympathetic about them. Then he meets his old friend, Mohan who is now working for *The Daily Messenger*. Though his father wants him to go to England, Chandran with the advice of Mohan wants to work with *The Daily Messenger*. His father also approves his business and sends him to Madras to his uncle to get agency of *The Daily Messenger*. With the help of his uncle he gets the agency and starts his successful business with creative ideas. Getting busy with it he starts his new life without any memory of Malthi. Here he gets a marriage proposal of a girl named Susila. At first he refuses for marriage but after the discussion with Mohan gets agree for that and goes to Susila's home with his mother. In her fifteen, Susila is a charming girl and Chandran finds his lost Malthi in Susila and agrees for marriage. Chandran wants to send invitations to all his friends but no one was in touch. Here Narayan quotes about friendship:

Friendship was another illusion like love, though it did not reach the same mad heights. People pretended that they were friends, when the fact was they were brought together by force of circumstances. (Narayan, 1991:118)

After few days they get married and by returning from marriage, Chandran, a changed man, is so much happy in his life. Apart from his working, he spends lot of time in reading and writing letters to Susila. But at the end he is so much upset and worried about susila due to the absence of her letters. In her last letter she has replied that she is ill and it may be malaria or some serious disease.

Throughout the novel we can find the realities. From the beginning itself the events are realistic, the characters of the novels are also realistic, and most of the events are parallel to Narayan's own life. The principal Brown is a truthful representative of Britishers. Chandran,



an Indian youth is very parallel to the then and current Indian youth. His family provides a real and interesting picture of the typical Indian family life, which is most affectionate about class, orthodoxy and conservativeness. His father, a retired District Judge, is supportive and understanding Indian father, who is always eager to make his son happy at any cost by upsetting his own desires about a son and letting them ruined, he helped and agreed with his son. Though his mother is a loving woman she is not an expectation for an orthodox and rigid woman. It is a true picture of the Indian home-world. She undoubtedly wanted to marry her son with Malthi, the girl of his choice but not ready to let down the things related to status, reputation and dowry. On the other hand Malthi's family may be or may not be strong believer of the superstition but they are aware of the custom and rules of the society and that's why wanted to be away from the upper class and demanding family Chandran. There are so many outside characters that depict different realities from the society.

The only part of the novel, which deals with the emotion, passion and romanticism, is that Chandran's thoughts about Malthi when he encounters with her at the river bank. He is overwhelmed by the mad passion of love for the girl, who didn't communicate him once. Narayan brings out the passions, illusions and obsessions of a heart in love expressively:

Probably she was going to bed: blessed be those pillows... Could he not just dash into the house, hide in the passage, steal up to her bed at night, crush her in his arms, and carry her away?(Narayan, 1991:71)

But he suddenly made Chandran realize that this is only the imagination not the reality. By making her match with another man and giving space to Chandran to realize himself in loneliness, Narayan puts forth the reality of life. Another real situation discussed by Narayan is the generation-gap. Most of the writers put it between father and son but here we find a new version, the clash between Chandran and his mother. The romantic vision of Chandran clashes against her mother's conservativeness, superstition, fatalism and conventions. The mother is a strong believer of the fate:

It is all a matter of fate. You can marry only the person whom you are destined to marry and at the appointed time. (Narayan, 1991:158)

So many events in the novel give a true picture of the convention-bound and orthodox Indian society such as: who will take the initiative in the talking of marriage proposal, the long controversy over the matching the horoscopes and reasons behind that as the question of the dowry and gifts from the bride side.



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